

**When
Heaven
Is
Brass**

Charles Shong

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Preface

The title “When Heaven Is Brass” is taken from Deuteronomy 28:23, *And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.* This verse is concerning the frightening judgment that God pronounced upon the children of Israel for departing from Jehovah God. This is a book on judgment; in particular, the nature of the judgment is by means of torment of the mind and bodily affliction by evil spirits. The day is coming in which God will allow the power of darkness to wreck havoc on earth and men tormented by hellish creatures shall not find death even though they seek for it according to Revelation 9:6, *And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

Actually, the author has no intention to write any book let alone a book on the topic that deals with mental illness and spirit possession. Recently, it was heard over a radio program during a talk show in which it was reported that one person committed suicide everyday in Singapore. About two months ago, a person who was known to the author died under mysterious circumstances. Last month, the newspapers reported about quite a number psychosis sufferers seeking help at The Institute of Mental Health. Just two weeks ago, there was a report on people being cheated by tricksters claiming to be able to chase away devils. Such scams are nothing new though. It is against the backdrop of such misfortunes of fallen men that this book is conceived and written. Another reason for the author to write this book is because of the often misinterpretation of the verse in 1 John 4:4, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* This is the verse commonly used to claim that the forces of darkness cannot touch a Christian.

The author is not writing this book as a textbook to be used by psychologists to study the human mind. This is a Christian book written in the Christian’s perspective concerning troubled minds and tormented bodies of sinners whether saved or lost under the sun. The purpose of the book is to present to the believers in Christ what the Scriptures have to say about mental illnesses and spirit possessions, especially the author himself having had a close brush with such spirits that eventually led to his salvation in the blessed Savior, Jesus Christ. In this book, the author will relate his own limited personal experiences dealing with people who had lost their minds as well as those who were possibly cases of spirit possession. This book also covers the various possibilities in which evil spirits according to the Scriptures could trouble a believer. This book is mostly written in the third person. However, where the events mostly involved the author himself, the first person is used. It is the author’s hope that any child of God reading this book will take heed to God’s warnings in the Bible concerning the serious consequences of walking in the flesh. For a non-Christian reader, it is the

desire of the author that such a person will come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

News Articles

Thanks to scheme, more psychosis sufferers get help early

ONE woman was convinced she had a computer chip embedded in her head and that people were using it to control her. A man heard voices and thought strangers were trying to poison his food. Both had psychosis. That is, they had lost touch with reality.

They and nearly 500 others like them would have stayed lost in their own worlds if not for a group of doctors at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). The doctors started a programme in April 2001 to encourage various professionals who encounter sufferers to bring them for medical treatment.

In less than two years, general practitioners and counsellors from the army, the police and tertiary institutions have referred about 495 patients to the Early Psychosis Intervention Programme. About 350 people, aged 16 to 39, have been treated. The remainder either did not meet the criteria of being first-time sufferers, or were found to be suffering from different conditions. The doctors are also training sinsehs to refer patients to them.

The programme's director, Associate Professor Chong Siow Ann, and his team have launched Singapore's first book on psychosis, entitled *Delusions, Possession Or Imagination? - Experiencing And Recovering From Psychosis*, to educate Singaporeans, in the hope that more patients will come forward.

'We saw only about 120 to 150 new cases a year at IMH before the programme,' said Prof Chong. He estimates that three out of 100 people here suffer from psychosis at some time in their lives. The two most common forms of psychosis are schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychosis. A common symptom in both is patients hearing voices.

'Many families attribute that to witchcraft,' he said. So the patients go from one temple medium to another, in search of a cure. One patient took 15 years to get medical help. On average though, most wait about 2 1/2 years.

Under the programme, patients also have access to a case manager who can help them find jobs.

Harry (not his real name), a 28-year-old former salesman, started hearing voices in 2000. Police arrested him as he would swear and curse but, since treatment at IMH, he has stopped hearing voices.

Encountering other sufferers helped him. Having someone who understood was 'absolutely crucial', he said.

