

UP FROM THE

*ashes,*  
*hope*

WILL ARISE



DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR LENT 2022

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# **Up from the Ashes, Hope will Arise**

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# Foreword

*That I May Know Him and Share His Sufferings*  
(Philippians 3:4b-14)

Lent, a period of self-examination, fasting, and penance leading up to our Easter Day celebration, is when we celebrate Christ's resurrection. This is the season in which we can come to grips with our human conditions and emphasises our need for a Saviour.

This year's Lenten Devotion theme is "*Up from the Ashes, Hope will Arise*". According to the Bible and ancient traditions, ashes are frequently used to represent great regret and sadness. Life, as we know it, is not a bed of roses. For many of us, it is filled with unparalleled struggles and disaster.

Nevertheless, the sun shines as clearly in the darkest day as it does in the brightest. Some people assume that hope is merely an emotion and would say, "We are feeling hopeful." But, on the other hand, its actual definition is a discipline, a determination to have faith in God even when the world around us collapses. That is the beauty and power of hope. Despite losing her sight and hearing, Helen Keller still stood firm and said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." Life in God is not immunity against adversity but rather peace amid adversity.

Let us recall what Christ did for us on the Cross and His victory over death during this Lenten season. No one exists in solitude, according to the Bible. We should not be self-centred, withholding God's blessings for ourselves. Indeed, we have been blessed in order to be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:2). When we come across the needy, we ought not to be like the priest and Levite in Jesus' story. Instead, we should emulate the Good Samaritan, who took pity and helped a stranger.

I pray that God will strengthen us, through this devotional, as we walk in His unending love and reflect on all that He has done for us. Remember, we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. May this season help to bring about a life-changing transformation as we *know Him and share in His sufferings*. To God be the glory—from this time forth and forevermore!

Rt Revd Dr Titus Chung  
Bishop, The Anglican Diocese of Singapore  
President, National Council of Churches of Singapore

# Preface

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:11-13

Lent is a 40-day period of fasting in imitation of Christ’s own victory over temptation in the wilderness. Though this journey points towards the death and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ, it also leads us to the celebration of his resurrection. As we prepare ourselves for Good Friday and Easter Sunday through reading and meditating upon God’s Word, we examine our lives, grieve our sins, and renew ourselves in the confidence of His blood-bought triumph over darkness. As in previous years, the Lenten Devotional is angled towards facilitating deeper meditation and an inward transformation among brothers-and sisters-in-Christ as we come together to overcome the struggles that separate us from fulfilling God’s will this season.

Every year since 2006, The Bible Society of Singapore has been commissioned by the National Council of Churches of Singapore to publish a collection of Lenten readings and reflections—making this the 17<sup>th</sup> year that we have produced this devotional. Over the years, we have sought to make our devotional more available and accessible to communities from all strata of the local Church. Last year, we produced and distributed about 11,000 print copies of “From Fear to Faith” in English, Chinese, and Tamil. (We made available online editions in English, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, and Tamil. We also produced audio recordings of the material in Hokkien.)

We are thankful for the continued opportunity to bless and edify the Body of Christ through this effort, and for the contributions of our many partners who have come alongside us in doing so.

The theme for this year is “Up from the Ashes, Hope will Arise”. Last year, we witnessed the mass production and implementation of various Covid-19 vaccines that temporarily curbed its escalation. Unfortunately, this relief was short-lived: as deadlier, more infectious strains were spread across the globe, countries faltered, struggling to contain the virus. The turbulent roller-coaster of emotions the pandemic has brought about has reiterated the transient nature of worldly things. It emphasised our need for utter dependence on He who controls all. It is now, more so than ever, that Christians must humbly examine the current condition of our relationship with God. Will we, like the secular world, close our hearts to others and seek self-preservation? Or will we, as children of Christ, open our hearts and lean on God for His divine provision?

May we use this time to renounce the temptations of life, to reflect and repent on where we fall short of the grace of God. Although the pandemic has cost us the opportunity to gather in our Churches and fellowship with our brethren, it is still possible for us to stir each other up, build stronger familial relations, and be unified as one. For Paul exhorts us “...to stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

As we journey through this season of Lent, let us direct our gaze towards the Cross and the work Jesus has accomplished for our salvation. It is our common heartfelt desire to see Christians everywhere serve the Lord with reverence and awe, live out in faith

of the Gospel, hold fast to the Word of Life. May we shine the light of Jesus unto all people everywhere, fruitfully hastening the fulfillment of his promised return. No matter how bleak and uncertain the future may seem, let us pray we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the One who has plans to prosper us and not to harm us (Jeremiah 29:11).

Rev Ezekiel Tan  
General Secretary  
The Bible Society of Singapore



# Introductory notes

Through the traditional Lenten disciplines of almsgiving, prayer and fasting (Mt 6:1-18), the church seeks to be renewed in the likeness of its Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This booklet aims to foster such renewal by disciples of Christ by providing a series of readings and meditations focused specifically on Lenten themes.

Drawing on the *Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings* (Augsburg Fortress, 2005), the biblical passages in *Daily Devotions for Lent 2022* have been selected because of their thematic connection to the Sunday readings of the *Revised Common Lectionary*. The Sunday Gospel Lessons of RCL are the central foci to which our weekday Lenten readings will point. Users should be mindful of the major themes and motifs encountered in the readings of *Revised Common Lectionary* and RCL *Daily Readings* for Lent:

First Sunday — For 40 days, being tempted by the devil (Lk 4:1-13)

Second Sunday — A searching God (Jer 17:5-10)

Third Sunday — They were written down for our instruction (1 Cor 10:1-13)

Fourth Sunday — Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example (1 Pet 2:16-25)

Fifth Sunday — That I may know Him and...share His sufferings (Phil 3:4b-14)

Palm Sunday — The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone (Ps 118:1-2, 19-29)

Following the RCL *Daily Readings* pattern, this booklet's readings for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are considered "Preparation for Sunday," and those for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are "Reflection on

Sunday.” The former group looks forward, the latter backward. (An exception to the pattern will be the readings for Holy Week, all of which will constitute a preparation for both Good Friday and Easter Sunday.) It is hoped that this system will provide a sense of unity and focus, and enable users to appreciate the Sunday lectionary readings within a broader biblical context.

The booklet’s overall theme of **“Up from the Ashes, Hope will arise”** challenges us in two ways pertaining to our walk with God: firstly, in the light of God’s Word and His other means of grace i.e. Prayer, Fellowship, Sacraments and Witness, humbly consider the current condition of our relationship with God with holy FEAR—“reverence and awe” (Heb 12:28; Phil 2:12) and as we face the challenges and renounce the temptations of life (self, the world and the devil), reflect and repent where we fall short, and secondly, encourage and stirring each other up, unified as one, in knowing God’s Word (Heb 10:23-25; Phil 2:16; Rom 15:4), live out in FAITH the Gospel (“both to will and to work for his good pleasure”—Phil 2:13) and declare and shine the light of Christ (Phil 2:15; Col 1:27) to all people everywhere fruitfully hastening the fulfilment of His promised Return (Rom 15:12; Mt 24:14; Phil 2:10-11; Rev 22:20).

Some suggestions for your daily devotions:

1. Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or distracted.
2. Choose a fixed time and begin with a short hymn or song of worship to prepare your heart for receiving the Word of God.

3. Take your time in meditating on the truth contained in the Scripture passage. As you read the Bible passage at least twice, meditate on the life-changing truth contained in God's Word.
4. Make a sincere commitment to the Lord (you may wish to modify the suggested commitment statement, or even make your own), and then spend some time praying.
5. If you are particularly touched by an aspect of the reading that day, try to share your insights with at least one other person.
6. Keep a journal that records significant insights.
7. As you begin each series of "Preparation" lessons, consider reading the Sunday lesson so that you get the "big picture."
8. Consider reviewing the Sunday lesson as you begin the "Reflection" series with your cell group at church and workplace.

May you draw closer to the Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit and His Word, be filled with the Father's passion (2 Pet 3:9b) and assured by His promise (Phil 2:10-11), and being challenged by His undying faithfulness, be a courageous, faithful and fruitful disciple and sent community fulfilling the Great Commission in the world where Christ may see "the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." (Is 53:11; Mt 24:14).

Canon Emeritus Louis Tay  
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# Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

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2 March • Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

<sup>1</sup>“Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



# Meditation

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Lent focuses on the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Here, in referring to them, Jesus warns against turning our pious practices into religious theatre meant mainly for a human audience (the Greek word in verse 1 is *theathēnai*, from which we get the word “theatre”). Instead, we must recognise that our true audience is God, the Audience of One. If we lose sight of this, we will be no better than the Pharisees, whose religion was external but who had no inner life of significance (cf. Mt 23:27). Like Abraham, we are called by God to “walk before me” (Gen 17:1). God is our primary audience because He is the One who created, saved, and called us and it is to Him we must give an account of our lives.

We must not only ensure that our lives are lived before the Audience of One, but also recognise that He is our true Master. Anything less, such as money, will lead us astray to become hunters and hoarders of earthly treasures. Such treasures are subject to decay, loss, and destruction. Heavenly treasures are different; they are spiritual in nature and do not resemble earthly treasures. What we give away in fact become heavenly treasures, where they do not rust and decay. Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor, “and you will have treasure in heaven” (Mt 19:21). The Lord teaches that our hearts (the core of our being) are where our treasure is—either they are earth-bound or set on things above (Col 3:1-2).

There are thus two key questions: Who is the Audience of all my pious acts? Who is the true Master I am serving? The answers to these two questions will determine whether our spirituality and daily life stand on solid ground, whether we live *to* God and *for* Him.

## Prayer

---

Heavenly Father, help me to recognise that it is to You that I direct my devotions and piety. Save me from the temptation of looking for earthly applause, but rather to seek *Your* approval. Help me to commune with You in the secret chamber of my heart, which I pray will serve You and only You. All others will be dethroned before Your divine throne. During this Lent season, I pray that Your rule will be firmly established in my heart and life.

## Action

---

Seek to fast, pray, and help the poor and needy without fanfare and showmanship. Aim to find opportunities to practice these things in “secret”, where the only reward comes from God. Decide to give up being a hunter and hoarder of earthly treasure; instead, find ways to share your possessions and give them away to help the needy.

*Bishop Emeritus Dr Robert Solomon  
The Methodist Church in Singapore*

# For All To See

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3 March • Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

<sup>15</sup>"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

## Meditation

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Two teenage boys made news for vandalism and theft in Singapore. Petty crimes otherwise unreported. They did it for a dare called Devious Licks, a TikTok challenge where participants videoed their crimes and post it on the social media platform to prove their feat. You too might have said it's utter foolishness, as their recorded crime was for all to see.

In Deuteronomy 30, Israel was encamped on eastern Jordan across the Promised Land where they would soon cross into finally. God knew there were many

Devious Licks awaiting them. But Israel was not only to occupy Canaan. Their life and living, for better or for worse, in a foreign land was for all to see!

Hence, God reminded them in no uncertain terms about their commitment to live as His people “by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules...” But the passage besides being a warning, was an invitation to participate in a fulfilling God-life, “*for he is your life and length of days*” (emphasis added).

The biggest promise in the Promised Land was not the offer of the land but God’s offer of Himself. Only genuine satisfaction in Him will sustain and keep us in our different pursuits in life. Each season of Lent is a reminder to cast our eyes upon the Lord Jesus who displayed in fullest measure what a God-life is like.

A God-life is one that finds its true satisfaction in God. It is a life of missional obedience, even if it meant being hung on the Cross—for all to see! But Good Friday was not the end, there was still Easter, and, Christ’s promise of His glorious Second Coming, again, for all to see. But more importantly, He will also see all of our lives. What will He see in yours?

## Prayer

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Dear God, You who know all and sees all, I cry the same cry as the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Ps 139:23-24) Indeed, may people see me, they see Your Spirit working and living in me. Make my life Lord—for all to see—You!

# Action

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Today is the second day of Lent. It's a good time to take a hard look at your lives in what I call the fist-palm test. How many aspects of your life are locked in a fist? Unlock your fist and open your palm. Ask God to take the undesired things away. Remember, it is easier for our Heavenly Father to hold your palm, than your fist, to lead you into the God-life.

*Rev Dr Alby Yip  
Senior Pastor  
Zion Bishan Bible-Presbyterian Church*

# Against You, You Only Have I Sinned

---

4 March • Friday after Ash Wednesday

Psalms 51:1-5, 17-18

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup>Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!

<sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup>Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgement.

<sup>5</sup>Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

<sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

<sup>18</sup>Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
build up the walls of Jerusalem;

## Meditation

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Perhaps the prestige and power of high office had got to his head. Instead of leading alongside his men in the battlefield against the Ammonites, king David chose to be in Jerusalem. While enjoying the comforts of palace life, he caught sight of Bathsheba bathing one evening. The sight of her body inflamed his lust. Lust led to adultery—he slept with Bathsheba knowing that she

was the wife of Uriah, his trusted soldier. Adultery led to murder—he schemed to kill Uriah after Uriah, choosing to stand in solidarity with his men, unwittingly foiled David’s attempt to conceal his adultery.

David’s self-absorbed outlook in 2 Samuel 11 stands in contrast to his penitent posture in Psalm 51. Instead of giving excuses or self-justifications, David came clean with his guilt: “Against you, you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight” (v 4). There are two striking things about his confession which are instructive for our discipleship.

Firstly, David confessed that it is God alone whom he had offended. This is not to deny his guilt against his neighbours, but to express the heart of the matter concerning sin. Our bodies belong to God and our neighbours are made in God’s image. Adultery and murder, like all sin, are ultimately offenses against God.

Secondly, God whom David has offended is also the one with whom he pleads for forgiveness. God punishes sin for what it deserves in His justice, and pardons sinners for what we do not deserve in His mercy. The posture of a guilty sinner approaching God’s throne of grace is not callousness but contrition. No matter how deeply we may have fallen into sin’s abyss, forgiveness and healing is possible with God.

## Prayer

---

O God of perfect justice,  
Search me and know my heart today.  
I acknowledge my sins, whether they are committed  
willfully or unknowingly.

O God of all mercy,  
In Your steadfast love, forgive me of all my sins.  
Make me pure in the intents of my heart and mind.  
Give me grace to love You and walk blamelessly  
in all Your ways.

In the name of Jesus Christ who loves me and  
gave Himself for me. Amen.

## Action

---

1. Spend some quiet moment asking the Holy Spirit to bring to your awareness any sins committed in thought, word and deed.
2. Acknowledge your sins in the presence of God.
3. Pray the prayer above as you close your time of devotion.

*Rev Dr Edwin Tay  
Principal  
Trinity Theological College*



# The Scripture Imprisoned Everything Under Sin

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5 March • Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Galatians 3:15-22

<sup>15</sup>To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

<sup>16</sup>Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. <sup>17</sup>This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. <sup>18</sup>For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

<sup>19</sup>Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

<sup>20</sup>Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

<sup>21</sup>Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. <sup>22</sup>But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

## Meditation

---

We begin our Lenten season on Wednesday, often called Ash Wednesday. For many, part of Lenten observance has to do with “discipline”, and more often than not, discipline has to do with “law”. Therefore, it seems apt that we have this passage to reflect on today.

Should you find this passage a little obscure, you are

not alone as it is one of the most vague verses of Paul's many epistles. As a trained rabbi, Paul has high regard for the law. He takes pain to defend the law. Paul's argument is that the law, while not bad, is incomplete and never intended to replace faith. The trouble with the Galatians was they thought that keeping the Law would save them, when all that the law could do was to expose their sins so that they would admit their need of a Saviour. The law cannot impart eternal life, for "if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law." (v 21)

"But" says Paul as he begins verse 22, emphasising the point that righteousness cannot be obtained by the law. "The Scripture imprisoned everything under sin"—including Covid-19. The Scripture is the court beyond which there is no appeal. The Scriptures tell us the bad news and then declare the good news of the gospel of grace, of God's power and above all, of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, we can believe in the Scriptures; it is the infallible, inspired, inerrant, eternal Word of God. Here we have the assurance of eternal life in Christ, as we place our faith in Him. Let us therefore read, mark, learn, inwardly digest, and apply all the treasures found in God's precious Word.

