

LIGHT

Jesus: "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)

BIRTH OF A CHURCH

**HAS THE RESURRECTION OF THE
LORD JESUS AFFECTED YOU?**

**THE GREATEST LOVE STORY
(SONG OF SOLOMON)**

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The Called Out

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord"
(2 Corinthians 6:17)

In Joshua's day God's people failed to drive out Jebusites from Jerusalem. When the Lord gave His people the whole land of Canaan to possess, He commanded them to drive out the seven nations because of their abominable heathen practices. But the Israelites allowed the Jebusites to remain in the strongest position of the city. Years later when David became king in Jerusalem, they began to mock him, and were very self confident. When King David and his men went out against them they said, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come hither," thinking they could not be overcome.

But God's purpose was to have the Jebusites driven out, so He gave David and his men victory (see 2 Sam. 5:1-10). It was only when he became the true king of Zion over all the tribes of Israel, that God showed him that the Jebusites must not remain. If you want to have a share in building the House of the Lord, then you must yield completely to Jesus Christ as the heavenly King. As we enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts, our family and our Church, we will begin to see something of God's plan for His Church.

Now the Jebusites had no part whatsoever in God's House, as in these days persons not born again have no place or share in the House of God. Many are found like Jebusites in the work of God today. Though they are not born again they have been elected to hold offices and to be members of committees because of their influence through their money, positions or other worldly qualifications. Others who are not born again hold positions as pastors and deacons. Such cannot truly have any part in the House of God or any share whatever in the work of the Lord. They cannot lead and take care of God's flock as true pastors and shepherds and like the Jebusites, must be kept outside.

The presence of even a few Jebusites hinders God's work. Even though David, when he came to Jerusalem had driven out many, he left some there, perhaps thinking not to trouble them because they did good and were nice people. But God had to punish David till he drove them all out.

- Bro. Bakht Singh -

The Greatest Love story

(Song of Solomon)

- Anne Jayasundara -

I would like to share with you some thoughts from the book of Song of Solomon. Many believers have not done a study of this book. It may be because of the nature of the story that is unfolding in the book. It is a description of a love story in poetic form. This Song is acknowledged in secular Literature as a master piece poem of love. Some say that it is written like scenes of a stage drama. There are 3 main characters in the drama. Firstly there is Solomon the king or the Bridegroom, secondly the Shulamite woman the Bride, and thirdly the Daughters of Jerusalem who speak in between the conversation of the Bride and the Groom. What I would like to do is to share with you some devotional thoughts from the first few verses of the book. I hope and pray that you will be given a desire to read this book again and receive spiritual blessing.

Let us read Song of Solomon 1:1-4.
Let us read prayerfully.

“The song of songs, which is Solomon’s.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.”

It is possible that some of you might have even wondered as to why this Song of Solomon is included in the Bible. But we must remember that God is always wiser than us. He has included in the Bible only that which is necessary. Please see 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17. “ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” It is good for us sisters to do a systematic and devotional study of the Song of Solomon. Please read it devotionally. Read it with the fear of God. God will speak to your heart and lead you to understand eternal truths about God’s love for us. And also about how we should love Him.

There are 4 main interpretations to this book. That is, 4 ways to understand the message of this book.

Firstly, this song can be seen as an expression of pure marital love as ordained by God between man and a woman. In the book it is between Solomon and a Shulamite girl. Today true marital love is being attacked by the devil so much. The minds of men and women have been corrupted by many wicked and worldly thoughts. That is why there is no peace in many families. We as believers must know that Holy Matrimony has been ordained by God. It is for the purpose of Holy experience of God’s love expressed through one another. Some couples love each other only at the beginning of their married life. After some time,

they begin to fight with each other and become rude to each other. Because of this their children get discouraged and will not follow the Lord. All our married sisters must examine their hearts about their promise they gave at the time of marriage. We promised to love and obey our husbands. God will not accept any excuse for not doing so. God wants us to live peaceably with our husbands. We must learn divine love from the Lord and express it to our husbands. So the first interpretation is pure marital love.

Secondly, the Song of Solomon shows us about God's love for His covenant people, Israel. In several passages in the Bible, Israel is described as the wife of the Lord. And the Lord is described as the husband. Please see Isaiah 54:5 & 6. "For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, The God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou was refused, saith the God." Jeremiah 2:2 and Ezekiel 16:8-14 also the same idea. When we read the book of Song of Solomon, we could think of this unique relationship God has with Israel. God always wanted to have an intimate fellowship with Israel. That is why in Exodus 19:5 He said "you will be a peculiar treasure unto me". Then in Exodus 25:8 He said "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them". So the second interpretation is God's love story with people of Israel.

Thirdly, this book is symbolic of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for His heavenly bride the Church. This is the greatest love story ever told. Please read 2 Cor. 11:2. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." This is a

grand theme that we could study from the scriptures. Whenever we read the Song of Solomon, we must know that through the love relationship that is mentioned there, the Lord is showing us His love for the Church. In Revelation 19:7 and 21:2, we read that the glorified church is the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today the Church is waiting for the heavenly Bridegroom to come back. We should all be waiting for the Rapture. Remember the key word for a bride is Purity. God has admonished us not to get polluted by the ways of the world.

Then the fourth interpretation is the personal relationship that each one of us has with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our relationship with the Lord is necessarily a love relationship. It is not based on fear or any other thing other than love. The Bible tells us that God has loved us with an everlasting love. That verse is found in Jeremiah Chapter 31:3. Then, John 3:16 says that God loved us and gave His only begotten Son. Then in Ephesians 5:25 says that "Christ loved us and gave Himself for us". So, it is all about divine love.

So, can you now remember the 4 interpretations of the Song of Solomon? Expression of true marital love, God's love relationship with Israel His covenant people, relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ with His Church and the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ with an individual believer. So, whenever you read this book, you must keep this in mind. This book cannot be understood by those who have a carnal mind. The un-regenerated person cannot see the divine plan in this book. Those who are not born again will see a human love story. But we believers could see divine love and divine truths.

As I have mentioned already, there are 3 characters throughout the book.

They are Solomon the Bridegroom, the Shulamite woman the Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem who will intervene in the story from time to time. It is important to identify as to who is speaking in a given passage. In the first 4 verses of chapter 1, only the Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem are speaking. But if you go further, you can read what the Bridegroom is saying. But in the first four verses only two characters are present.

In verse 1 we find about the author. "The song of songs which is Solomon's".

In verse 2 the Bride is speaking. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. For thy love is better than wine".

Here we find the desire of the Bride to experience divine love in a deeper manner. Kindly do not think of this as a carnal expression. Everything revealed here is spiritual and divine. How many of us are desiring to experience a deeper love of the Lord. We only want his blessings. There is a saying that 'The Lord Jesus has many servants and only a few lovers.' This is a true saying.

Ephesians 3:18 tells us that we need to know and experience His love, the breadth and length and depth and height. Then verse 19 tells us that it is a love which passeth knowledge. Please read those 2 verses. "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Can you see that we could be filled with all the fulness of God only if we know and experience the Love of Christ in full measure. See how important this thought is! God will reveal this love of Christ only to those who really desire it. Others will have only a superficial experience of His love.

The next line says "Thy love is better than wine".

Wine in the Bible speaks to us about human gladness. Ps 104:15 says "wine that maketh glad the heart of man". The Bride says that His love is better than wine. Yes, God's love is not merely making our hearts glad. His love has accomplished God's purposes. Do you know what the Bible says about God's love for us?

Firstly, His love is Eternal – Jeremiah 31:3. That means even before we were born, God loved us from eternity past.

Then His love is Sacrificial – John 3:16 – "He gave". Yes, God gave His Son. The Son gave His life.

Thirdly His love is Unfathomable – In Matthew 27:46 we read the words – "My God My God why hath thou forsaken me". He was willing to go through that experience because of His love for you and me.

Next, His love is Unending. This unending love is also described as the Undying love or even Covenanted love. This is the love of God that will never change. In whatever condition you are today, His love remains the same. We love people according to their performance. But God does not love like that. There is a special word in the Hebrew Old Testament to express this love. It is the Word KHEZED. This word is translated in the English Bible as the "Lovingkindness of God". Today if you think that you have disobeyed God and grieved Him, please remember His love for you has not changed. That is why you must repent and return to Him. He will abundantly forgive.