## Prayer

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Dear God, thank You for being my Heavenly Father. Thank You for Your wonderful words in the Scriptures and for the assurance of sins forgiven and eternal salvation in Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Help me to appreciate Your Word for what it truly is. I now know that this is Your Living Word for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Action

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If it isn't your daily practice yet, begin making it a habit to read God's Word daily. Do not try to skip difficult passages or those which are not your favourite. Ask God for His help to understand and receive His message. If need be, seek help from a friend.

*Rt Rev Datuk Danald Ak Jute  
Bishop of Kuching (Sarawak and Brunei Darussalam)*

# For 40 days, Being Tempted By the Devil

---

6 March • First Sunday in Lent

Luke 4:1-13

**4** And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup>for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” <sup>5</sup>And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup>and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” <sup>8</sup>And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

“‘You shall worship the Lord your God,  
and him only shall you serve.’”

<sup>9</sup>And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,  
to guard you,’

<sup>11</sup>And

“‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

<sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” <sup>13</sup>And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

# Meditation

---

Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness for forty days. He made it to the end which then turned out to be the climax. The devil tried to tempt Him three times with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of this life. Yet Lord Jesus identified every single plot of the devil and conquered them all.

At the first round when Jesus was facing hunger and physical need, the devil challenged Him to turn stones into bread to meet His physical need. Like the Lord, are we then able to identify the plot of the devil without falling into his temptation of overly relying on ourselves, instead of trusting God for provision?

Then, while Jesus was still suffering from hunger, the devil asked Jesus to bow down to him for earthly bliss. Are we clearly aware of, like the Lord, that we are to seek to obey the will of the Father, instead of pursuing material things that are visible?

Finally, as Jesus stood firm in serving God alone, the devil challenged Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple to prove God's protection for His Son. Can we then believe the Word of God in the Bible, as firmly as Jesus did, without the need to be convinced, so as to be spared from falling into tempting God?

Jesus overcame all the temptations of the devil by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. We all face such temptations every day, but fail many times. The devil makes use of it to attack our faith, making us doubt our identity as God's children, questioning God's love or wondering if God still favours us His children. The devil's purpose is to plant the evil of unbelief in our hearts so as to turn us away from our merciful God and our salvation.

Therefore, as children of God, let us always remember that God has already declared to us at our baptism that we are His children by Christ through faith, not by our works. He has given us the Holy Spirit to testify with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16). As we are already united with Jesus, His victory becomes ours. Amen.

## Prayer

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Father God, give me faith to look steadfastly to Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, for all that He has accomplished. I am sure that because He has overcome temptations, I will also have victory in Him. In the holy name of Lord Jesus I pray. Amen.

## Action

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When we face the temptations of the devil, we can confidently say to him, “Get behind me, Satan. I am baptised, united to Jesus, a child of God. In Him, and by His victory, we too have victory.”

*Bishop Lu Guan Hoe  
Bishop, Lutheran Church in Singapore*

(Source: Translated from Chinese Lenten Devotions 2022)

# You Shall Fear Your God: I Am the LORD

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7 March • Monday of the First Week in Lent

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

**19** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

<sup>11</sup>“You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. <sup>12</sup>You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>“You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. <sup>14</sup>You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour. <sup>16</sup>You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbour: I am the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>“You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you incur sin because of him. <sup>18</sup>You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

## Meditation

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Leviticus 19 is a call to moral holiness; more specifically, how God’s people must relate to others in ways that will always honour Him.

“I am the Lord” is reiterated at the end of every other verse (Leviticus 19:2, 12, 14, 16, 18) to emphasise the fact that we, who are called by His name, need to have reverence (fear) for the Lord and be holy because the Lord our God, the Creator of all creation, is holy.

However, with each passing instruction in Leviticus, we notice that it gets progressively challenging. Do not steal, do not lie, do not oppress, etc., are commandments that most believers think they have no issues adhering to. But to control our tongues, be authentic with restorative conversations and not bear hatred or grudges in our hearts against others, etc., seem to require a higher level of righteousness that calls for total obedience, submission, and humility. Now, before we hastily conclude that it is impossible for anyone to be holy, let us revisit how Jesus overcame the enemy’s taunting in the wilderness.

From yesterday’s scripture passage, we read that the Son of God, **when fully man**, *chose* to clothe Himself with a level of holiness and Word-based righteousness that honoured God, despite being physically weak in the flesh from 40 days of fasting. Do note that Jesus *intentionally chose* to live a sacrificial life that honoured and fulfilled the will of His Heavenly Father above His personal needs.

My friends, no more excuses that “I am only human.” If we are truly willing, it is possible to live a consecrated life in reverence of a holy God. A surrendered life that recognises and embraces the fact that it is no longer about the self, but Christ who lives in us.

We need to remember that the call to holiness is a call of love. God wants us to be holy so that we will never be separated from Him ever again. Since a holy God



cannot co-exist with sin, we have been encouraged to “make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; [for] without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

Hence, “I am the Lord your God” is a reminder that obeying God’s instructions does not mean mindless submission to a set of written rules but a relational obedience, in response to a loving God who is holy.

Therefore, if we have been distracted, our rightful response as Christians is to set things right by repenting and realigning ourselves back to what God desires of us. Remember this—a holy people of God will always seek to build God-honouring relationships with all people, so that God’s love can be experienced in real and tangible ways.

Be holy, for the Lord our God is not just a God of love but a God who is holy.

## Prayer

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Heavenly Father, You are truly a holy God worthy of all praises. May the empowerment of Your Holy Spirit enable us to live a consecrated life so that Your holy name is always honoured, lifted, and glorified. May Your joy be our strength and Your love, our devotion in fulfilling our destiny and purpose as salt of the earth and light of the world. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

## Action

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Read 1 Peter 1:13-25.

1. How have I been living my life as a child of God?  
Have I been true to what my heavenly Father desires of me?

2. Have I been living in reverence to a holy God, aligning my thoughts, words, and actions accordingly?
3. Have I been dying to self, allowing the Holy Spirit to live through me so that I rightly bear the name of God?
4. What can I do today that the “old” me would not do? Is there someone I need to reach out to today?

*Rev Dr Edwin Wong  
Pastor-in-Charge  
Christ Methodist Church*

# Your Kingdom Come, Your Will be Done

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8 March • Tuesday of the First Week in Lent

Matthew 6:7-15

<sup>7</sup>“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup>Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

<sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread,

<sup>12</sup>and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

<sup>14</sup>For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup>but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

## Meditation

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**“Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” - Mt 6:10**

In history we have read that earthly kingdoms rise and fall. Nothing is permanent in this world. Political turbulence, famine, peace unrest always keep the universe worrying.

In this clouded world, as we pray “Your Kingdom come” in the Lord’s Prayer, what could it mean for us. We know that the Kingdom of God is where Jesus is the King and we are the believers who have exercised our free will to come under His Lordship. Jesus at His trial declared to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (Jn 18:36). This prescribes that the Kingdom of God for now is the rule of God in the hearts of His people.

When Jesus began His ministry, He preached, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel.” A response is needed for us to enter God’s Kingdom. The gateway to His Kingdom is to repent from our sins, believe in Him for salvation and turn to God. Unless we experience this individually, it is in vain when we say this prayer. When we come under His Lordship, under His reign, submitting to His rule in our hearts, we become heirs in His Kingdom. We need to walk upright as citizens with the help of the Holy Spirit.

“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” demonstrates that God’s will is perfectly done in Heaven but not on earth. The world without Christ cannot know or do His will. How about us? Christ came to this world to accomplish His Father’s will. After accepting our Lord, it should be our desire to constantly do His will. Most people seek after personal profit and pleasure. They have no concern for the will of God. But our Lord expects us to know Him and submit to His will.

As we read Daniel 3:17-18, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were determined to do the will of God. They

had no struggle making that decision. Even though their lives were at risk when asked to bow down to the image of gold that Nebuchadnezzar had built, they knew what they ought to do and they did it. Their response displayed their loyalty to God and submission to His will. Let us also commit ourselves to do His will daily.

## Prayer

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Heavenly Father, I pray that You rule my heart. Help me walk in Your perfect way with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Action

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How do I ensure that my heart is ruled by God? What purposeful commitments do I need to make today to seek the will of the Lord?

*Rev Philip S Abraham  
President  
Emmanuel Tamil Annual Conference*

# God Saw What They Did, How They Turned From Their Evil Way

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9 March • Wednesday of the First Week in Lent

Jonah 3:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

<sup>6</sup>The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup>but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

## Meditation

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The book of Jonah begins with a rebellious prophet who refused to obey God, boarded a ship and sailed the opposite direction (1:1-3). God sent a great wind,

causing a mighty tempest that threatened to shipwreck. The mariners and everyone onboard were fearful and desperately called on their gods to save them, except Jonah who was found sleeping peacefully in the lower deck (1:4-6). Jonah confessed that he was the cause of the great storm, and great fear gripped everyone. He told them that the only way to stop the shipwreck was to throw him into the sea. But these mariners did not want to commit homicide, rowed harder towards shore, but failed. They asked God for forgiveness before throwing Jonah overboard. The sea calmed down and everyone onboard *feared the Lord exceedingly* and worshipped Him! (1:7-16). God used the rebellious prophet and the raging tempest to bring the people from the worst ship experience to a worship experience with *the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land*.

Next, God sent a great fish and it swallowed up Jonah. He stayed in the fish belly three days and three nights (1:17) and he prayed to God (2:1-9). God used a great fish to bring Jonah from rebellion to repentance and renewal of his vows to God, and he concluded his prayer with a declaration of hope, *“Salvation belongs to the LORD!”*

**God is gracious and merciful.** God commanded the fish to spit Jonah onto dry land (2:10). *Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time* (3:1-2). Jonah obeyed, *arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD* (3:3). He preached only one simple message, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” The whole city of Nineveh *believed God*. The king proclaimed a city-wide prayer and fasting, and in repentance and humility both men and animals clothed with sackcloth and sat on ashes (3:4-9). When God saw what they did, He relented of the disaster

(1:10)! *A humble and repentant heart* God would not reject (Psalm 51:17).

**God is impartial.** Jonah refused to preach to the city of Nineveh because he knew that God being gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love would spare the people, who were enemy of Israel, from the disaster. People are created by God and regardless whether we like them or not. God is the God of all people. Peter said, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). We demonstrate the character of our Heavenly Father when we love, pray and do good to our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48).

**God is not willing that anyone should perish.** God had great compassion for the people of Nineveh who were morally lost (4:11). Jonah might be angry but the angels in heaven rejoiced that day over the whole city of Nineveh who repented (Luke 15:10).

## Prayer

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Lord, if You would spare the whole wicked city of Nineveh when they humbled themselves, and prayed and sought Your face and turned from their wicked ways, how much more You would hear us who are called by Your Name. The world and even our city is going through much distress because of the sins of self-sufficiency, self-dependence and self-centredness. We repent before You and humbly confess that without You we can do nothing. We need Your intervention. Forgive our sins and heal our land. As I call upon Your name, Jesus. Amen!



# Action

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Are you running from God, refusing to do what He wants you to do, or rejecting His calling in your life? God gave Jonah a second chance, He can do the same for you. Are there people whom you find hard to love or witness to? God can do the same for you as He did for Nineveh.

Ashes is a symbol of distress, grief, repentance (3:6; Daniel 9:3) and humility before God (Genesis 18:27). When you turn to God in “ashes”, hope will arise. God who is gracious, merciful and impartial will surely give you a crown of beauty for ashes and oil of joy for mourning (Isaiah 61:3).

*Rev Dr Chia Beng Hock  
Senior Pastor  
Bethel Assembly of God*

# My Thoughts Are Not Your Thoughts

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10 March • Thursday of the First Week in Lent

Isaiah 55:6-9

<sup>6</sup>“Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
call upon him while he is near;  
<sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion  
on him,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
<sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
<sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

## Meditation

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Since the dawn of the Enlightenment, humanity has tried to declare independence from God. The assumption is that we do not need God to help us make sense of the world or to help us find solutions to the complex challenges we face in our time. What we need, we are told, is to depend on human ingenuity and with the help of human reasoning, we can progress without having to look to God for guidance and wisdom. Dominant ideologies in our post-enlightenment world that influenced the thoughts of the academia, political thinking, pop culture and even the liberal religious institutions, are particular in the Euro-North American world. They now impact other parts of the world, do not have God in their thought, moral and life-style choices. If God is mentioned, He is often ridiculed by the militant atheists. Sometimes God is given only a cursory

consideration by those who still harbour certain degree of religiosity.

Sadly despite the optimism of the defenders of worldviews without God, the world is in a mess. Many wars have been fought; nations against nations; tribes against tribes. Millions of people are homeless as victims of war and famine. More money have been ploughed into producing sophisticated weapons to destroy life and properties, than money spent in alleviating poverty. A human-centric world has brought about massive destruction to the natural environment, depleting forests and pushing animals and plants to extinction. In morality, the traditional idea of marriage and family has been assaulted and reshaped by people who insist on their right to choose and impose on others what they want. They call such moves “progressive” when it looks more like a regressive move—a return to some form of tribalistic customs; a form of the law of the jungle.

The world has moved too far to a human-centred perspective of life and in so doing, lost sight of God. To be sure being religious does not guarantee a trouble-free life in our fallen world. Sometimes people still kill people in the name of “gods.” There is always the need to use our mind; to be able to reason; to think God’s thought and to discern God’s will and way. But our mind must be placed in the service of God and not to replace God which a human-centric sinful world has attempted to do.

It is not easy to steer through the labyrinth of our fallen world. It would be foolish to do so using only human-centric navigational tools which have often ended up—to use a phrase borrowed from Ecclesiastes—as a futile pursuit aptly described as a “chasing after the wind.” To have a more wholesome and holistic perspective of life,

we have to “seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near” as we engage our mind and be more critical of those thoughts which sidelined God. What we need to do is to return to a more God-centric perspective.

Use the mind, but use it for the service of His Kingdom to glorify God. He is after all our Creator whose thoughts are higher than human thoughts, no matter how smart a human being may think s/he is.

## Prayer

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O Lord, our God. You have commanded us to love You not only with our heart, our soul and our strength, but also with our mind. Forgive us if we have neglected the discipleship of our mind or if we have used our mind without reference to You or reverence for You. Forgive us if we have thought too highly of ourselves, assuming that we can out think You. Instead of neglecting our mind, or being too pretentious, O Lord, whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts, humble us and help us to use our mind to serve You and to glorify Your Holy name. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

## Action

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How to think God-centric thoughts without being too presumptuous? Perhaps we can start with a right attitude that although we cannot out think God, we should still cultivate the discipleship of our mind. Pick up some good books, for self and group studies, to deepen Godly thinking. If you need help, start with the works of Christian thinkers like Tom Wright, Marva Dawn, Tim Keller, Samuel Wells, Alister McGrath, Stanley Hauerwas and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

# Walk... (be) Led... Live By the Spirit

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11 March • Friday of the First Week in Lent

Galatians 5:16-26

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

<sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

## Meditation

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Today's passage is a familiar one about Christian life in God's Kingdom.

It is a reminder that in the world we live in now, there are many temptations and snares. Some are easy to spot—anger, strife, drunkenness. Some are sometimes easy to hide—impurity, envy. Others we often may not even acknowledge—jealousy, rivalry, division. But they are all difficult to resist: anger can overwhelm us suddenly.

We can actively dissent and create division believing we are standing for truth against heresy. Many of us have already lapsed into idolising money and power.

One thing seems certain—a society where people worked out all the desires of the flesh listed in this passage above does not sound like a nice place to be in.

But the apostle Paul says there is an alternative to “those who belong to Christ Jesus”! We are supposed to have crucified the flesh. We are supposed to walk by the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit in us is shown by the fruit of the Spirit. Since ‘fruit’ is in the singular, and not plural, I believe the fruit of the Spirit is love. What is love? It is joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (In the original Greek of the New Testament, there was no punctuation.) We cannot be all this apart from the Spirit, which is why they are the ‘fruit of the Spirit’. Only if we are like this, then the ‘law’ has no hold on us.

Now, we have to be deliberate and mindful about producing this fruit in us, which is why Paul says in verse 25 to “keep in step with the Spirit”. The fruit is not produced without our involvement. After all, you just have to look in churches to find people without the fruit of the Spirit, practicing works of the flesh. We are all tempted by the flesh, and some of us yield too easily and frequently.

But one other thing also seems certain to me and that is a society where people who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit listed in today’s passage sounds a lot like heaven.