Fifthly His love is personal. His love is individually focused upon each one of

us. We read in Mark 10:21 that the Lord Jesus looked at a young person and loved him. We also read in John 11:3 that Jesus loved Lazarus. Yes, our Lord has loved us personally and He still loves us personally. That means all His love is focused upon each person. All His deeds are done in love.

So truly we could say “Thy love is better than wine”. We could also remember Ps 63:3. “Thy lovingkindness is better than life”

Now please read verse 3. These words are spoken by the Daughters of Jerusalem. “Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is like ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee”. Here we find the Daughters of Jerusalem are praising the Name of the Bridegroom. The Name of the Lord Jesus is the only name whereby we must be saved. Please read Acts 4:12. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”.

Then we have the “good ointment” in the same verse. Ointments here suggest to us, all the attributes perfectly blended together in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ointment is made through the process of crushing and pounding. So, through discipline of suffering, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ has become as sweet ointment poured forth. The sweet fragrance of the life of the Son of God has sweetened many a life. Have you sung that beautiful hymn “How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds, In a believer’s ear”?

*How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear!
It soothes his sorrow, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear,*

Shall we now go to verse 4. This verse is divided into 3 sections. The first is “Draw me”. The actual thought is “Draw me after thee”. This is the Bride speaking. Has the Lord drawn you with His cords of redeeming love? We must constantly pray that prayer. Lord draw me after thee! If not we could be attracted by the vain glory of this world. The Lord is asking only one thing from us. That is to “follow Him”. Can you remember that was the first request the Lord made from Peter and Andrew? And also, James and John. What strong words are they! Follow Me! They left everything and followed Him. Are we true followers of the Lord? Are we running the race only looking unto Jesus. Do we have any other heroes in our lives? No there can be no other such person. We must walk as close as possible to Him.

The next section in verse 4 is “We will run after thee”. These are the words of the Daughters of Jerusalem. Notice the words “we will run”. When one saint gets a spiritual reviving, it will influence others also. By our pure devotion to the Lord, others also could get encouraged. They will say “we will also run”.

Then we read the most beautiful experience of the Bride. “The King has brought me into His chambers”. This speaks to us of the unique privilege of every believer of coming into the very presence of God. We are going there to enjoy His presence and to enjoy His love. Are we entering in on a daily basis? Please read Hebrews 10:19-22. Oh what a blessed experience is this!

So dear sisters, can you see now that we have a lot to learn from the meditation of scriptures of Song of Solomon. I am going to stop there. May the Lord give us spiritual understanding to appreciate the Word of God. May our heavenly Bridegroom comfort us and show His precious love to us.



TEST OF TIMES

Part 4

[Click here to read Part 3](#)

Having considered this theme the TEST OF TIMES firstly under the sub heading of **TEST OF OUR FAITH IN GOD** and secondly **TEST OF OUR FEAR OF GOD**, now we venture to consider this theme thirdly under the heading **TEST OF OUR FAITHFULNESS TOWARDS GOD**.

3) Test of FAITHFULNESS towards God

God is a faithful God, but man's faithfulness is always questionable. So our faithfulness has to be put to test. The test of faithfulness towards God can be understood in 3 main aspects.

1) Faithfulness in relation to the COMING of the Lord Jesus Christ

I don't know how much you realized this during these trying times, but for me personally the thought of the coming of Christ has been more real and it has led me to desire it and hope for it more than ever before during this period of life. Our faithfulness in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is a clear marker of our faithfulness towards God. Those who

faithfully wait for the coming of the Lord will **PURIFY** themselves, **PREPARE** themselves and **PROCLAIM** the message of hope.

• **PURIFY**

As we consider the coming of Christ, the first thing we need to be mindful is our **PURITY** - 1 John 3:3. *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*

We will try to understand this simply by using 3 words.

a) **The STANCE – Personal – "purifieth himself"**

Leading a pure life is a personal stance that you and I need to take. But unfortunately, many fail to realize this and depend on others to encourage, guide and advise them to be steadfast in this respect. How about you? Are you concerned about it personally or do you want someone to keep pushing you? Your faithfulness in relation to the coming of the Lord can be seen in your commitment to keep yourself pure for the Lord's coming.

**b) The STANDARD – Lord Jesus Christ –
"even as he is pure"**

The standard of our purity is the Lord Jesus Christ alone and not any other. No matter how high their standard may be the comparison should be made only with the Lord Jesus Christ and not with one another. By comparing our standard of purity with one another how much we fail to maintain the standard that God expects from us and also many a time we complain and get discouraged in our endeavour by looking at others.

**c) The SCOPE – Whole being - BODY,
SOUL & SPIRIT - 1Thess. 5:23**

The scope of our purity is described in this verse. In this verse please notice the words WHOLLY & WHOLE used in relation to our sanctification at the coming of the Lord. God wants us to be pure in every area of our being that is our whole body, soul and spirit. So let us be found faithful in relation to the coming of the Lord by PURIFYING ourselves.

• PREPARE – Matt. 25:1-13

This passage is the parable of the ten virgins which teaches us many lessons about our preparedness for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And very briefly I'm going to lay out 3 areas we need to be prepared in as we wait for that event. The following statement is very self-explanatory in this regard. ***"By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail"*** Benjamin Franklin.

**a) Be PREPARED for the UNDUE DELAY –
Matt 25:5**

We find that there's an undue delay in relation to the coming of the Lord and in 1 Thess. 4:17 we understand that even Paul in his days was waiting for this event and since then nearly 2000 years have passed

and still we in our time are waiting for this glorious event. Also in 2 Pet. 3:19 we find that the reason for this delay is the salvation of many souls. So let us be prepared for the undue delay.

**b) Be PREPARED for the UNEXPECTED
DESCENT – Mt 25:6, 13**

Here we understand that the coming of the Lord is going to be at a time we least expect and we need to be prepared for that sudden coming. We need to be watchful – Matt. 24:36-41.

**c) Be PREPARED with an
UNCOMPROMISING DETERMINATION
Mt 25:4,9**

In our preparation for the coming of the Lord we cannot afford to compromise in relation to anything at all. We need to be steadfastly determined to maintain that preparedness no matter what the cost may be.

**• PREACH/PROCLAIM
2 Tim. 4:1-2**

Our faithfulness to the coming of the Lord is also seen in our proclaiming of the message of His coming to those who are unaware and unprepared of it. But what is the message that we proclaim? It is a sevenfold message in relation to the coming of the Lord that we have been given to proclaim. I'm only listing it out and encourage you to go through the verses and to do your own self-study.

- I. **Message of SALVATION**
Mark 16:15
- II. **Message of SANCTIFICATION**
1 Thess. 3:13/5:23

- III. **Message of STEADFASTNESS**
2 Thess. 2:1-2/ James 5:8
- IV. **Message of SOBERNESS**
1 Thess. 5:1-6/ Titus 2:12,13
- V. **Message of a SURE HOPE**
1 Thess. 4:13-17
- VI. **Message of SUFFERING** for Christ
2 Timothy 2:12
- VII. **Message of SERVICE**
Rev. 22:12

2) Faithfulness in relation to the CONCERN for the people of God Phil 2:4,5

The next area of test in relation to our faithfulness towards God is our concern for one another. Philippians 2:4,5 does not teach us to be inquisitive of what people do and dig the garbage in their lives but while taking care of our own matters we need to be concerned and sensitive of the matters that concern the people of God, without being self-centered. We find 3 outstanding examples in Philippians chapter 2 in this regard.

Phil 2: 20 – Timothy

Timothy was concerned of the spiritual state of the believers at Philippi. How about you? Are you concerned about the spiritual state of believers? If you are truly concerned, you will set a right example and also encourage one another without discouraging them by poisoning minds with your attitude issues.

Phil 2:25,26 – Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus was so much concerned of the believers that he was so worried because others were troubled about the sickness he was experiencing. How different to many of us who complain saying no one came to see me and so on. Today many complain of not being visited but have you visited anyone lately? We usually expect the Church leadership to visit us and show concern but we need to

remember that Church leaders need to be visited as well and encouraged to carry on their ministry of bearing the burdens of the people of God.

Phil 2:5-8 – Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ was so concerned about us that He left aside His heavenly glory and came down to this earth to go all the way to the cross and die on our behalf. Do we need any other example more than this? Let us follow the example that has been set before us.

Having these examples let us also now consider 3 aspects of showing our concern to the people of God.