What about you? Have you decided to be filled with the Spirit and be led by the Spirit, or do you still gratify the

desires of the flesh? Do you believe that since we are free from the law then we do not have to live by the Spirit?

It is not easy to allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit. But I think Christians who belong to Jesus should make sure the fruit of the Spirit is clear in our lives for others to see. We have to put in more effort to keep in step with the Spirit, to live by the Spirit.

## Prayer

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Dear Jesus, thank You from freeing us from sin and death, and giving us new life. Help us to live out this new life as Your loving people, putting aside old worldly ways to live as You would have us live. Help us to live by Spirit, so that others may see that we are Your people and that a new Kingdom awaits! Amen.

## Action

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Spend a moment to think about whether others can see the fruit of the Spirit in you. What work of the flesh are you still gratifying? What can you improve on?

*Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun  
Associate Dean and Lecturer in Church History  
Trinity Theological College*

# Be Perfect As Your Heavenly Father is Perfect

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12 March • Saturday of the First Week in Lent

Matthew 5:43-48

<sup>43</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup>You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## Meditation

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As we continue our journey towards the cross today, how do we make sense of this Scripture passage from Matthew 5:43-48. What did Jesus mean when He exhorts us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect? How can we frail, sinful human beings be perfect?

The word “therefore” (in verse 48) provides the key to our understanding of how Jesus envisages us to be perfect. It links the thought in verse 48 to what Jesus has revealed in previous verses, where He encouraged His listeners to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. He reminds them to not only love their neighbours, but to love their enemies as well.

Just as the heavenly Father loved us all perfectly, even while we were yet sinners, sending His Son Jesus to die for us on the cross, so too, we are called to love



others perfectly, even our enemies. John Stott, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, sums it up by writing, “We are called to be perfect in love, that is, to love even our enemies with the merciful, inclusive love of God.”

How do we do that though? The parallel passage in Luke 6:27 gives us some handles. Luke 6:27 exhorts us to love our enemies, by doing good to those who hate us, by blessing those who curse us, and by praying for those who mistreat us. We are to do good, to bless and to pray for our enemies.

Let us take up our cross today and follow Jesus, to love our enemies, by doing good, by blessing and by praying for them.

## Prayer

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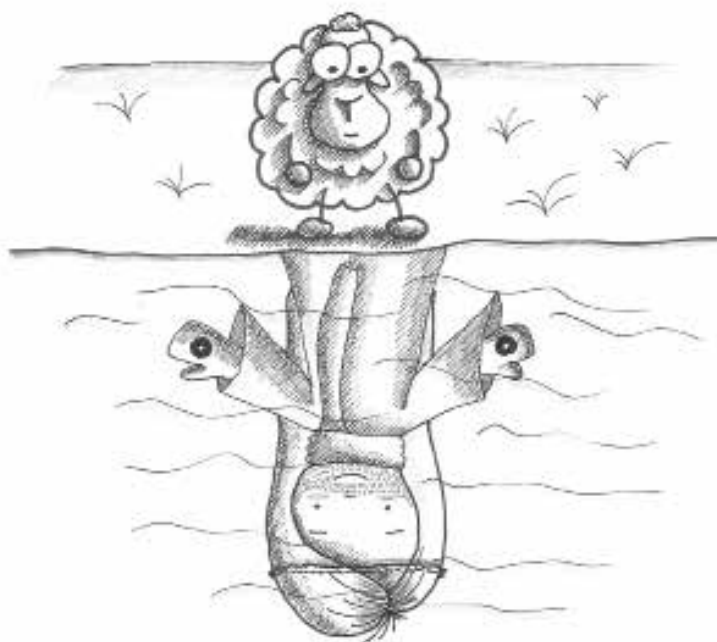
Father-in-Heaven, empower us by Your Holy Spirit today, to love our enemies as You have loved us. Grant us wisdom to know how we might do good, how we might bless and how we ought to pray for them. Grant us the grace that is sufficient for us, to lay aside our prejudices, so that we may truly be able to be perfect as You are perfect, in loving, even our enemies. In Jesus name, amen.

## Action

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Today, think of one way you can do good and be a blessing to your enemy. Begin now, by praying a prayer of blessing for them.

*Rev Benjamin Lee  
Pastor-in-Charge  
Toa Payoh Methodist Church*



**AS HE IS** *so are we*  
*in this world*

*1 John 4:17*

# A Searching God

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13 March • Second Sunday in Lent

Jeremiah 17:5-10

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man  
and makes flesh his strength,  
whose heart turns away from the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>He is like a shrub in the desert,  
and shall not see any good come.

He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,  
in an uninhabited salt land.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,  
whose trust is the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>He is like a tree planted by water,  
that sends out its roots by the stream,  
and does not fear when heat comes,  
for its leaves remain green,  
and is not anxious in the year of drought,  
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

<sup>9</sup>The heart is deceitful above all things,  
and desperately sick;  
who can understand it?

<sup>10</sup>“I the LORD search the heart  
and test the mind,  
to give every man according to his ways,  
according to the fruit of his deeds.

## Meditation

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Anyone who has ever lost or misplaced something will know a sense of anxiety, looking in every place, dark spaces, even retracing steps until the item is found.

In the early 90s, my wife and I, while serving in Russia, went to an outdoor market with our two children, and my wife's parents, who were visiting us.

Like every good parent, we were holding our children's hands whilst walking around, until we needed to help our parents buy some winter shoes.

Whilst helping them, we unconsciously let go of our children's hands. When we had made the purchase, we realised that one child was with us, but the other had gone. The market was very large with hundreds and hundreds of people everywhere.

After a quick prayer, we ran up and down all the aisles with such dread, only to find him minutes later standing and looking at the toys on a stall. He had no fear, he wasn't lost, we were the ones with the issue.

Life has a way of causing us to turn from what we know is right and appropriate to seeking out alternative ways, luring us away from the safe, to the unknown, to the desires of the heart.

Jeremiah 17:5-10 reminds us that the Lord is always concerned for us, our tendency to wander, to get ourselves lost when life goes through mundane or challenging times, even though we feel we are safe.

There is something warming in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah; though God knows we are weak, lose focus, at times get bored with what we have, or are doing, our Lord helps refine our thoughts and actions by bringing to our recollection those things that need to be handed over to Him.

Praise be to God for His searching and finding/revealing care.

## Prayer

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Father God, forgive us for the times we have wandered off from holding onto You, and Your will and purpose for our lives. We recognise that the allures of this world sometimes take our focus off what You are doing for our good. We have struggled as a world through Covid-19, and in this time of Lent, seek Your forgiveness and help so our faith and trust in You will grow stronger every day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Action

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Establish a regular pattern of reading God's word and prayer to stay closely connected to Him.

*Colonel Rodney S. Walters  
Territorial Commander  
The Salvation Army  
Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand*

# To Us O LORD Belongs Open Shame... Because We Have Sinned Against You

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14 March • Monday of the Second Week in Lent

Daniel 9:4-10

<sup>4</sup>I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>5</sup>we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. <sup>6</sup>We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup>To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. <sup>8</sup>To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. <sup>9</sup>To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him <sup>10</sup>and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

## Meditation

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The prophet Jeremiah, many years previously, had declared that the people of Judah would suffer exile in Babylon for seventy years, after which Babylon itself would fall (Jer 25:12-13). Babylon did indeed fall, and Daniel remembered Jeremiah's prophecy (Dan 9:1-2). Strikingly, he did not respond with praise ('Hallelujah! Jeremiah got it right!'), but sought God in prayer (9:3).

The first part of Daniel's prayer (9:4-10) is a confession: God is great, God is faithful, God keeps his word (v 4);

but Israel had repeatedly sinned against him ('sinned... done wrong... acted wickedly... rebelled... turning aside from your commandments', v 5). God sent prophets to call his people back, but they ignored them (v 6). So God sent the people into exile, treating his people's rebellion with the seriousness it deserved (vv 7, 9). Israel, leaders and people alike, had ignored God's word; they were facing the consequences.

Lord, we have no excuse; Lord, we should have listened to You; Lord, we are in disgrace because we ignored You. That is the burden of today's text. Daniel's words reflect a clear vision of God's character, and a clear sense of Israel's obstinacy and sinfulness.

Daniel's sincere confession should raise an echo in our own hearts. It should lead us to reflect on those times when we have let God down, have disobeyed God, acted treacherously, deceitfully and brought dishonour on God's name—both we and (sometimes) the churches to which we belong.

But that is not where Daniel 9 left things: Daniel moved on from confession to petition ('Oh Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive', v 19). God heard his prayer; he received a word that he himself is 'greatly loved' (v 23). Let us, then, have no hesitation in confessing our sins, trusting that God will hear and forgive.

## Prayer

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Lord, forgive us for so persistently falling short of Your glory, for those occasions when, either through ignorance or through wilful disobedience, we have dishonoured Your name by what we have done. We trust in Your mercy: please heal us and give us a fresh desire to walk in Your ways.

# Action

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Prayer should be reflected in action. If, in confessing sin, you become aware of having wronged someone else, what practical steps can you take to put the matter right?

*Dr Philip Satterthwaite  
Lecturer in OT and Biblical Interpretation  
Biblical Graduate School of Theology*



# Whoever Feeds on This Bread Will Live Forever

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15 March • Tuesday of the Second Week in Lent

John 6:52-59

<sup>52</sup>The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” <sup>53</sup>So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup>Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup>For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup>Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup>As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup>Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

## Meditation

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The above passage reminds us of the Marburg Colloquy (Oct 1529) where the two leading Reformers Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli discussed passionately the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion from their understanding of the Bible. Despite their different understanding of it, this meeting showed clearly how each of them respected the authority of God’s Word in their life and practice.

The Lutheran Confessions helpfully also reminded us from this passage that:

*“61. There is, therefore, a two-fold eating of the flesh of Christ, one spiritual, of which Christ treats especially John 6:54, which occurs in no other way than with the Spirit*

*and faith, in the preaching and meditation of the Gospel, as well as in the Lord's Supper, and by itself is useful and salutary, and necessary at all times for salvation to all Christians; without which spiritual participation also the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary, but even injurious and damning [a cause of condemnation]". -Book of Concord, Solid Declarations Article VII.*

Jesus said that this spiritual eating of the "bread that came down from heaven" is necessary for life and anticipates the sacramental eating for forgiveness of our sins. Without forgiveness of sins there is no resurrection and no life, as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Only through faith in Christ crucified for us do people have what they really need for life, a life with God that earthly food and drink cannot provide. In Singapore some people say that "they eat to live and they live to eat." The eating culture here is strong. We should share with them the spiritual eating also, so that they truly have life with God.

## Prayer

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Lord, as I meditate on Your Word, grant me the faith to feed spiritually on the bread from Heaven that I may live, because Christ rose from the dead and lives for us. Let me with true confidence rests in the Word of the Gospel in all troubles and temptations that I encounter daily in life.

## Action

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Invite someone you know over for a nice meal and also share the importance of spiritual eating of the bread from Heaven. Share how 'Man shall not live on bread

alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Mt 4:4)

*Rev Martin Yee  
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Lutheran Church in Singapore*

# Still Looking to Jesus

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16 March • Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent

Hebrews 2:10-18

<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup>For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, <sup>12</sup>saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

<sup>13</sup>And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

<sup>14</sup>Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup>and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. <sup>16</sup>For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

# Meditation

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In difficult times like this, we thank God for His encouraging word.

God has given “a word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22) to encourage the Jewish Christians who were badly treated by fellow-Jews for abandoning Judaism, their ancestral religion. They were scorned as traitors for following Jesus. I recall a mother and her five young children who were driven out of their home by her angry husband. She had believed in Jesus and no longer worshipped the family idols.

The writer begins with “For” (2:10) to explain Jesus’ suffering and death: God deemed it fitting to make Jesus, the founder of our salvation, perfect through suffering. In travail of pain and triumph over the devil and death, Jesus revealed His perfections as a human and as the Son of God, our Saviour.

As God’s children, our lives are united with Jesus Christ. He who sanctifies and we who are sanctified share a common tie. We are members of the family of God! Thus Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. In fact, in good times or in adversity, Jesus makes three declarations on who He is and how He serves the Father, encouraging us to follow His example:

1. Joyful witness: “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”
2. Persevering faith: “I will put my trust in him.”
3. Loving fellowship with God’s children: “Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

## Prayer

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Lord Jesus, in these days of disorder, disease and death, make me more like You. Break me and mould me: O To Be Like Thee! Full of compassion, loving, forgiving, tender and kind; Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, seeking the wandering sinner to find. Amen.

## Action

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Be a joyful witness. Exercise persevering faith. Be a blessing to the needy and to brothers and sisters in God's family.

*Rev Dr Michael Shen  
Principal Emeritus  
Singapore Bible College*

# His Delight is in the Law of the LORD

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17 March • Thursday of the Second Week in Lent

Psalm 1:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Blessed is the man  
    who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
    nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
<sup>2</sup>but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
    and on his law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup>He is like a tree  
    planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
    and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.

<sup>4</sup>The wicked are not so,  
    but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement,  
    nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;  
<sup>6</sup>for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked will perish.

## Meditation

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Psalm 1:1-6 describes the life of the blessed man who meditates upon the Word. The psalm uses the image of a tree by the river to capture the dynamics of a Word-centred life. He is like a tree planted by the streams of water. His roots go deep into the ground. He anchors himself by the river and laps up all the water and nutrients needed to survive and thrive. Therefore, the tree produces great fruit and weathers every season. Its leaf does not wither. A life rooted in the Word produces

Christians, who have joy in God in every season of life. Even in suffering, loss, disappointment, or persecution, the Christian rooted in the Word of God will still have spiritual health and will not cease in fruitfulness. One who longs for more growth in God must sink his roots further into God's Word. The wicked, on the other hand, demonstrate that life apart from the meditation of God's Word brings death and ruin.

## Prayer

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O God, we thank You for Your Word which sustains us in the midst of challenges and calamities including the pandemic the world is going through. Help us to continue to take delight in Your Word so that we can experience that life in all its fulness which You have come to offer to all. Amen.

## Action

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Spend time meditating on God's Word and derive strength to face life, its ups and downs. Also try to be of help to those who are suffering due to the pandemic by giving them hope in the midst of their despair.

*Rev Dr M. Mani Chacko  
General Secretary  
The Bible Society of India*



# Today If You Hear His Voice

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18 March • Friday of the Second Week in Lent

Hebrews 3:7-19

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

<sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

<sup>9</sup>where your fathers put me to the test  
and saw my works for forty years.

<sup>10</sup>Therefore I was provoked with that generation,  
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;  
they have not known my ways.’

<sup>11</sup>As I swore in my wrath,  
‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

<sup>12</sup>Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup>But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup>For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. <sup>15</sup>As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

<sup>16</sup>For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? <sup>17</sup>And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup>And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup>So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

## Meditation

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When I was a young parent, the thought of my children missing key developmental milestones would send me into a mild panic. I scrambled to see if there was any way we could intervene, so that growth could continue.

I believe that is the response of the author of this letter. The church he was writing to was growing well, but now has hit stagnancy. Staying still means something is critically wrong.

In this passage, he compares the believers to the Israelites wandering in the desert. If they are not moving towards the promised land, then it means they are circling the drain. Sin is starting to take root, and it deceives us into thinking we are ok—when in reality, our hearts are hardening.

The only remedy out of this spiritual lethargy is to hear and obey the voice of Christ. The author commands the church to ‘exhort one another every day’ (v 13), so that none may fall away from the Living God.

I believe this must be the default view of the church. It is so easy for anyone’s foot to slip, for anyone to backslide. All need constant intervention. We need to preach the Word to one another daily—with all the means at our disposal. We long for everyone to keep moving forward, indeed for everyone to arrive at the promised rest.

My brother, my sister—Jesus bids us ‘Come!’. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

## Prayer

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Father in heaven, do not let sin deceive me. Do not let me fall into unbelief. Speak Your Word into my heart

through the voice of my brethren. Help me hold fast to the confidence I have in Christ. Amen.

## Action

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Friend, is it time to go back to church? Has the pandemic kept you away? Go to the place where you can once again hear His voice and be amongst His people.