1) By SUPPLICATION

An important aspect in carrying the burden is carrying it by Prayer. By interceding for one another we can exhibit our concern. Some examples - Moses – Ex 32:30-35, Daniel – Dan 9:5, Abraham – Gen 18:23-33. Dear brothers and sisters it is of utmost importance to pray for one another. Samuel considered it a sin if he didn't pray for Israel – 1 Sam 12:23. Do you pray one for another?

2) By SHARING

Concern towards believers does not just stop at praying but it goes a step beyond to minister practically to that need. 1 John 3:17,18 – Love not in word but in deed. Very often it is easy to pray but not to perform the needful. In the early Church they practiced this sharing – Acts 2:44,45 / 4:34,35. But you may say "I have only a little and how can I share that". Remember that there are always people who are poorer than you. If you carefully look out you'll find many with needs, and though you may not be able to fulfill it all, yet you can to some extent. When did you last share with some one? Don't say "tell us if you need anything" but simply give as the Lord leads you. It's not the amount but the thought that matters.

3) By SACRIFICE

Caring for the people of God will also result in sacrifice. The Lord delighted so much in us that it resulted in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus – John 3:16. And now it is our turn – 1 John 3:16

We find Paul as another outstanding example - 1 Cor 15:31 – "*I die daily*", 2 Cor 12:15 – "*Gladly spend and be spent*". This is the meaning of Salt in Matt 5:13. Salt gives flavor and prevents spoiling at the expense of it – it dissolves. If we are truly concerned of the people of God this will be true about us. Time, energy, wealth and self will have to be sacrificed to demonstrate our concern for believers.

3) Faithfulness in relation to the **COMMAND** of the Lord Jesus Christ – **Matthew 28:19,20**

The third and final aspect in this study is the faithfulness towards God proved by obeying the great commandment of our Lord. We need to be true to this command and spread the gospel of hope to those who are living without a hope in this world. Let me list out the sevenfold hope the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ brings to us. Let us be faithful to proclaim this message and be faithful to this great commission.

The 7 fold **HOPE** of the Gospel – Col. 1:23

- 1) **Hope of SALVATION**
1 Thess. 5:8
- 2) **Hope of ETERNAL LIFE**
Titus 1:2
- 3) **Hope of RIGHTEOUSNESS**
Gal. 5:5
- 4) **Hope of HIS CALLING**
Eph. 1:8
- 5) **Hope of HIS SECOND COMING**
Titus 2:13
- 6) **Hope of GLORY**
Col. 1:27
- 7) **LORD JESUS CHRIST himself our hope** – 1 Tim. 1:1

- Dinesh Malcolm Paul -

Martyrs In The Bible

Abel

Killed by his brother
Genesis 4: 3 - 8

Zechariah

Killed between the temple and the altar
Matthew 23: 35; Luke 11: 51

John the Baptist

Killed by Herod the tetrarch
Matthew 14: 1 - 12

Stephen

Stoned to death
Acts 7: 54 - 60

James

Killed by King Herod
Acts 12: 1, 2

Antipas

God's faithful martyr in Pergamos
Revelation 2: 12, 13

Two Witnesses

Will be killed by the beast
Revelation 11: 7, 8

Host of Martyrs in Heaven

Slain for the word of God
Revelation 6:9-11

Precious in the sight of the
LORD is the death of His
saints.

Psalms 116: 15



Longest Reigning King

Who do you think the longest reigning king was in the Bible?

Manasseh the son of Hezekiah who is considered to be the most wicked King of the kingdom of Judah was the longest reigning king who reigned for 55 years.

Acts of Manasseh

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke

Him to anger. He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of the LORD. Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.

He Shouldn't Have Been Born in the First Place

In those days when Hezekiah — the father of Manasseh — became ill and was at the point of death, the Lord sent Isaiah the prophet to inform him to be prepared for his death. This itself was a supernatural activity, but a more miraculous thing happened when Hezekiah prayed earnestly for an extension of his life and God granted him his request by adding 15 more years to his life and as a proof of it, the time travelled back by ten degrees.

Amazing, isn't it? But what has this to do with Manasseh? We know, according to 2 Kings 21:1, that Manasseh became king when he was

12 years of age and this happened after the death of his father Hezekiah as written in the previous verse, that is 2 Kings 20:21. So a simple calculation tells us that Manasseh was born during the extended 15 years of Hezekiah, to be precise 3 years from when Hezekiah should have died.

Hence, Manasseh's birth could have been avoided if Hezekiah had been willing to accept God's timing. Not only Manasseh but also all the evil he did can be avoided and the Israelites who joined with him in doing all the evil could have been protected from doing so.

Abundant Grace

Up to this point we have condemned Manasseh and we picture him as the most wicked king of Judah which is true in deed and whose birth could have been avoided. However, I was wondering why God allowed such an evil king to reign 55 years, longer than any other king of Judah or Israel. But something unexpected happened when the king of Assyria, took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon and it was then, when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom.

This doesn't encourage us to live however we want expecting God to turn us back to Himself in His time but

teaches us that no one is excluded from the abundant grace of God. If any would like to humble himself before God and ask for His favor, God would embrace him with both hands and accept him no matter how cruel he is; how much of sins he has done; how others think of him.

How do you consider yourself today? Are you thinking that you shouldn't have been born? Do you count yourself worthless because of your sins and failures?

There is no sin that is too great for God to forgive. In fact, in Isaiah 1:18, God declares an open challenge to come to Him and reason out things with Him to see if your sin is greater than His grace. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

God gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

All you need to do is to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." with the sincerity of your heart.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

- S. Varaprasath -



BIRTH OF A CHURCH

In Acts Chapter 16, you would discover the story of the birth of a church, and I would like to narrate it in the form of a story.

Paul and Silas are on their second missionary journey, and they have come to a place called Troas where in the night the apostle Paul had a night vision. In that night vision a man of Macedonia begs Paul to come over to Macedonia and to help us. This is commonly referred to as the Macedonian call. So Paul took that vision to mean that the Lord wanted him to go to Macedonia.

He travels to Philippi a Roman colony, a leading city in that particular province of Macedonia. On the Sabbath day, Paul and his team go to the riverside where a prayer meeting took place attended by women who were seeking the Lord. Paul proclaimed the gospel, the good news, to them.

And one of those listening to Paul was a woman by the name of Lydia, a very successful business woman. The Bible explicitly says that the Lord opened her heart and she responded to the good news and she and her whole family, meaning those who were of an age of understanding, hear the Word of the Lord; received the Lord Jesus Christ to be their personal

Lord and Saviour; and are instantly baptized. So Lydia becomes the first convert in Europe. Because she had a very large home and lots of servants, all of whom we can assume became Christians because of that preaching, the home is open as a Church for Paul to continue his ministry in teaching them and disciplining them. So the first convert is Lydia.

Now as Paul continued in Philippi, a slave girl who was demon possessed had the ability to predict the future made good money for her masters in predicting the future for people. Even today we know that people are very curious about the future and their own personal future.

So this slave girl had a big following; large number of people followed her because they wanted to hear about their future. She looked at Paul and his team and made an astonishing statement, "These men are servants of most high God who are telling you the way to be saved". Now what she said under demonic inspiration was true. And this happened for many days. Every time she saw Paul and the team, she recited these words. And the Bible says that Paul was troubled. Now that raises the question why was Paul troubled? Because we don't need a witness of an evil spirit. That's a bad testimony.

So, one defining day, when this slave girl makes this recitation, Paul spoke with authority, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her". Instantly, the demon leaves this girl and she is delivered and she becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. So she becomes the second convert in Philippi; an amazing, dramatic conversion; set free from demonic bondage and brought into the kingdom of light, life and love.

Now as soon as this exorcism took place, it led to severe persecution. The kingdom of darkness had been impacted, and Paul and Silas were arrested and they were severely flogged and they were thrown into prison and to make sure that they don't escape, they were placed in an inner cell and their feet fastened in stocks. Now, I don't know what you and I would have done under those circumstances, but beaten to within an inch of their lives – hurting deeply physically and emotionally, tired, hungry, thirsty – the Bible says at midnight, at the birth of a new day Paul and Silas prayed and praised God. And that's what we should do when we are facing dire circumstances in our life; pray and praise God.

Just letting my imagination run riot a little bit, probably Paul took the hymn book and looked at Silas and said, "Let's work our way through the hymn book. Let's sing all the praise songs in this hymn book". And it was such a powerful witness because all the other prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there

was a violent earth quake and the foundations of the prison were shaken and at once, all the prison doors flew open and everybody's chains came loose; they were free. The jailer who was entrusted with the responsibility of making sure that all the prisoners stayed intact was probably having a nice snooze – ah, he was fast asleep – and he wakes up in a hurry and in a cold sweat. Why? Because, all the doors are open; all the chains are fallen off; and he thought that all the prisoners had escaped. And under Roman law, if you let prisoners escape, you were executed.