*Rev Dr Dev Menon  
Pastor  
Zion Bishan Bible-Presbyterian Church*

# Father, I Have Sinned Against Heaven and Before You

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19 March • Saturday of the Second Week in Lent

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

<sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable:

<sup>11</sup>And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup>And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ <sup>20</sup>And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup>And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup>But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup>but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup>And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

## Meditation

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Luke the Gospel writer was an early Christian believer with a big heart for the lost, least, last, and left out in society. As a disciple of Jesus, he tried to capture for the church important lessons that Jesus taught about relating to them.

One lesson is found in today’s bible passage. Luke 15 comprises three parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Three ideas repeat themselves in each of the three parables. First, all the parables begin with a single lost item/individual. Second, they all include an active search/wait for the lost. Third, they all conclude with rejoicing when the lost item/individual is no longer lost but found.

This three ideas pattern is broken in the third parable. When the lost son came to his senses and returned, the father’s active longing and waiting turned to active

rejoicing. But this is where the difference between the three parables is contrasted. The older brother strongly objected to the celebration and didn't want any part of it.

His reason revealed what was at the core of his heart and mind: "Celebration and commendation is reserved only for those who strictly observed duties and commands!" At the core of his being, there was no room for the father's eye for errant, repentant sinners. There was thus no alignment between the core of the father's and the older son's thinking and being.

Who was the message of the three parables directed at? Verses 1-3 tell us that the three parables were meant to address the detached and self-righteous institution that its religious gatekeepers had made it into. Contrary to popular understanding, the main message of Luke 15 is not that God seeks out the lost and rejoices when they return. That is part of the message, but the main message is for members and gatekeepers of religious bodies not to be cold and unwelcoming towards repentant sinners when they return to their heavenly Father!

Today's repentant sinners can take many forms. When they enter our communities to meet our Heavenly Father, what sort of attitudes will they sense? Will they sense the Father's heart or will they sense the displeasure and disdain of the older brother?

## Prayer

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Lord, help us in the church to recognise our own unworthiness before You. Rescue us from our self-righteousness. Put in our lips welcoming and hospitable

words when the lost, least, last, and left out enter our Christian communities to seek after You.

## Action

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Let's pray for God to do a deep work in "lost sons" who are not ready to return. As congregations, let's also be ready to love, welcome, and celebrate "lost sons" who enter our midst.

*Dr Calvin Chong  
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Singapore Bible College*

# They Were Written Down For Our Instruction

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20 March • Third Sunday in Lent

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

<sup>1</sup>For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup>Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup>Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” <sup>8</sup>We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup>We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup>nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>11</sup>Now these things happened to them as an example, **but they were written down for our instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

## Meditation

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The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the death of a few million people around the world. It has been a tough and challenging period for people across all strata of society. Such dark and difficult times can render us vulnerable to temptations. Trials may justify us going



soft on ourselves and making excuses such as: *give me a break and let me relax (indulge), or no one will know, I am working from home.*

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul cited the privileged forefathers who experienced God's guidance with the "cloud," God's power as they were "passing through the sea," and God's provision of "spiritual food and drink"—yet God was not pleased with them, and they perished in the wilderness. They "desired evil," were "idolatrous," "indulged in sexual immorality," "put Christ to the test," and "grumbled" in opposition to God. The overconfident Corinthians were warned that miracles did not guarantee arrival at the Promised land. Temptations that are "common to man" continue to persist in whichever era, even in a pandemic. As privileged and confident as some of us may feel, we are to "take heed lest we fall." The danger of being "disqualified for the prize" and "losing the crown" (1 Cor 9) is very real. But our God is faithful, He will make a way out. The question is, will we choose His way, and obey?

The miracles experienced by the Israelites—can also serve as a reminder of God's faithfulness in these times. Let's...

1. Seek and follow God's guidance—*just as the Israelites follow the cloud*
2. Trust in God's power to open a way when there seems to be no way—*as they passed through the sea*
3. Rely on His provision for all our needs—*just as they ate the spiritual food and drink.*

## Prayer

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Lord, help us to be discerning and alert to temptations.

We know You are faithful and we rely on You to provide a way out. Grant us strength of character to resist temptations and may our passion and love for You compel us to follow Your way.

## Action

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1. Identify areas of weakness in your life that may cause you to fall into temptations and sin.
2. Identify needs and burdens that may render you vulnerable to temptations.
3. Besides praying over these lists, share with someone you trust so that you can be held accountable.

*Rev Dominic Yeo  
Lead Pastor, Trinity Christian Centre  
General Superintendent, Assemblies of God of Singapore*

# Let Him Come... That He May Know That There is a Prophet in Israel

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21 March • Monday of the Third Week in Lent

2 Kings 5:1-15

<sup>1</sup>Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favour, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. <sup>2</sup>Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup>She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup>So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." <sup>5</sup>And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel."

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. <sup>6</sup>And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup>And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."

<sup>8</sup>But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." <sup>9</sup>So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup>And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." <sup>11</sup>But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave

his hand over the place and cure the leper. <sup>12</sup>Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup>But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" <sup>14</sup>So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

<sup>15</sup>Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant."

## Meditation

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This Bible story has an amazing cast of characters: a Syrian general, an Israelite servant-girl, two kings, a prophet and, above all, the God of Israel and the nations. The servant-girl is unnamed. Her master is Naaman, a famous general who is stricken with leprosy. He asks his king to approach his Israelite counterpart for help. The prophet is Elisha, the servant and successor of Elijah—both in the highest service of the ever-living God. Their story has timeless yet timely learning points for us.

1. **God's control over all events.** Through Naaman "God had given victory to Syria" (v 1) and was going to demonstrate His grace in healing his dreadful disease in an unexpected way. This God presides over the rise and fall of nations. When confronted with large-scale calamities as well as personal crises, our only help and hope is in such a God.

## **2. The general's condition and his servant's concern.**

What a contrast between great achievements and personal affliction—"a mighty man of valour but he was a leper" (v 1)! No matter what we may achieve, we are all afflicted by a disease more deadly than leprosy or other catastrophic diseases—not skin deep, but sin deep. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Yet Naaman's wife's servant-girl, a captive from neighbouring Israel, held out hope: "Would that my lord were with the prophet in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy" (v 3). God uses all kinds of individuals, young or old, to carry out His merciful plans. A young boy's packet lunch, presented to a Prophet greater than Elisha, would be multiplied to feed a multitude (Jn 6:1-14).

**3. A king's confusion and his prophet's call.** When Naaman applied for medical leave, his Syrian master asked his Israelite vassal ruler to cure Naaman. The Israelite king tore his robes in desperation: "Am I God?" (v 7). However, when Elisha heard of this, he called for Naaman to come to him "that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel" (v 8). When we are confronted by "many dangers, toils, and snares", how do we react? Like John Newton, let us turn to a God of "amazing grace" to save wretches like us. Turn to His Word, trust His promises, and wait for His provision.

**4. The prophet's command and the general's conversion.** Elisha didn't bother to meet Naaman and his splendid escort. He sent him a simple message: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean" (v 10). The way of salvation is so simple that even a child can understand

God's invitation to come to Him, turn from our selfish ways, and trust Him to cure our deadly disease.

This challenges human pride and preconceptions of salvation. Naaman went away angry and complained: "I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" (vv 11-12). However, his servants gently persuaded him to comply with the prophet's command—"according to the word of the man of God" (v 14). The result was not a magical cure but a miraculous conversion—"his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (v 14). Just as Naaman was cleansed by His faithful obedience to God's word, as he dipped himself in the waters of the River Jordan, so we can be forgiven and cleansed of our sins, by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus' finished work on the Cross, being washed in the blood of the Lamb (1 Jn 1:7-9).

**5. The general's confession and the prophet's contentment.** Naaman's conversion was expressed in his confession of faith and gratitude: "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant" (v 15). Elisha, however, refused to accept the lavish gifts. He was contented with God's provision. He foreshadowed the coming and commands of an infinitely greater Prophet, who taught His disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay" (Jesus, in Mt 10:7-8; in the King James Version, "...freely ye have received, freely give").

The Lord Jesus Christ also referred to Elijah's and Elisha's miraculous dealings with non-Israelites like a widow in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian to illustrate that His mission extended beyond Israel (Lk 4:24-27). The people in His hometown of Nazareth were offended by this message. In contrast, our risen Lord gives us His great commission to make disciples of all nations, and assures us that He is with us always until the end of the age (Mt 28:18-20). May we come to Him and go with Him, obeying this global commission.

## Prayer

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"Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not  
to rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea all I need, in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

(Charlotte Elliott).

## Action

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Just as you have freely received the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, so resolve today that you will make it freely available to others—by prayer lifting someone to God and listening for His guidance, by patience sharing the Gospel with that person, and then by partnership working within your church and through Christian organisations.

*Dr Ernest Chew  
Advisory Elder, Bethesda (Frankel Estate) Church  
Vice-President, The Bible Society of Singapore*



# My Food is to Do the Will of Him Who Sent Me and to Accomplish His Work

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22 March • Tuesday of the Third Week in Lent

John 4:5-42

<sup>5</sup>So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

<sup>7</sup>A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>(For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." <sup>17</sup>The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." <sup>19</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in

Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” <sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

<sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples came back. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” <sup>28</sup>So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup>“Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” <sup>30</sup>They went out of the town and were coming to him.

<sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” <sup>33</sup>So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup>Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.”

<sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

# Meditation

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The importance of food for human survival needs no argument. Thus, it is simply stating a biological fact that we are people who “eat to live”. But if we were to say that we “live to eat”, something altogether different is meant. The implication of the latter assertion is that eating food is central to our everyday activities.

Let us relate these remarks to Jesus’ statement, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (v 34). These “golden” words, as Charles Spurgeon once described them, were spoken by a travel-weary Jesus (so verse 6) to His returning disciples following His encounter with the woman of Samaria. The disciples who had earlier left Him to get provisions, were concerned that He had nothing to eat and were urging Him to take some food (see verses 31-33). But their kind offer was refused, with Jesus explaining that He had “food to eat” which they could not know anything about (verse 32).

How do we interpret Jesus’ statement? Obviously, Jesus was not talking about food *per se* but only using it to make some spiritual point. I offer the following suggestions:

1. The first is that doing God’s will is His primary concern, not food or any other thing. Jesus was willing to forgo physical refreshment for the sake of ministering to a spiritual need. Let us ask ourselves: is doing God’s will our primary concern in life?
2. The second point is that true fulfilment or satisfaction comes from doing God’s will. In Jesus’ case, it was not the approval of the masses but the joy of pleasing God that gave him satisfaction. Recall Jesus’ famous words, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4).

3. Lastly, in Jesus' profound statement the stress is on the imperative: "to do". He did not say "My food is to *know* the will of Him...", but "My food is to *do* the will of Him..." Is it not often the case that we concern ourselves to seeking to know God's will but when it is revealed, we fail to do what God requires?

## Prayer

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Dear God, help me to always want to do Your will as a matter of priority. For I know that it is in the doing of Your will that I shall find satisfaction and fulfilment. Deliver me from paying lip-service to the notion of pleasing You but then failing to do what You want me to do. Help me to desire to do God's will. For Christ's sake, I pray. Amen.

## Action

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Ask yourself this question: what is my 'food'? For Jesus, His food was to do the will of the Father. Take a few minutes to review your priorities in life. Ask if your priorities are in accordance with the Father's will, and whether they truly satisfy your innermost being. Reflect on and check yourself against these words, "I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread." (Job 23:12).

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*Dean*

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He had served as General Secretary of the Bible Society of Singapore, as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Singapore, and as a member of the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony. He studied at the universities of Durham, Tübingen and Edinburgh.

# For As the Loincloth Clings to the Waist of a Man...

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23 March • Wednesday of the Third Week in Lent

Jeremiah 13:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD to me, “Go and buy a linen loincloth and put it around your waist, and do not dip it in water.” <sup>2</sup>So I bought a loincloth according to the word of the LORD, and put it around my waist. <sup>3</sup>And the word of the LORD came to me a second time, <sup>4</sup>“Take the loincloth that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a cleft of the rock.” <sup>5</sup>So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. <sup>6</sup>And after many days the LORD said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the loincloth that I commanded you to hide there.” <sup>7</sup>Then I went to the Euphrates, and dug, and I took the loincloth from the place where I had hidden it. And behold, the loincloth was spoiled; it was good for nothing.

<sup>8</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>9</sup>“Thus says the LORD: Even so will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing. <sup>11</sup>For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the LORD, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.

## Meditation

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“Go and buy a linen loincloth and put it around your waist and do not dip it into water...” I am sure Jeremiah did not know nor understand why the Lord wanted him to do it but he did as told. I can imagine his pride as he

wore it around his waist and paraded around with it. Imagine his surprise when the Lord commanded him to take the loincloth to the river and hide it in the crevice there. Again although not knowing nor understanding the reason, he did as he was commanded.

After many days, the word of the Lord came to him again and commanded him to retrieve the loincloth he had hidden. Imagine how he felt when he saw that the beautiful, expensive loincloth was ruined.

I can imagine him thinking “what a waste...such an expensive and beautiful loincloth now ruined”. The Lord explained. Israel was created and redeemed to be His pride and glory but they chose to go their own way and went after other gods rather than the Lord. Now, like that loincloth, they are dirty, ugly and useless. Fit only to be thrown away or burned.

Do you feel a little of what the Lord felt as He looks at the people He created, wallowing in the sin and pleasure of this world and destroying themselves in the process? He desires that they see the errors of their ways and seek Him.

Do you realise that like the linen loincloth, God had paid for your redemption with the death of Jesus on the Cross? Are you going to remain with the Lord as His pride and glory or would you abandon Him for the pleasures of this world?

## Prayer

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Lord, we know that You are not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. I pray for \_\_\_\_\_ that he/she may come to the saving

knowledge of Jesus Christ. That he/she may be Your pride and glory, Your beloved child in whom You are well pleased. In Jesus' name, amen.

Or

Lord, thank You for paying the penalty for my sins on the Cross with Your own life. Forgive me for pursuing success and pleasure instead of Your pleasure. Help me to resist the temptations of this world. I truly desire to be pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Action

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1. Pray for yourself or your loved ones. Ask God to help you be light and salt to those around you.
2. Make time to connect with your loved ones. Give them a call or invite them for a meal. Take them, they are precious to God and to you.

*Rev Terry Kee  
Jurong Christian Church (Lutheran)*

# Whoever is Not With Me is Against Me

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24 March • Thursday of the Third Week in Lent

Luke 11:14-23

<sup>14</sup>Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marvelled. <sup>15</sup>But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," <sup>16</sup>while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. <sup>17</sup>But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. <sup>18</sup>And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. <sup>19</sup>And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. <sup>20</sup>But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. <sup>21</sup>When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; <sup>22</sup>but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his spoil. <sup>23</sup>Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

## Meditation

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The Lord Jesus is the Man who cannot be ignored. Indeed, some in this biblical passage, marvelled at His power to drive demons out. Others accused Him of being linked with the powers of darkness (Beelzebul, the Lord of the flies). Others wanted to test Him to see if He could produce a sign from Heaven; or was He only an unvalidated, travelling and teaching Rabbi. Truly, people had all kinds of opinions about Him. But what did Jesus have to say to these people about Himself?



Firstly, Jesus declared and demonstrated that His purpose on earth was to oppose satan, Beelzebul, his kingdom and his demons. Hence, Christ's work of casting out demons. This made many to marvel at Him or to falsely accuse Him (vv 14-18).

Secondly, Jesus said that He did not do ordinary 'exorcisms' like the disciples of the religious leaders (vv 19-20). Jesus actually claimed to have driven out demons by the 'Finger of God' and as a sign that the Kingdom of God has suddenly come. In Exodus, it was by the 'Finger of God' that the Commandments were literally written down (Exodus 31:18, Deuteronomy 9:10). At the plague of the gnats, the sorcerers of Egypt could not imitate what God was doing. Hence, their declaration: 'this must be done by the Finger of God' (Exodus 8:16-20). Their 'magic arts' could not counterfeit God's mighty acts of judgement, then. For Jesus to declare that He was casting out demons by 'the Finger of God', He was declaring that He was doing the work of God which cannot be copied by the evil one. This was surely His reply for those who accused Him of using the power of darkness.