He is about to kill himself with his sword when Paul shouts and says, "Don't harm yourself, we are all here; no one has escaped." And this man brought a light and he came trembling to Paul and Silas, he knelt and he asked the question of the ages, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved". That's the question that every human being has got to ask and receive an answer. And Paul gave a very simple reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Paul didn't complicate it. He simply pointed the person to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His atoning work on the cross and His resurrection.

Paul and Silas are taken to the jailer's house, where Paul took the opportunity to continue preaching. In spite of all his pain, he faithfully shared the word of God with the jailer and with his family. And again, what a challenge for all of us, isn't it? When we are feeling low, we are in

pain, we are troubled, and we have pressing problems, we must never stop proclaiming the gospel – the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that the jailer and his whole family, they believed and they were baptized and they were filled with joy. That's a sure sign that the Lord has come into your life. You will be filled with joy. And he shows amazing hospitality in providing food for Paul and Silas and in binding up all their wounds. So this government official becomes the third convert of the Philippian Church. And so, to entire families, Lydia and the jailer and a former demon possessed slave girl.

And these are the first members of the Philippian Church. What diversity! What amazing conversion stories! The church is born and they meet at Lydia's house. And this church became a delightful church. If you read through the four chapters, it is very evident that Paul was very pleased with this church. This church was growing, and, there was dramatic conversions, life changing, authentic conversions.

So what can we learn from the birth of the church in Philippi? And, I want to give you four "M" words as I wrap up. There must be **messengers**. For there to be a church planted, there must be messengers. They must be godly; they must have a passion for souls; they must know the word of God; and they must be willing to pay the price. Because when you encroach on satanic territory, Satan is going to

attack relentlessly. There is going to be oppression and hardship. So are you and I that kind of a messenger to whom God can entrust the task of church planting.

The second aim is there must be the **message**. So what do we proclaim? What do we preach? We use the scriptures and we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. We proclaim the virgin birth. We proclaim the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus. We proclaim all His miracles. We proclaim His teachings. But supremely, we talk about his work on the cross where He died as our Saviour; Sacrifice; Substitute. We talk about his resurrection and we talk about His ascension and we talk about His intercession right now at the right hand of the Father. And we also talk about His soon return. So proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There must be messengers. There must be a message. And the third 'M' is **might** of the Holy Spirit. No preacher can convert a sinner. It is only the Holy Spirit who can regenerate a sinner. Only the Holy Spirit can bring the conviction of sin. Only the Holy Spirit can make the Lord Jesus Christ real in the heart and mind of a sinner. And only the Holy Spirit can impart new life to a dead soul. And so we depend entirely on the ministry of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His work in the hearts of sinners, redeeming them and incorporating them into the church. Messengers, message, the ministry and might of the Holy Spirit.

And the fourth 'M' word is **multiplication**. So here are three families and in the Philippian church. But they need to be discipled, and they need to be trained, they need to be equipped, and they need to be sent out to become evangelists and missionaries themselves. And so they need to multiply; they need to reproduce. And no church can grow without multiplication and God gets all the glory, isn't it?

So I want you to be encouraged by the birth of the Philippian Church and to become part of a team where you can be involved in church planting, reaching out to lost souls and leading them to the Lord Jesus Christ, making sure that they are planted in a church for growth and for fellowship.

- Benjamin Devadason -

7 Titles of Christ in Hebrews

Heir of all things

Hebrews 1:2

Captain of our salvation

Hebrews 2:10

Apostle

Hebrews 3:1

Author of salvation

Hebrews 5:9

Forerunner

Hebrews 6:20

High Priest

Hebrews 10:21

Author and finisher of faith

Hebrews 12:2

“

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand;
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from error's chain.


- Reginald Heber (1783-1826) -



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR BIBLE?

1. What is the shortest book of the Bible?
2. Which two Gospels tell of the birth of Jesus?
3. How many books did the Apostle John write?
4. Which prophet predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem?
5. What is the oldest written book of the Bible?