Thirdly, Jesus declared that His casting out of demons by the Finger of God was the sign that the Kingdom of God had already come (v 20). This was in fulfilment of the prayer, later taught by Jesus, for His disciples to pray continuously: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come' (Luke 11:2). According to Jesus, the Kingdom of God will come invisibly first among the people in a decisive, spiritual manner, before it finally comes visibly in great power at the end of history (Luke 17:20-24). Therefore, in the timing of God, the Kingdom of God was brought in by this first Advent of Jesus Christ. Truly, He was the Man who could not be ignored.

Fourthly, Jesus claimed to be stronger than the strong man and is able to take away from him, his possessions and armour (vv 21-22). The 'strong man' opposed by Jesus is the evil one who cannot resist the power of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus is strong enough to rescue the victims/prisoners of satan, the enemy of our soul. Jesus can rescue all who have been entrapped by satan. Christ is stronger than the strong man, even today!

Finally, Jesus said that if we are not with Him, then we are against Him (Luke 11:23). Jesus calls us to be with Him and for Him! We cannot be neutral with Jesus Christ. We should not only embrace the claims of Jesus Christ, but also commit ourselves to be His disciples under His Lordship, in this battle against sin and satan.

Hope arises for us today because there is no other power greater than the power of Jesus Christ. If we are in any bondage now, remember, Jesus can set the captives of satan free. Interestingly, the early practice of baptism, in the earliest church always included exorcism and an opportunity to 'renounce satan and all his pomp'. May we intentionally ensure that we belong to Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Indeed, His power is greater than any demonic strong man.

## Prayer

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Lord Jesus, we rejoice that You are greater than the power of evil. We rejoice in the hope that You have brought to us, through the Kingdom of God Your Father, so that we can live free from the 'strong man' who has often made our lives miserable and trapped. Help us enter the Kingdom of God now, through You, O Christ. Lord Jesus, You are the King of the Kingdom of

God. It is to You that we call for help. May we live joyful lives now because of You. In Your Name, Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen!

## Action

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Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Recall those times when we were but mere half-hearted followers of Jesus Christ. Ask God for strength to be whole-hearted followers of Christ, so that we can be His instruments to help other entrapped people, that they may live lives in the joyful freedom of the children of God.

*Rev Dr Malcolm T H Tan O.S.L  
Pastor-in-Charge  
Covenant Community Methodist Church  
Chaplain-in-Charge  
Methodist Girl's School*

# The Blessings of Obedience

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25 March • Friday of the Third Week in Lent

Psalm 81:6-10, 13, 16

- <sup>6</sup>"I relieved your shoulder of the burden;  
your hands were freed from the basket.  
<sup>7</sup>In distress you called, and I delivered you;  
I answered you in the secret place of thunder;  
I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*  
<sup>8</sup>Hear, O my people, while I admonish you!  
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!  
<sup>9</sup>There shall be no strange god among you;  
you shall not bow down to a foreign god.  
<sup>10</sup>I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.  
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
- <sup>13</sup>Oh, that my people would listen to me,  
that Israel would walk in my ways!"
- <sup>16</sup>But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat,  
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

## Meditation

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This Psalm begins with a call to gather the people of God to sing and make a joyful shout to God. In the midst of the celebration, God speaks to the people gathered reminding them of how He set them free from their slavery. God also reminded them that He responds to the cry of His children.

The greatest truth is that God loves us unconditionally. So much so that He wants us to succeed and prosper by showing us the way through His word. There are many

times when we choose our own paths and we end as captives of our own disobedience. But our loving Father will never leave us nor forsake us, He hears our cry and delivers us. God desires us to come to “The Secret place of Thunder”, a place of obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

This is evident as God reminds them of the testing in Meribah. This was a place of testing for the Israelites but more so for Moses and Aaron. Based on biblical text, there were two sites named Meribah, one Meribah (Massah) and the other Meribah (Kadesh). At Meribah (Massah), the Israelites grumbled against Moses because they were thirsty. Moses sought the Lord and was instructed to strike the rock. He obeyed God, struck the rock and water came out of it. At Meribah (Kadesh), again the people complained of lack of water and they quarreled with Moses. Moses and Aaron sought the Lord. The Lord instructed them to speak to the rock which would bring forth water. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses and Aaron struck the rock in disobedience. In the midst of their disobedience, God was still faithful in providing water for His people. But because of their disobedience, both Moses and Aaron were told by God that they would not enter the promised land.

Just like Moses and Aaron at Meribah (Kedesh), our constant battle is with obedience to God. We face a constant battle with our mind as our minds are bombarded with many thoughts that distract and prevent us from obeying the Lord. If only we obey Him, He has promised that He would lavish his best on us and satisfy us.

## Prayer

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Father, in this world where people choose to do what they want to do rather than choosing Your way, give me the grace and strength to walk in obedience to the prompting of Your Holy Spirit. Help me to always chose obedience in Jesus' name, amen.

## Action

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Make a conscious decision to walk in obedience to His Word even if it is not popular with people around you.

*Rev Samuel Gift Stephen  
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Smyrna Assembly (LIFE Centre)*

# I Desire Steadfast Love

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26 March • Saturday of the Third Week in Lent

Hosea 5:15—6:6

<sup>15</sup>I will return again to my place,  
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,  
and in their distress earnestly seek me.

**6** “Come, let us return to the LORD;  
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;  
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

<sup>2</sup>After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
that we may live before him.

<sup>3</sup>Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;  
his going out is sure as the dawn;  
he will come to us as the showers,  
as the spring rains that water the earth.”

<sup>4</sup>What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
Your love is like a morning cloud,  
like the dew that goes early away.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;  
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,  
and my judgement goes forth as the light.

<sup>6</sup>For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,  
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

## Meditation

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Our God knows us, He knows us from upside down and inside out. But when the winds of promiscuity blow, when the sun of competition blazes, we are like the Israelites, we fail to treat one another with the covenant

(steadfast) love that Yahweh has shown to us (v 4). Judgements have already been inflicted through God's agents, the prophets, who have faithfully and forcefully conveyed the destructive words of Yahweh's mouth (v 5). The relationship between the prophets and Yahweh is so intimate that their utterances of judgement constitute the very acts of 'hewing' or 'hacking' and 'slaying' that Israel's sins warranted (v 5). Through the mouth of the prophets, our Lord explicitly stated that what He desires from us is our steadfast love and the knowledge of God (v 6).

The knowledge of God, to know God, is not simply to be aware of His existence; for the most part this is taken for granted in Hebrew writings. To know Him is to recognise Him for who He is, the sovereign Lord who makes a demand on man's obedience and especially upon the obedience of His people Israel, with whom He has made a covenant. He is the God whose holiness and loving-kindness are 'known' in the experiences of nations and individuals. The criterion of this knowledge is obedience.

In short, to love and obey Him are what our Lord desires from us, not sacrifice and burnt offerings. However, this does not mean that sacrifice or ritual worship are intrinsically bad. This should not prompt us to overthrow all liturgy, but to love and obey as we serve and worship.

## Prayer

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Father, forgive our sins, intentional or unintentional. Help us to be sensible and mindful of what is happening in our culture and our faith. May we discern what is pleasing to You as we claim that we love You and obey Your commands. In the name of our most precious Lord, Jesus, amen.



# Action

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What are the acts of worship that connect you deeply with God? What are the acts of good work that connect you truly with people?

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# Christ Also Suffered for You, Leaving You an Example...

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27 March • Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Peter 2:16-25

<sup>16</sup>Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. <sup>17</sup>Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

<sup>18</sup>Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. <sup>19</sup>For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup>For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup>When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

## Meditation

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“Leaving you an example,” (v 21) “so that ...” So that we can talk and teach about it? No, more than that. “...so that (we) might follow in his steps.”

The example or pattern of Christ that Peter highlights is not the part of Christ’s life that we prefer to highlight. We prefer to highlight the courage of Christ to stand

up and speak out against injustice and evil, condemning the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and pronouncing “woes” upon them. But Peter highlights Jesus’ refusal to return insults or defend Himself when He was being verbally and physically attacked. Instead, Jesus reacted to unfair suffering, not by pronouncing threats, but by “entrusting himself to God who judges justly” (v 23).

*“But surely Jesus’ suffering is unique because He needed to die on the Cross for us. We can’t be expected to apply Jesus’ response to suffering in our modern unfair situations at work (with our bosses) or at home (with our silly spouses).”*

Yet, this example of how Jesus dealt with the unjust suffering directed against Him is given by Peter in the context of advice to slaves with unjust bosses (v 18), wives with unbelieving husbands (1 Pet 3:1ff) and husbands (1 Pet 3:7). Peter explicitly says that Jesus’ willingness to endure the unfair suffering directed against Him was “so that you might follow in his steps” (v 21). Peter advises a most unconventional strategy of responding to the problem of unjust suffering today.

Verse 23 “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”

## Prayer

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Dear Lord Jesus, help us who call ourselves Your disciples, to follow in Your footsteps, and to show “honour to everyone....Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust” (vv 17-18). Amen.

# Action

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What are some steps we might take in our current social contexts to put Peter's words into practice?

Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. (vv 17-18)

*Bishop Dr Gordon Wong  
Bishop, The Methodist Church in Singapore*

# Access in Christ into the Holy Places

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28 March • Monday of the Fourth Week in Lent

Hebrews 9:1-14

<sup>1</sup>Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup>For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup>having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup>Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

<sup>6</sup>These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, <sup>7</sup>but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. <sup>8</sup>By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing <sup>9</sup>(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper, <sup>10</sup>but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

<sup>11</sup>But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup>he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of

a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

## Meditation

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Whenever we gather for worship, do we “barge” into God’s presence unprepared—in a hurry, flustered by frustrations and worries, too casually dressed, or with an attitude that says: “I have a right to be here”, or “I’m doing my spiritual duty for the week” or even, “what am I doing here”? Are we ever struck by the awe and wonder of God calling us into His presence?

Our text for today from Hebrews 9:1-14 reminds us of the deep privilege we have to worship God through Jesus. For here we are told that Christ Jesus entered the very presence of God in heaven, and that He has brought us with Him into heaven itself for all eternity (vv 11-12). He has done for us what the ancient tabernacle and worship rituals could point to, but could not accomplish—to give us access to heaven itself, the Holy of Holies, the very real presence of God Himself.

Let us realise that the tabernacle itself was God’s gracious gift to the ancient Israelites as a means through which He would *meet* with them, *speak* to them, *sanctify* them and *dwell* with them—all images of His loving and gracious presence upon them (Ex 29:42-45). But as great and as meaningful that the tabernacle was, the gift of Jesus was far greater. The tabernacle could at best be a means for people to receive God’s presence on earth, but Jesus is the means of our presence before God in heaven for all eternity.

However, the tabernacle, by its very design, also speaks of the opposite truth, that is, the *inaccessibility* of God. The two sections, called the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, and the curtains that separate each section, were places of highly restricted access—only the priests were allowed into the Holy Place, and not without a prescribed liturgy of sacrifice for sin. Only the High Priest was allowed into the Most Holy Place once a year, with the prescribed blood sacrifice for sin. No one else was allowed into these Holy Places. The message was clear—God is holy, and sinful humanity had no access to Him except by His grace and on His terms.

All the more then, we are struck by the utter separation that our sinfulness deserves, and awestruck by the limitless breadth, length, height and depth of God's love for us in Christ Jesus. For in Him, the Lamb of God who died and rose again for us, and our great High Priest—the curtain of the temple has been torn in two, and we forgiven sinners have access to the Heavenly Father, to receive His blessings and to respond in prayer and praise, now and forevermore.

## Prayer

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Thank You, O gracious God, that in Your word and sacraments we have the promises of Your forgiveness, the gift of holiness, and access into Your very presence, on earth and for all eternity. All glory be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. In Christ we offer You our prayer and praise. Amen.

## Action

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Does your church use an order of confession and forgiveness in your worship service?

If so, treasure it. If it is a rite of preparation at the beginning of the service, be on time, confess your sins and trust in the word of forgiveness declared to you.

If not, consider spending a few minutes before the service begins to confess your sins to God, and remember His promises of forgiveness in His word (e.g. 1 Jn 1:8-9).

This is a good way to come before God in reverence, and remember that as sinners we can enter His presence only in Jesus Christ and in His gracious forgiveness.

*Rev Soh Guan Kheng  
Senior Pastor  
Yishun Christian Church (Lutheran)*



# I AM Has Sent Me to You

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29 March • Tuesday of the Fourth Week in Lent

Exodus 2:23—3:20

<sup>23</sup>During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. <sup>24</sup>And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup>God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

**3** Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” <sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup>Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” <sup>6</sup>And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup>and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that

you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

<sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” <sup>12</sup>He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

<sup>13</sup>Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” <sup>15</sup>God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. <sup>16</sup>Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, <sup>17</sup>and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’” <sup>18</sup>And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ <sup>19</sup>But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. <sup>20</sup>So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

## Meditation

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“God is not finished with us yet” is an old saying. He intervenes in human history and in the lives of His people. The Book of Exodus is an excellent illustration

of how His intervention brought new hope during one of the darkest periods of Israel's history.

### **God heard a cry from a bondage (Ex 2:23-25)**

*"And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."*  
(Ex 2:24, NKJV)

The abject condition of God's people in Egypt had not changed for hundreds of years after generations. There was no one on their side. They could cry out only to God. Our compassionate God heard them and took action (Ex 2:23; Ps 40:1-2).

God had already trained Moses as leader in Egypt (Acts 7:22) and as a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian. Moses was far away from his people and God though. He had forgotten all about God and His purposes for His people. But God had not. He would not give up on Moses—he had divinely ordained destiny to lead the Israelites out of slavery.

God wanted Moses back to Himself to fulfil His redemptive purposes. God was after Moses. Friends, we cannot run from God.

### **A call came to Moses under unusual circumstances**

Midian, a tough, barren desert of Sinai, was Moses' comfort zone. But under the scorching sun of a normal day of shepherding, God appeared to him. Moses had not expected to encounter God in the wilderness, but God is not conditioned by circumstances. God was in that burning bush for a life-changing encounter with Moses.

We need to be always aware that God can intervene anytime, anywhere, often when we least expect it.

## **Overwhelming challenges a part of the call**

*“Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”* (Ex 3:10 NKJV)

God’s call to Moses was not easy—the call commanded him to go back to the danger zone to deliver his people from the clutches of Pharaoh.

Going back to Egypt from Moses’ perspective was suicidal. He was a wanted murderer. If he were to stand before Pharaoh, a cruel ruler, it could cost him his life. Pharaoh was also a powerful king with rich resources while Moses had none. The enemy seemed to be bigger.

During overwhelming challenges, we need to recognise that our God is bigger than the challenges. Someone rightly said, “one man with God is a majority”.

## **Human Inadequacies cause reluctance (Ex 3:11-4:17)**

*But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”* (Ex 3:11 NKJV)

Moses was born during a miserable period in Israel’s history. A ruthless Pharaoh had tried to crush God’s people. By God’s miraculous intervention, Moses survived.

But life was not easy for him. Born with a Hebrew identity in a priestly home, he got a royal Egyptian identity growing up in the palace as Pharaoh’s daughter’s son. Later, he escaped to the wilderness of Midian after killing an Egyptian to rescue a Hebrew. In Midian, he became the son-in-law of a Midianite priest, Jethro.

Moses had a list of excuses to resist God's call. He had an identity crisis (was he a Hebrew, prince of Egypt, a priest's son-in law or a fugitive?). His past records in Egypt and his later status in Midian were not adequate for the task. Moses was terrified by God's call and the consequences of obedience.

God calls people with shortcoming and failures for His extraordinary mission.

### **God's all sufficiency is promised**

Note the verses "I am sending you to Pharaoh" (Ex 3:10, NIV), "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you" (Ex 3:12, NIV), "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Ex 3:14, NIV), "the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation." (Ex 3:15-16, NIV)

But God knew where Moses' true identity came from—from Him, YHWH, self-existing, self-sufficient, everlasting and sovereign. It was not Moses' past identities but his current identity as God's ambassador that counted. It would enable him to stand before Pharaoh. We are called to Go in His name, Stand with His presence and serve His purposes. A difficult call obeyed with God's favour.

## **Prayer**

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Dear God, thank You for reminding me that I could be part of Your Redemptive Mission. "Here I am", use me for Your purposes.

# Action

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Let us see God in our daily chores of life. Let us be sensitive to His voice in the midst of noises around. Let our hearts be ready to receive His command with obedience.

*Rev Ranganathan Prabhu  
Pastor  
The Methodist Church in Singapore*

# Whoever Hears My Word and Believes Him Who Sent Me...

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30 March • Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Lent

John 5:17-30

<sup>17</sup>But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

<sup>18</sup>This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

<sup>19</sup>So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. <sup>20</sup>For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. <sup>21</sup>For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. <sup>22</sup>For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, <sup>23</sup>that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. <sup>24</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life.

<sup>25</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup>For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup>And he has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup>Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup>and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement.

<sup>30</sup>"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my

judgement is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

## Meditation

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It was the Sabbath (v 9b) when Jesus performed the miracle at the pool of Bethesda (v 2) giving healing to the lame man invalid for 38 years (vv 3-9), declaring ‘Sin no more.’ (v 14), and, answering the Jews (vv 16-17), “‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’”

### 1. The Nexus Between the Father and the Son

(vv 17-23, 26-27, 30)

John, the Gospel writer/evangelist, writes of the functions of the Godhead being devolved from the Father to the Son, so that, as Jesus says later, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (Jn 14:9a). The Father/Son relationship is developed and characterised on the Father’s side by **LOVE**, and on the Son’s side by **OBEDIENCE**. Unlike the Old Testament metaphor where the relationship of God as Father to the people of **Israel** as his children fails as often Israel disobeys (Hosea 11:1-2), Christ the **true Son, loved** by his Father (v 20) offers to his Father **perfect obedience** (v 30), since “whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.” (v 19b).

### 2. The Nexus Between the Son and “Whoever Hears His Word and Believes Him” (vv 23-24, 25, 28-29)

Occasionally, I meet ‘Christians’ who state, ‘I hope I will get eternal life when I die.’ Clearly, Jesus wants His disciples to know that through repentance and faith (Acts 2:38; faith is to **trust** and **obey**—Prov 3:5-7; Jn 3:36; Heb 3:18-19), we receive forgiveness of sin and are brought from spiritual death to eternal life. Hence



Jesus in John **5:24**, 3:36 assures us of salvation by grace through faith. Jesus has borne the costly judgement for the sins of the Christian disciples (Jn 3:14, Jn 10:11; Heb 9:12, 14) and at the point of conversion have already passed from spiritual death to eternal life.

Sadly, too we know of ‘Christians’ who ‘**play the margin**’, and abuse the grace of salvation by ‘hyper-grace’ not practising the means of grace especially the Word of God (Ps 119:11) and “hold our original confidence firm to the end.” (Heb 3:14), recognises that the Father has not only granted to Jesus the authority to give eternal life (v 26) but also to execute judgement (v 27). Thus Jesus reiterates that ALL “will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement.” (vv 28b-29).

As Jesus loved and obeyed His Father, Christian disciples are called to love, honour and obey Him above all else.

## Prayer

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‘Through death into life everlasting  
He passed, and we follow Him there;  
Over us sin no more hath dominion  
For more than conquerors we are!  
(Turn your eyes upon Jesus)

## Action

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Jesus, the Incarnate Son calls us to obey His Great Commandment and Great Commission, and, in the power of Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) be witnesses fulfilling the Father’s heart desire not “wishing that any should

perish, but that ALL should reach repentance (2 Pet 3:9b).

*Canon Emeritus Louis Tay  
Auxiliary Priest  
St Andrew's Cathedral*

# As One Breaks a Potter's Vessel

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31 March • Thursday of the Fourth Week in Lent

Jeremiah 19:1-13

**19** Thus says the LORD, "Go, buy a potter's earthenware flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests, <sup>2</sup>and go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you. <sup>3</sup>You shall say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. <sup>4</sup>Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, <sup>5</sup>and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind—<sup>6</sup>therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. <sup>7</sup>And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. <sup>8</sup>And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds. <sup>9</sup>And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbour in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them.'

<sup>10</sup>"Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, <sup>11</sup>and shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a

potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended. Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury. <sup>12</sup>Thus will I do to this place, declares the LORD, and to its inhabitants, making this city like Topheth. <sup>13</sup>The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah—all the houses on whose roofs offerings have been offered to all the host of heaven, and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods—shall be defiled like the place of Topheth.’”

## Meditation

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It is common sense that no one likes to receive bad news, neither does anyone rejoice in suffering. Yet we all hear bad news of disasters, both natural and man-made, bereaved families, separation in life and death. Under suffering circumstances, how can God's people understand the Lord's heart during Lent? Let us meditate on God's Word to discern the situations and human nature. We look forward to be raised and used by the Lord amidst the ruins of the pandemic world.

Today's scriptures refer to the prophet Jeremiah, who was called in the sixth and seventh centuries before the Lord to minister to the nation of Judah, a world of suffering. How did he discern the situations and human nature?

First of all, through contemplation, that is, meditating the Word of God from physical matter and phenomena. The prophet followed God's instruction to buy a potter's earthenware flask. He then gathered the elders and priests of the people to go together to the valley of the Son of Hinnom, where the flask would be broken, disposed in pieces, and to look at the broken pieces from the entry of the Potsherd Gate (vv 1-2). From these physical objects, the prophet wants the leaders

to watch and understand the heart of the Lord.

Secondly, through description, using metaphor to describe crises, threats, and afflictions that the Israelite community was experiencing. In the presence of the leaders, Jeremiah describes Judah's society as the valley of the Son of Hinnom (v 6): tragic pictures of abandoning the true God (v 4), violence and idol worship (v 5), siege by foreign enemies, hunger and cold, and even cannibalism (vv 7-9).

Thirdly, through shema (hear), that is, returning to the Word of God and understand the Lord's heart all over again. Jeremiah broke the flask before the leaders as God had instructed him (v 10), pointing out that the people of Judah had forsaken God and broken His covenant with them, which led to their death and destruction (v 11). Just as the brokenness of the flask could not be reversed, so the fate of idol worshippers of Judah could not be reversed.

After all, God is the Potter, and as mentioned before, the Potter makes vessels according to His heart (Jer 18:1-10). In our times, as long as we trust in Christ, God also moulds you and me into vessels useful for Him (Rom 9:20-24; 2 Tim 2:19-21). In your affliction, do you see Him moulding you into a usable, useful, and honourable vessel?

## Prayer

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Lord, open my eyes to see the suffering experienced by the community and to understand Your heart to save the world. May I respond to Your heart to share the gospel of Your love for the world.

# Action

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Practice contemplation now and look at people and things around you and the world situations through God's perspective. Understand the Lord's heart according to biblical truth. Share with others the good news that the Lord loves them and loves to save them.

*Rev Dr Clement Chia  
Principal  
Singapore Bible College*

(Source: Translated from Chinese Lenten Devotions 2022)

# For You Have Need of Endurance

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1 April • Friday of the Fourth Week in Lent

Hebrews 10:26-39

<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup>but a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup>Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup>For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” <sup>31</sup>It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

<sup>32</sup>But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, <sup>33</sup>sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. <sup>34</sup>For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. <sup>35</sup>Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup>For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. <sup>37</sup>For,

“Yet a little while,  
and the coming one will come and will not delay;  
<sup>38</sup>but my righteous one shall live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back,  
my soul has no pleasure in him.”

<sup>39</sup>But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

## Meditation

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Salvation is a free gift from God available to all sinners who seek to be pardoned from all sins that have been committed and to escape the final judgement of God. Having been aware of this truth about salvation, there is no other sacrifice for the remission of sin to those who willfully persist in sin (v 26). It is a warning as well as a wake-up call to remain faithful to God in our commitment to live a life devoid of sin. The loving God through the Holy Spirit always convicts every person about sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8) in order to bring every person to repentance.

This passage in Hebrews makes it clear that indifference to the free gift of salvation or rejecting the salvific deed of Jesus Christ brings judgement on every sinner. Those who abide in Christ with repentance can be free from the fear of judgement. So, Hebrews encourages believers to cling on to the confidence of salvation in the midst of persecutions. Resisting temptations is also a testimony for the unbelievers as well as for those who are weak in their faith.

We are living in a world that questions our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. After resisting evil for some time, the temptation to give up is natural when the majority live for worldly pursuits. Never give up, endure persecutions, Jesus Christ is coming to gather His children to the Kingdom of God. Delay of the coming of the Lord is not God's delay. God will come at His time. Let us wait for the Lord with endurance, patience and faith. Endure persecution solely by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lenten period is a time for regaining strength from the Holy Spirit for endurance.



## Prayer

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Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for the great price You have paid for our salvation. We ask Your pardon for taking the gift of salvation lightly and for yielding to the temptation to give up our resistance to evil. Grant us patience and endurance in the face of persecutions.

## Action

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Find out the areas where you are vulnerable in keeping our commitment to lead a godly life. Search for ways to overcome temptations.

*Rev Dr Alex Thomas*

*Vicar*

*Mar Thoma Syrian Church in Singapore*

# You Shall Love Your Neighbour As Yourself: I Am the LORD

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2 April • Saturday of the Fourth Week in Lent

Leviticus 19:1-18, 30-37

<sup>1</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. <sup>3</sup>Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. <sup>4</sup>Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves any gods of cast metal: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>5</sup>“When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. <sup>6</sup>It shall be eaten the same day you offer it or on the day after, and anything left over until the third day shall be burned up with fire. <sup>7</sup>If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is tainted; it will not be accepted, <sup>8</sup>and everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned what is holy to the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from his people.

<sup>9</sup>“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. <sup>10</sup>And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>11</sup>“You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. <sup>12</sup>You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>“You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. <sup>14</sup>You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour. <sup>16</sup>You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbour: I am the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>“You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you incur sin because of him. <sup>18</sup>You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

<sup>30</sup>You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

<sup>31</sup>“Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>32</sup>“You shall stand up before the gray head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>33</sup>“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. <sup>34</sup>You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>35</sup>“You shall do no wrong in judgement, in measures of length or weight or quantity. <sup>36</sup>You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. <sup>37</sup>And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them: I am the LORD.”

## Meditation

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How do we become holy? We tend to think of a holy

person as one who abstains from worldly pleasures because of his religious devotion. Many may think it is practically impossible to be holy because many things in life will defile that holiness.

This passage turns this other-worldly idea of holiness upside down in two ways.

Firstly, being holy is less about what we don't do, and more about how we live our daily life. Yes, it begins with the spiritual disciplines of keeping the Sabbath, reverencing the house and things of God, offering right sacrifices and refraining from dabbling in spirits and idols. But it doesn't stop there. It is also about how we honour our parents, respect the aged, leave something for the poor, show hospitality to strangers, speak the truth, take care of our neighbours, be impartial to everyone, and be honest in our business dealings—very real things in everyday life.

Secondly, being holy is not about our own moral perfection, but a reflection of who we are and whose we are: we are the people belonging to God. Our lives are called to be holy in the way to reflect God's holiness—He is righteous, just, truthful, merciful, compassionate, protective, caring, forgiving, life-giving, peace-loving, time-honouring and eternal. The spiritual aspects of being holy are to draw us into a transformative and sustaining relationship with God, so that who He is rubs off on who we will be.

Let us walk with God in such a worshipful way that His holiness can be seen in our walk with our neighbours, even those who do not yet know God.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so

that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Mt 5:16)

## Prayer

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Holy God, what an awesome privilege it is to be called Your child. Thank You for Your Word that reveals You and lights up my way. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit who convicts and enables me to walk in Your holy ways. Transform me inside out, to be more like You in the way I live with people around me. Let Your holiness guide and enable me to treat them in such a way that they may experience Your holy presence in their lives. Through Christ Your Son our Lord. Amen.

## Action

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Each day, name one aspect of who God is that really amazes you. That’s His holiness. Worship Him! Imitate Him!

1. What do I find amazing about God today?
2. What is a situation or a person in my life to whom God wants me to be more like Him? What is hindering me from doing so?
3. What can I do today that will reflect our amazing and holy God in that situation or to that person?

*Venerable Wong Tak Meng  
Archdeacon for Community Services  
Diocese of Singapore*

# That I May Know Him and... Share His Sufferings

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3 April • Fifth Sunday in Lent

Philippians 3:4b-14

<sup>4b</sup>If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—<sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

## Meditation

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What Paul advocates is what Christ Himself did. Christ emptied Himself in becoming man, and even became rejected and despised by all. Christ not only became man but also died on the cross so that the risen Christ has a new body and now sits on the right hand of God

the Father. Christ did this in obedience to God the Father. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit raised Christ to new heights in his resurrected body.

We too must have the trust that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit will raise us up to be like little Christs. We are like statues who will come alive. We do not know what we will become. Christ acted in faith when Christ came to the cross. Christ had the righteousness that depends totally on faith.

Let us share in the sufferings of Christ, following in His footsteps. Christ was fully man and at the same time Christ was fully God. Christ is beside us, encouraging us, and pulling us up when we fall.

## Prayer

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Father God, Father of mankind, we thank You for giving us Christ, our example, our companion and our redeemer. Thank You God for enabling Christ to be fully man, and therefore able to understand our limitations as we imitate the sufferings of Christ. Enable us to look continually to Christ the author and the perfecter of our salvation. Let us count everything as loss as we look forward to gaining Christ and be found in Him.

## Action

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Start with counting small things as loss and move on to bigger things, counting them as loss also. Do not think too highly of oneself but rely on God to give you the capacity to count everything as rubbish.

*Dr Lee Soo Ann  
President  
The Bible Society of Singapore*

# Let Him Who is Without Sin Among You be the First to Throw a Stone at Her

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4 April • Monday of the Fifth Week in Lent

John 8:1-11

<sup>1</sup>but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup>The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst <sup>4</sup>they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup>Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" <sup>6</sup>This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup>And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup>And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup>Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>11</sup>She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

## Meditation

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Have you ever judged or condemned someone? What would Jesus have done if He were in your shoes?

We read that a woman caught in adultery was brought by the religious leaders to Jesus. The accusers were setting a trap. They wanted grounds for accusing Jesus. He was the one they were really after. If Jesus said, "Stone her," He would violate Roman law, because capital offenses required Roman courts. A stoning would also seem to go counter to Jesus' message of



forgiveness. If Jesus said, “Let her go,” His decision would be in direct conflict with the Law of Moses.

Adultery involves two people. If they had caught her in the act, where was the man? The Mosaic law required both man and woman be put to death (Leviticus 20:10). Where were the witnesses? Moreover, by shaming the woman and making her stand before them, they had ignored several legal requirements for just treatment. The would-be protectors of morals were breaking their own codes!

Scholars have wondered what Jesus wrote on the ground. Was it the sins of those men standing around Him? Perhaps He wrote their names along with their sins, beginning with the most respected. No one knows. By not speaking, Jesus refused to respond to their charges. His silence, bending down, His writing in the dirt changed the interaction. When they persisted in asking Him, Jesus responded, “**Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.**”

The test was over. The men had been judges; now they were humbled. The woman had been an object; now she was a person. Everyone was enjoined to break with old ways—the leaders with legalism and judgementalism, the woman with sin and sexual immorality. Jesus said to her what He said to the crippled man made well at the Pool of Bethesda: “Go, and sin no more.” Jesus offered grace and mercy but also required accountability of the leaders and of the woman.

This beautiful story brings home two important lessons for us: **Firstly**, correcting wrong begins with forgiveness, not rebuke. Whenever we confront wrong we must be truly humble, not proud. We must take a long hard

critical look at our own lives. Galatians 6:1 reminds us, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” **Secondly**, when our sins are forgiven, it is to free us to form new habits in Christ by the power of the indwelling Spirit, never to go back to our old sinful lifestyle (Galatians 5:1).

## Prayer

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Most gracious and merciful God, thank You for Your deep, deep love for us. Like the woman in the story, we are undeserving of the grace and mercy You have so marvellously bestowed upon us. We are deeply grateful and indebted to You. Forbid that we should ever return to our old sinful ways. Forbid that we should be judgemental of others and not ourselves. Empower us with Your indwelling Spirit, that we may live an ever victorious and fruitful life as we await the glorious meeting in heaven with Your begotten Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose mighty name we pray. Amen.

## Action

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Take a few moments right now to celebrate and give thanks to God for your freedom in Christ. Take concrete steps to establish new or reinforce ongoing holy habits.

*Rev Dr Steven Gan  
Senior Minister  
Amazing Grace Presbyterian Church*

# Make a Fiery Serpent and Set It on a Pole

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5 April • Tuesday of the Fifth Week in Lent

Numbers 21:4-9

<sup>4</sup>From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup>And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup>And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

## Meditation

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Numbers 21 tells the story of the rebellion and impatience of God’s people as they journeyed through the wilderness. God punished them by sending ‘fiery serpents’, which killed many Israelites (21:6).