Answers
1. 2 John
2. Matthew and Luke
3. Five
4. Micah (Micah 5:2)
5. Job



Has the resurrection of the Lord Jesus affected you?

- Neville Jayasundara -

Do we believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? I know the answer is obvious. The next question is, "Is that belief is real and has it affected our lives"?

The knowledge of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ turned the fearful disciples into a group of fearless bold witnesses. More than anything else, it is the fact and the truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ that gives us the assurance of our salvation and also the boldness to be witnesses.

Romans 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead".

All the apostles except Judas Iscariot died as martyrs at the end, after having preached the gospel all over the then known world.

What made those timid, ignorant to some extent about the worldly affairs and illiterate to a great extent never gone to school such a group of people, to go about preaching the gospel and establish something that is still continuing after 2000 years.

How was it possible at the trial of the Lord Jesus, a man who said, "I

do not know this man; I deny having known him" later said, "Please crucify me upside down. I am not worthy to be crucified like my Master". That was Simon Peter.

Please think about it. These are facts about history that during the first and the second centuries so many Christian believers were put to death; thrown to animals; and killed and burned alive. Why? How were they so bold to give away their lives?

It was the knowledge of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one incident that changed the history of the world, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. They knew Romans 1:4, the reality of it. "He is declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead."

What we need today is not another telling of the story of resurrection. How the ladies went to the tomb early in the morning; how the stone was rolled; how the angels were seen. That is not what we need at the moment. We like to hear it but that is not what we need at this moment.

I would like you to come into this full assurance of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and may that

truth have the full effect in your life to do the things that I would like to now very briefly remind you of.

Justification through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 4:25, "The Lord Jesus was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"

Justification comes through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We are justified! We are no longer those condemned poor sinners. Remember, God has declared you and me to be a just person, justified by God. Nothing that you have ever done, said or thought will be held against you in the Day of Judgment. Are we holy people before God? Yes! Are we perfect? No! But our standing before God is great because God looks at us through the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to get rid of this low kind of perception of life. You are a righteous person before God because you believe on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not afraid to speak out from the street corner and say, "We were terrible sinners" but we have to say, "Saved by the grace of God".

So the first word is Justification. Do we go about as such people? This is the need of the hour.

Second word is **Transformation**. That is, Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

You can see the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to that verse, is connected with transformation of life. Your life and mine.

This is the greatest need at the moment. We need to show transformed life. We need to have one; we need to show one. In your life, practice and behavior you need to be different to your neighbor if he or she is not a believer. You need to exhibit divine love at every time. There are certain characteristics of man which he is not able to come out of. We need to come out of it by the power of resurrection; by the power of transformation that is vested in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You need to love your enemy by the power of resurrection. Begin with the fellowship of the brethren. You have to love your enemy, or enemies who are seemingly so, you need to love them. You need to turn your other cheek when someone strikes on one cheek.

This is the message of resurrection. This is what the risen Lord is giving us. Justification and Transformation!

Then we have the third word **Proclamation**. Acts 4:33, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

If you read through the book of Acts from chapter 2, so many

examples are given to show how so often the apostles preached and talked about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus to the people. We cannot keep quiet; we need to talk.

It is a divine obligation. That is, something that God expects. We need to do this. Wherever you go, whomsoever you may meet, now we need to begin today to talk about the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that sometimes will bring trouble to you. But if you know and believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, then you know as to who God is; the Lord Jesus is the one; and He is the one that matters because finally, all what he has said is right then.

So, we have to reinvent this art of witnessing. We need to talk now. Please do not keep your mouth shut; begin to talk in simple conversations about the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be afraid of the accusation of anyone or social media the new found instrument now in the hands of people, you find that so many things are said but do not be afraid because the victory is ours.

The fourth word can be **Persecution** or even **Vindication** because finally, we will be declared to be innocent though there are now accusations but we will be declared innocent if we do this even through suffering.

So, 2 Timothy 3:12 is a verse we cannot run away from. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

And Philippians 1:29, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake”.

So this is what we will experience. In varying degrees you find persecution in different places all over the world. But that is the proof that we are worthy as you find in 2 Thessalonians 1:5, “We are worthy for that kingdom of God”.

So it is a call from God to witness and action. We need to realize that we have only short time left to do whatever you would like to do. What would you do with the rest of your life?

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