The serpent is a symbol of judgement and sin. Just as the bite of the serpent leads to physical death, so the venom of sin brings about eternal death.

In His mercy, God also provided a way for the Israelites who have received the fatal poison to escape death. He instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on

a pole. Those who had been bitten by the serpents need only to look at the brass serpent to be healed.

That this story points to what the incarnate Son of God did for rebellious humanity on Calvary is made clear by Jesus Himself. In John 3:14-17, Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.'

Just as the bronze serpent was lifted on a pole, so Jesus was lifted on the cross. Just as the rebellious Israelites were able to escape death by looking at the bronze serpent, so sinners will receive eternal life by looking to Jesus.

Note that it is not enough to simply look *at* Jesus. Though Christ was lifted up in the sight of all, not everyone who looked at Him is saved. In order to be saved, we must look *to* Him.

To look *to* Jesus is to believe in Him. It is to put our trust in Him.

Let us look to Jesus today, for He is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Those who put their faith in Him will receive everlasting life.

## Prayer

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Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You for dying on the cross for the sins of the world. I put my faith in You as my Saviour, and I obey You as my Lord. May Your holy name be honoured and glorified in my life. Amen.

# Action

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Share with someone today about what God has done for you in Jesus Christ.

*Dr Roland Chia*  
*Chew Hock Hin Professor of Christian Doctrine*  
*Trinity Theological College*  
*Theological and Research Advisor*  
*Ethos Institute for Public Christianity*

# That Through Endurance and Encouragement of the Scriptures We Might Have Hope

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6 April • Wednesday of the Fifth Week in Lent

Romans 15:1-13

<sup>1</sup>We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup>For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." <sup>4</sup>For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup>May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

<sup>8</sup>For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, <sup>9</sup>and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,  
and sing to your name."

<sup>10</sup>And again it is said,

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

<sup>11</sup>And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples extol him."

<sup>12</sup>And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,  
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

<sup>13</sup>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.

## Meditation

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When Reagan and Thatcher introduced their vision of a free global economy, globalisation was believed to be the means for uniting all nations in the decades that followed. Not anymore. The last few years have seen the world fragmenting into competing blocs that rage against each other and vie for their own self-interests (Psalm 2). The current pandemic have only made things worse. The aspiration of ‘better together’ now rings hollow. So, despite our best aspirations, our sinful tendency to discord, pride and selfishness is not something we can humanly resolve. This is why Christ had to come—so that the Jews and Gentiles, the whole world, may be united as one people of God (15:8-12). In Christ, a new humanity has been forged, one that can love each other, carry each other’s burdens and look out for the interests of one another (Phil 2:4).

To be sure, we are still far from that. As Romans 14 reminds us, there is still much discord between Christians and within churches. Nonetheless, we must hold steadfast to the teaching of Scripture—the Church remains the arena where we must learn how to undo these sinful habits and become the new humanity that Christ has called us. The way forward is the way of Christ: ‘we who are strong’ must fulfil our obligations to ‘bear with the failings of the weak’ and no longer please or serve ourselves. We must bear reproaches for others’

sake (15:3). This cannot be done on our own. Instead, we must submit humbly to the guidance and power of Christ's Spirit. May Christians endure in dying to ourselves and bearing each other's burdens so that our neighbours can see the glorious humanity that Christ has achieved on the Cross.

## Prayer

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Dear Lord Jesus, as the world spirals down a path of pride and discord, grant us humility and the grace of Your Spirit, that we may learn to die daily to ourselves and to have love for one another, so that we may model to our neighbours the new humanity that You are ushering into the world.

## Action

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Let us be watchful over ourselves, that we may not yield to pride and contribute to discord and quarrels within the Church. Instead, let us seek the Spirit's guidance and strength, that we may serve one another in humility and bear each other's burdens in love.

*Dr Lai Pak Wah  
Principal  
Biblical Graduate School of Theology*



# No Longer Shall Your Name be Called Abram, But Your Name Shall be Abraham

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7 April • Thursday of the Fifth Week in Lent

Genesis 17:3-9

<sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, <sup>4</sup>“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup>And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

<sup>9</sup>And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

## Meditation

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In the preceding chapter Genesis 16, Abram resorted to having a son, Ishmael, through Sarai’s slave woman, Hagar, thinking that he would be fulfilling God’s promise of becoming a great nation and inheriting the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-3, 7; Gen 15:1-5). This turned out to be a grave mistake as it brought misery and tension in the family (Gen 16:4-12; Gen 21:9-21).

While Abram suffered due to his own human effort, God appeared to him again in Genesis 17 to reaffirm His covenant and encourage him during one of the lowest points in his life. This time, God gave Abram a new name,

Abraham, and declared that he would father many nations. The name change is God's stamp of authority that His word would come to pass. The addition of the new Hebrew letter *He* ם to the name conveys God's divinity imprinted in Abraham's life. It is an indication of God's grand plan that He himself would fulfil His own promise. Abraham was sealed by God's Spirit to bless many nations through his offspring (Genesis 12:2-3).

A year later, Isaac was miraculously birthed through Sarah. Isaac's descendants would eventually become the nation of Israel that would inherit the promised land of Canaan. But God's work was not finished yet. Many years later, Jesus Christ, who descended from Abraham, was born through a virgin birth in a similar supernatural fashion. Through Jesus, God's promise to Abraham was ultimately fulfilled, as He took on the sins of the world upon Himself and opened the way for salvation and reconciliation with God. Just as Isaac was the promised offspring for Abraham, Jesus Christ is the promised offspring for all mankind (Gen 3:15). Today, we belong to the family of faith of nearly a third of the world's population who claim our spiritual heritage to Abraham through Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:29; Romans 4:16-17).

What a privilege for Abraham that God would use this humble man for his greater purpose! From a position of human failure, God elevated him to become a conduit of hope for himself and the world. When both Abraham and Sarah were reproductively dead, God breathed His Spirit through their new names. Indeed, nothing is impossible with God! (Gen 18:14; Mt 19:26)

As the world today is recovering from the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, may we follow the example

of Abraham and continue to place our assurance and hope in our unchanging God in an ever-changing world. God's work is yet to be finished, and He is calling us to participate in His salvation plan to be a blessing to the nations. May we be witnesses to proclaim the hope in Christ, relying not on our own human effort, but by His divine grace, so that nations and peoples may become spiritual heirs of Abraham as well (Mark 16:15-16)!

## Prayer

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Eternal God, we thank You for the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, Your Son, an offspring of Abraham. May we place our faith and hope on You, even when our situations may seem impossible. Use us, O Lord, as Your vessels to finish Your work of reconciliation, that all nations will indeed be blessed through the Seed of Abraham. In Your Son's most precious name, we pray. Amen.

## Action

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Is there a worry or personal struggle that hinders you from putting your faith in God? Cast all your fears and doubts to Him in surrender. Trust that God can do the impossible and do all things for His glory in every situation.

Is God also calling you to do something? Obey Him.

*Rev Ezekiel Tan  
General Secretary  
The Bible Society of Singapore  
and Evangelical Alliance of Singapore*



"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." ~ Genesis 17:6-8

# Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday and Today and Forever

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8 April • Friday of the Fifth Week in Lent

Hebrews 13:1-16

<sup>1</sup>Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup>Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. <sup>3</sup>Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. <sup>4</sup>Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. <sup>5</sup>Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup>So we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"

<sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup>Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. <sup>10</sup>We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup>For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup>So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. <sup>13</sup>Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. <sup>14</sup>For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup>Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup>Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

# Meditation

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In our passage today, the writer of the book of Hebrews lists out a number of imperatives for our faith:

v1 - let brotherly love continue.

v2 - do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers

v3 - remember those who are in prison

v4 - let marriages be held in honour

v5 - keep your life free from the love of money

v7 - remember your leaders

v9 - do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings

v13 - let us go to him

v15 - let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to  
God

v16 - do not neglect to do good

The list continues on with verse 17 (obey your leaders and submit to them), verse 18 (pray for us) and the chapter (Hebrews 13) and book concludes with a benediction and final greetings. The list of imperatives reads like a charge to us to continue strong with the faith, not just to believe but to practise what we believe and to show evidences of that belief by demonstrating the imperatives. Our actions and behaviour reflect our journey with the Lord.

Right in the midst of our passage, we are reminded that the focus of our beliefs is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The writer reminds us that He is the same yesterday and today and forever. He has not changed and He will not change whatever the circumstances or the seasons. This is what people call The Immutability of God (The un-changing and un-changeable character of God). The prophet Malachi wrote “God Himself declares that He does not change” in Malachi 3:6 while the apostle James reminded us that with God “there is no variation

or shadow due to change” in James 1:17. This is the wonderful truth for all who believe and follow Him—we have a God who does not change (at all) and in Him, we can truly trust and depend, like the man who built his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). When the rain, floods and wind came, the house stood strong and was not blown away and fallen down. Our God is like the rock—he is trustworthy, dependable and un-moveable. Just as He was in the past, He is very much in the present (now) and He will be ever more so in the future.

As we pay attention to demonstrating what we are to do to show evidence of our faith, let us NOT forget to call upon our Rock, the One who is sure and steadfast for us, knowing full well that He will not leave us nor forsake us (verse 5, Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:5) and He has already given us His Holy Spirit to help and teach us on what we are to do (John 14:26).

## Prayer

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Father God, time and time again You have shown Yourself to be true and dependable. As we continue in our journey here on earth, we know we are in good hands and in Your time and according to Your will, You will fulfill Your work in our lives. Teach us to rise in that knowledge and hope. Thank You for always being there for me and for providing all that I need. I pray God, that You will help me to trust You more and more each day. In Yeshua’s name, amen.

## Action

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I need to show by my action and behaviour what is on the inside. I need to also look to Him who is the source of my trust and rock, the Lord God Almighty.

*Rev'd Canon Andrew Shie  
Priest-in-Charge*

# Then the Nations Will Know That I Am the LORD Who Sanctifies Israel

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9 April • Saturday of the Fifth Week in Lent

Ezekiel 37:21-28

<sup>21</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. <sup>22</sup>And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. <sup>23</sup>They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

<sup>24</sup>“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. <sup>25</sup>They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. <sup>26</sup>I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. <sup>27</sup>My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>28</sup>Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

## Meditation

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These prophetic words of Ezekiel speaks of a beautiful vision—the people of God, who have been divided and then scattered among the nations during the Exile,



would be brought back to their homeland and re-unified as one people under the rule of a single messianic King. Yahweh refers to Him as “my servant David” (v 24), in the sense that this messianic King would be a descendant of David. He would be their prince “forever”. God would make an everlasting covenant of peace with His people, and He would dwell in their midst. The last verse (v 28) speaks of God’s sanctifying presence with His people, so that all the nations in the world would know that Yahweh is the one who sanctifies His people, Israel.

These words are fulfilled in our hearing today! The messianic King foretold by Ezekiel is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of David. With His coming, the blessings of the everlasting covenant of peace that is foretold in Ezekiel are now experienced by all of us who have come to faith in Jesus.

This is all possible only because, out of His wondrous love, God sent His own beloved Son to redeem His people at Calvary. The beautiful vision painted by Ezekiel is turned into reality by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. What is reckoned to be an ugly death by the nations of the world becomes the means by which a beautiful vision is realised. The followers of Jesus Christ, the Christians, stand to inherit the blessings of this act of covenantal love by their messianic King, the Son of David.

Looking at the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, let our hearts be filled with humble gratitude and thanksgiving! We deserve none of the blessings that Christ has made possible for us. Yet, out of His infinite love, God has chosen each one of us and called us by name to be His children in Christ. Yes, the sacrifice of Jesus may be dreadful, and His death an unsightly one. But it is a

beautiful testimony of His infinite love for each one of us! Let us remember that we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, set apart to be His and His alone.

## Prayer

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Dear Lord, thank You for dying on the Cross, in order that I might have life! May I continue to live my life in humble gratitude for what You have done for each and every one of us. Amen.

## Action

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Just as you have been wonderfully blessed, be a blessing to someone today!

*Rev Dr Leonard Wee  
Registrar and New Testament Lecturer  
Trinity Theological College*

# The Stone That the Builders Rejected Has Become the Cornerstone

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10 April • Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday)

Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29

<sup>1</sup>Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!

<sup>2</sup>Let Israel say,  
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>19</sup>Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the LORD.

<sup>20</sup>This is the gate of the LORD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.

<sup>21</sup>I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup>The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.

<sup>23</sup>This is the LORD's doing;  
it is marvellous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup>This is the day that the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

<sup>25</sup>Save us, we pray, O LORD!  
O LORD, we pray, give us success!

<sup>26</sup>Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!  
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

<sup>27</sup>The LORD is God,  
and he has made his light to shine upon us.

Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,  
up to the horns of the altar!

<sup>28</sup>You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God; I will extol you.

<sup>29</sup>Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!

# Meditation

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Psalm 118:1 and 118:29 call us to “give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” Besides, as “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (v 22), Jesus who died for our sins, has become Christ in glory. Let us wave the palm branches, shout “Hosanna”, and give thanks to the Lord with our hearts on Palm Sunday.

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” clearly refers to Lord Jesus. He was rejected by men, but chosen by God to become the cornerstone, showing us the wonderful works of God.

Lord Jesus Himself quoted this verse, referring to Himself (Mt 21:42, Mk 12:10-11, Lk 20:17). Peter, on two occasions, specified that this refers to Lord Jesus (Acts 4:11, 1 Pet 2:4-7). Paul also said that Lord Jesus is “the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20). This is the LORD’s doing, not of men. Therefore, it is marvellous in people’s eyes (Ps 118:23). We are convinced that the LORD does things differently from men, because His thoughts are higher than men’s (Is 55:9).

There is a Jewish legend that when Solomon, the wise king, was building the temple, the architects needed to look for a suitable cornerstone, but could not find any. When someone found a suitable stone and reported to them, they did not use it, but abandoned it. They continued to spend time searching everywhere in vain. Finally, they figured out that the abandoned stone was actually the most suitable one.

We know that though Jesus Christ was rejected and crucified by men, God chose Him to accomplish the work of salvation (cf. Ps 118:28, Brenton Septuagint Translation, “I will give thanks to thee, for thou hast

heard me, and art become my salvation.”), and made Him “the cornerstone”, the first stone of the church. Though not accepted for a moment, the cornerstone assumed the most honorable position when God established His kingdom and church on earth.

So let us “give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” (Ps 118:29) We shall give thanks to the Lord from our hearts (Ps 118:1-4), give thanks in our tents/houses (Ps 118:15), and enter through the gates of righteousness/temple to give thanks (Ps 118:19), giving thanks at all times.

## Prayer

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O Lord! Even though there are people who deliberately forsake and despise us, we know well that we are chosen by You. You shall never leave us nor forsake us, but use us for Your kingdom. May we be Your vessels according to Your will, to fulfill the mission You have entrusted us.

## Action

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We might be abandoned by men, but God is good and will never forsake us! Therefore, we give thanks to God at all times and in all circumstances (1 Thes 5:18).

*Rt Rev Dr Teoh Boo Cheow  
Senior Pastor, Christian Grace Presbyterian Church  
Moderator, The Presbyterian Church in Singapore*

(Source: Translated from Chinese Lenten Devotions 2022)

# Then Came the Day of Unleavened Bread, on Which the Passover Lamb Had to be Sacrificed

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11 April • Monday of Holy Week

Luke 22:1-23

<sup>1</sup>Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. <sup>2</sup>And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

<sup>3</sup>Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. <sup>4</sup>He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. <sup>5</sup>And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. <sup>6</sup>So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

<sup>7</sup>Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." <sup>9</sup>They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" <sup>10</sup>He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters <sup>11</sup>and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>12</sup>And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." <sup>13</sup>And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

<sup>14</sup>And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup>And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup>For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup>And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup>For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup>And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is

given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”<sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”<sup>21</sup> But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.<sup>22</sup> For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”<sup>23</sup> And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

## Meditation

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The Passover is a very important feast for the Jews because it commemorates the astonishing and gracious deliverance of their nation from the slavery of Egypt. A commemorative event of this nature seeks to draw them closer to God and to one another. Depicted in our passage, however, were the different responses of actual people.

One group prepared themselves for the event by planning a dastardly deed. The chief priests and scribes—the people who should know better—sought to kill Jesus. The apostle Judas conspired with these blood-thirsty people to betray his master. The holy and redemptive meaning of the Passover was totally lost on them. We may see in this the profound depiction of the problem with humanity. It is one thing to take people out of Egypt, but quite another to take Egypt out of them. The enslavement of sin is not easily broken.

The other response, in contrast, was total dedication to the will of God, even to the point of offering oneself unreservedly to fulfil it. This was the response of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only was the Passover remembered, it was also fulfilled in all its meaning by His act of self-giving love, leading to a true deliverance from sin’s enslavement for all who would believe in Him.

This act of giving His body and blood continues to be remembered regularly in our churches.

The repeated mention of the word 'Passover' in the passage therefore provides a poignant ring to the whole episode: what stood for a mighty and gracious divine act of redemption could be used for evil ends. We are therefore prompted to reflect on how we are responding to Holy Week or God's gifts. Are they occasions for destruction or dedication?

## Prayer

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Dear Lord, as we approach another season of gracious reminders of Your Son's saving sacrifice for us, we pray for a renewal of our gratitude, leading to a renewal of our dedication to Your will and calling. With this renewal of our minds, may we henceforth use Your feasts or gifts to build and not to destroy our fellowmen.

## Action

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Do something practical to show one person, or a small group of people, how this season may be used for building one another up.

*Dr Tan Kim Huat  
Chen Su Lan Professor of New Testament  
Trinity Theological College*



# Nevertheless, Not My Will, But Yours, be Done

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12 April • Tuesday of Holy Week

Luke 22:39-46

<sup>39</sup>And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup>And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” <sup>41</sup>And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup>saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” <sup>43</sup>And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. <sup>44</sup>And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. <sup>45</sup>And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

## Meditation

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“After celebrating the Passover feast, and having washed the feet of the disciples, our Lord once again went to His favourite place in Mount Olive—the Garden of Gethsemane. Knowing that He was only moments away from having to carry the burden of sins for all mankind—He appealed to the Father—“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”

We need to ask, why the appeal for the cup to be removed from Him? Was Jesus reluctant, or was He fearful? Have you had the experience of being entrusted with a responsibility or put in a situation that was way beyond your ability? This is one of those rare moments we see our Lord Jesus overwhelmed by the

extraordinary responsibility placed on Him—to carry the sins for all mankind on the cross.

Whenever we are overwhelmed, our tendency is to ask, “Why me?” The truth is, God does not make any mistake—you are the person He has chosen for His purpose. You can be assured that God will neither leave you nor forsake you. Just as He sent the angel to strengthen our Lord Jesus, God too will strengthen you for the responsibility you have to carry and the situation you have to overcome.

Although our Lord was deeply agonised—plan B was not an option. In humility, Jesus surrendered to the will of the Father. “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” When Jesus allowed Himself to be betrayed, arrested, tried, and nailed to the cross, He did it for the sake of all mankind, to fulfil the will of the Father. Are we willing to surrender ourselves to the will of the Father to fulfil a greater purpose for the Kingdom of God?

## Prayer

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Lord forgive us—we have often failed to recognise that You are the ONE who have chosen us for Your purpose. By Your grace, empower and strengthen us for the task so that we may fulfil Your will on earth, that You alone may be glorified. Amen.

## Action

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Are there areas in your life, that you are struggling to surrender to the will of the Father? Perhaps, today is the day for you to pray—“Lord, not my will, but yours, be done.”

*Revd Canon Lewis Lew  
Vicar  
St Andrew's Cathedral*

# Before the Rooster Crows Today, You Will Deny Me Three Times

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13 April • Wednesday of Holy Week

Luke 22:54-71

<sup>54</sup>Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. <sup>55</sup>And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. <sup>56</sup>Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." <sup>57</sup>But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." <sup>58</sup>And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." <sup>59</sup>And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." <sup>60</sup>But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup>And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." <sup>62</sup>And he went out and wept bitterly.

<sup>63</sup>Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. <sup>64</sup>They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" <sup>65</sup>And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

<sup>66</sup>When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, <sup>67</sup>"If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, <sup>68</sup>and if I ask you, you will not answer. <sup>69</sup>But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." <sup>70</sup>So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." <sup>71</sup>Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

# Meditation

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The unprecedented and unwarranted arrest of Jesus must have aroused astounding anxiety, agony and anger. More than others, Peter must have felt the full brunt and burden of these enormous emotions. He had been there. He had seen it all.

When Christ was led away, Peter instinctively or intuitively, followed—but from afar—at a safe distance. In the courtyard of the High Priest, the dim light from the fire and even the darkness of the night, did not diminish the persistent pursuits of the maid who suggested that Peter had been with Jesus. Peter promptly put to rest this proposition.

Then came another encounter. It was strongly stated that Peter was one of them. This demand was dismissed there and then. The third thrust at Peter came in the assertion that was associated with his Galilean connection. As Peter embarked on this third denial, the rooster crowed even as Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter.

Overwhelmed and overcome by all that had transpired including the warning of Jesus, Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Reflecting on this extraordinary episode, one can imagine that any Singaporean even with the faintest knowledge of the Gospel may exclaim “Peter, WHY LIKE THAT?”

For many of us, who admire Peter in his walk with Jesus, witnessing wonders and miracles, spellbound by His teaching and preaching, touched and thankful for His handling of individuals and crowds alike, our reaction

would be “How could he?” He had also declared that even if all were to forsake Jesus, he was prepared to go with Him to prison and to death.

We would not have so denied Jesus, would we?

Really?

Does it occur to us that each time we act, speak or even think in a way unworthy of Christ, we are actually denying Him. More than Peter, we have the full gospel of Jesus and the whole counsel of God in the Bible. We have also been given the presence and power of His Holy Spirit.

Could we further find warnings of confidence in self thinking that we are better, more committed and faithful than other fellow disciples. On the other hand, when faced with tough situations when the tough should really get going, are we tempted to follow Christ at a comfy and safe distance?

Hopefully and prayerfully, may this passage prepare us to confess our faith in Christ with conviction and courage, be winning and winsome in our witness and work for Him and serve Him fruitfully and faithfully, in humility and honour of our Lord God. We may then be really ready to go to prison and to death for HIM. But for most of us, He may not need us to so die for HIM but to LIVE and LIVE TRIUMPHANTLY FOR HIM and HIS GLORY.

## Prayer

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Heavenly Father,

As we THANK and PRAISE YOU for today’s word, we

confess our many faults and failings, short-comings and sins and even denying You in our actions and attitudes, words and thoughts. We thank You for Your love and forgiveness, restoring us and raising us from the ashes of defeat and despair to aspirations of triumphs and victories in our Lord Jesus. We rejoice, and are truly overwhelmed that HE has not only died for us but continues to pray for us even as He did for Peter. Help us to be fruitful and faithful followers of Christ not from afar but always by His side, sharing and showing, even sacrificially, His LOVE and SALVATION to all around, near and far. We pray this prayer with thanksgiving in the name and presence of our dear Lord Jesus—AMEN.

## Action

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Let us be close and faithful followers of our Lord, not just individually but also TOGETHER, keeping close to Him and one another, bearing one another's burdens, in humility, unity and love for LOVE OF HIM and for HIS GLORY.

*Elder Dr Lawrence Chia  
Chairman, Evangelical Alliance of Singapore (EAS, formerly  
known as EFOS)  
Vice-President, Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES)*

# When I See the Blood, I Will Pass Over You

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14 April • Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup>“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup>Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household. <sup>4</sup>And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbour shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.

<sup>11</sup>In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover. <sup>12</sup>For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>“This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

## Meditation

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The passage is an important reminder. The blood of the lamb was a sign for God recognised so that He would let death and judgement pass over the household concerned. The blood was taken from the lamb that was slain for the purpose of the Passover. It was a sign

of atonement. But God said that the blood shall be a sign for His people. It was in reality, a sign of salvation. The children of Israel saw around them death of the Egyptian firstborns. The devastation that came with death was real, but the children of Israel were spared.

The sign of the first Passover reminds us of the last Passover celebrated by Jesus before His crucifixion. In Matthew 26:27-28 we read: "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." At the Passover, Jesus lifted the signs of bread and cup and instituted the Lord's Supper for the Church. They were symbols of His body broken for our atonement and His blood shed for the remission of our sins.

Do we need to be reminded of the Lord's Supper? Absolutely! We need to be reminded of what should accompany it. We remember the ceremonial ritual but we often forget the spiritual realities behind it. The devastation of death in Egypt caused a great cry and was followed by funerals on the night of the Passover. In contrast, the salvation received by the children of Israel was accompanied by celebration and feasting. They also celebrated the new freedom, and the beginning of a new period, that followed the Passover. Salvation, freedom and new period were practical realities then. Are these personal realities to us today and if so, do we celebrate them with joy?

## Prayer

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Help me Lord to lift up the eyes of my heart to see the spiritual realities in the signs of the bread and wine as and when I partake of the Holy Communion. Let there



be a deep stirring of joy and gratitude in my heart as I partake the bread that signify Your body broken for the atonement of my sins. Let there be a deep sense of peace and hope as I drink the cup that signify the shedding of Your blood and the new covenant of grace. Help me to always celebrate at Your table of love and mercy.

## Action

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I shall prepare my heart this coming Easter Sunday to celebrate the Lord's Supper. I shall fully engage myself in the celebration. I shall go before the Lord and lay down my sins, shame and sadness at His feet and exchange them for grace, forgiveness and hope.

*Pastor Lawrence T Y Chua  
Senior Pastor  
Living Sanctuary Brethren Church*

# The LORD Has Laid on Him the Iniquity of Us All

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15 April • Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

<sup>13</sup>Behold, my servant shall act wisely;  
he shall be high and lifted up,  
and shall be exalted.

<sup>14</sup>As many were astonished at you—  
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,  
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

<sup>15</sup>so shall he sprinkle many nations.  
Kings shall shut their mouths because of him,  
for that which has not been told them they see,  
and that which they have not heard they understand.

**53** Who has believed what he has heard from us?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup>For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.

<sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

<sup>4</sup>Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he opened not his mouth.

<sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgement he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?

<sup>9</sup>And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;  
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup>Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

## Meditation

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From Isaiah 52:13—53:12, we get a glimpse of the ministry of the Messianic Servant of the Lord and His completed work of salvation as our sin bearer.

There are two astounding revelations about this salvation.

First, it was the Father who laid on His Son our sins and iniquities. There's a tendency for us to view the Father as the reluctant Judge who had to be pacified by Christ's death before He can love us. The distortion sounds like this, "Jesus died for us so that the Father can love us". Does the Son have to "twist" the Father's arm into loving us? Absolutely not. Both Isaiah and John 3:16 say otherwise. This has immense impact in the way we view and relate with the Father. Christ's coming is not just to die for our sins and make a way for us to have eternal life. The primary work of Christ's coming is to show us the Father, to behold how lovely, compassionate, kind and gracious He is. The apex and goal of redemption is our adoption as children of God.

Secondly, we learn the shocking manner of Christ's coming. "...he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." Isaiah 53:2

Contrary to most artist impression and movie characters of Jesus, Scriptures portray a Christ who has nothing desirable or attractive about Him. Not just in life, but in His death on the cross. The manner of saving us was repugnant and repulsive to all. The Cross is foolishness and a stumbling block.

It was Martin Luther who insisted rightly, "The theology of the cross as the only correct way to view God and the only way to correctly view the life of the believer. The supreme moment of God's self-revelation was on the cross at Calvary. The cross is paradigmatic for how God will deal with believers who are united to Christ by faith."

## Prayer

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Lord, forgive us for making light of the Cross and seeking to live the Christian life in the most convenient and comfortable way, without any sacrifice. Help us embrace the cross as the pattern for all of life. Amen.

## Action

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How can my new understanding of the cross re-orientate my lifestyle, in the way I worship God, the way I give and serve others?

“The cross is the safest of all things. Blessed is the man who understands this”. (Luther)

*Rev Dr Keith Lai  
Senior Pastor  
Covenant Presbyterian Church*

# Whoever Has the Son Has Life

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16 April • Holy Saturday

1 John 5:5-12

<sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

<sup>6</sup>This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup>the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. <sup>9</sup>If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. <sup>10</sup>Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

## Meditation

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The world is in trouble—Pandemic, distrust and trade tensions between nations, disunity and conflict within nations, climate and rapid technological changes, unprecedented urbanisation and international migration exacerbating inequalities and fuelling discontent.

Who can overcome the troubles of the world?

The answer is “the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (v 5). It is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that assures us the victory (v 4).

Our faith in Christ is not without basis. Christ was in the world and overcame the world. He said, “Take heart I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33).

Verse 6 assures us that Jesus Christ is truly from God because God’s Spirit bears witness to His humanity (by water) and divinity (by blood)—He alone is the God-Man who can fulfil God’s requirement to be our Saviour and the Saviour of the world.

When Jesus was water-baptised by John, the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove and God’s voice from heaven declared: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17). Throughout his earthly ministry, God’s Spirit never left Him as He confirms Jesus’ authoritative teaching and miraculous works.

The blood represents Jesus’ death on the cross predicted by the Lord Jesus Himself during the last supper when He took the cup and gave thanks, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Lk 22:20). His blood sealed a new covenant with God almighty, in which we have the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and a new relationship with God as our heavenly Father.

Because we have the Son, we also have the life of Christ that will overcome the troubles of this world. We have the reason to be hopeful in a troubled world.

## Prayer

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Dear God, there is so much despair in the world as it appears to be spinning out of control. But we do not despair because YOU are in control and You have sent Jesus Christ our Lord into the world to show us that

the troubles of the world can be overcome in Jesus. We pray Your Spirit will continue to turn the eyes of the world to see Jesus as the only Overcomer who can give us the Faith, Hope and Love to make sense of this darkening world. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Action

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Every morning, as you begin your day, ask the Lord to make you a blessing to someone. Be determined by God's grace to light a candle to show the way and not just curse the darkness around us. Ask for strength to live positively, purposefully, and passionately so that we can let our light shine before others, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven.

*Rev Dr William Wan, JP., PhD.  
General Secretary  
Singapore Kindness Movement*



# God's Wonderful Plan

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17 April • The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Sunday

1 Peter 3:14-22

<sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup>but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

<sup>18</sup>For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup>in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup>because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. <sup>21</sup>Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup>who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

## Meditation

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Have you ever come across this statement? "GOD loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!" It's actually taken from the first Spiritual Law of the four Spiritual Laws. Is the statement true? Totally!! Our heavenly Father has an incredible plan for us. However, *our* idea of "wonderful" and GOD's idea of "wonderful" might

not be totally the same. GOD's purpose for us is that we be totally transformed into the image of His Son. That is our end state, to be conformed to be like our Lord and Master (Romans 8:29).

However, more often than not, we assume that that journey would be "wonderful," in that the road would be smooth, unhindered and pain free. That's certainly not what the Scriptures tell us. The text before this day reminds us that we may suffer even when we try to live righteously!

But *when* we suffer under those circumstances, they offer us two "wonderful" opportunities. *First*, it grants us the opportunity to witness for our faith (v 15). I'm sure most of us would prefer to witness under better circumstances. But suffering for living well, is actually a powerful witness of the reality of the Gospel (v 16). The *second* opportunity is that it allows us to be more like our Master. Even our Lord Himself, who did not need to suffer for sin, chose to bear ours on His Cross, "the righteous for the unrighteous" (v 18). In that sense, we are following the way of our Master. This Lent season, as we remember what our Lord did for us, let us also be prepared to walk the way He did, to suffer, "if that should be GOD's will" (v 17b) for righteousness sake. In doing so, Our Father's wonderful plan will be formed in us.

## Prayer

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Dear Heavenly Father, we are grateful that Your will is good, perfect and pleasing. That will involve letting Your only Son, JESUS, to exchange His life for ours. Today, You remind us that as we follow Him, it may well be along that path of suffering also. Help us not to be troubled, as and when trouble comes. Rather, focus our

energy and attention on living righteously and following Him, that Your wonderful plan may be accomplished in us. For we ask this in JESUS' name, amen.

## Action

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How can you follow the Lord well today?

*Rev Dr Chua Chung Kai  
Chairman  
Evangelical Free Church of Singapore*

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"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." **JOHN 1:14 (ESV)**