Scam No. 6: Apple tricksters con 2 more of \$28,000

The apple tricksters have struck again. This time, they conned two women into parting with cash and jewellery worth about \$28,000 over two days. Since last July, there have been six such cases and the women tricksters cheated their victims, mainly elderly women, of a total of \$116,000.

The police say there have been no arrests. They have yet to ascertain whether it is the same trio that has been involved in all the six cases. On Friday, one woman was duped of \$8,000. The next day, a 48-year-old woman technician was cheated of \$20,400 in return for nine apples and six bars of soap.

The second woman, who declined to be named, did not realise she had been tricked until she saw a television news report on Monday about the woman who had been cheated on Friday.

She described the three women who conned her as 'not locals'. She said that a woman in her mid-40s approached her when she was on her way to a Clementi West market and asked her for directions to a priestess' house. When she said she didn't know, the woman stopped another woman who happened to be passing by. This second woman led them to yet another woman whom she introduced as the priestess' granddaughter.

The third woman told the victim that an evil spirit was trying to harm her and her second son, and unless a ceremony was performed to chase the demon away, they would die. The victim and the first woman were asked to bring all their cash and jewellery, plus nine apples, to Ginza Plaza. Each was given a black trash bag to put the items in.

The third woman said some prayers, returned the bags, and told them not to open it before the 15th day of the second lunar month. They were also given strict instructions not to tell anyone about the incident.

When she saw the TV report on Monday morning, the victim opened the bag to discover she had been tricked. Speaking in Mandarin, she said: 'I feel so stupid, but what's lost is lost. There's nothing I can do about it.'

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Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Philippians 2:12

Perils For The Presumptuous

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 John 4:1-6).

The statement “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” is simply a factual statement. This is given with reference to trying the spirits because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The children of God are not to fear these spirits in the world because they have overcome them. The reason for overcoming these spirits in the world is because the person of the Holy Spirit residing in the child of God is greater than all these spirits that are in the world.

There is no Scriptural backing to suggest that just because the Holy Spirit is inside a child of God that the devil cannot touch him or her. It is commonly believed that a Christian cannot be possessed by devils because of the Holy Spirit living inside his body is greater than all the spirits in the world. Many Christians believed that the worst that could happen to a child of God is to be oppressed by devils as far as this issue is concerned. Such beliefs have very serious theological implications for a child of God. A Christian may ignorantly believe that since the Holy Spirit is living in him or her, he can do anything without any consequences, including being dealt with via the person of Satan. Though there are many promises found in the Bible that assure the Christian of God’s mercy and protection, it does not necessarily mean that the Devil and his cohort cannot touch the child of God, including possession by devils.

On the contrary, there are many Scriptures in the Bible that warn the child of God to be vigilant and be careful of his walk before God. Peter warned the child of God to, *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8). This is not an empty threat. If the child of God does not take heed to this warning, the devil will devour him while the Holy Spirit is residing in him notwithstanding. The devil can devour the child of God by any means at his disposal, including taking over his body to destroy it. Before anyone concludes that this is heretical teaching, it is prudent to search the Scriptures, like the believers in Berea of old, to see whether these things were so before he ends up

learning the lesson the hard way. For such grave a matter of possession by devils, laziness and carelessness in searching the Scriptures are not an option. It is a matter between peace or turmoil and life or death.

Consider what Paul told the Christians in Corinth concerning one of its members who sinned by cohabiting with his father's wife. *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus* (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The sin committed by this person was exceedingly heinous. Even the unbelieving Gentiles would abhor sin of such nature. Yet this Christian dared to commit such a depraved and vile act of fornicating with his father's wife, which the unbelievers would not even commit. Such presumptuous act of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness is definitely worthy of death. Unfortunately, the congregation in Corinth was indifferent to this sinning member's vile practice of living with his father's wife as his own wife. The furious apostle Paul described their relationship as fornication in an extreme form. Paul charged that the Christians in the church were puffed up for their liberal attitudes in condoning this fornicating couple. Paul expected them to mourn and remove this sinning member from among their midst. Unfortunately, the Christians in Corinth as a local church body did not exercise and execute judgment on their sinning member but turned a blind eye to what went on between this sinning couple.

What Paul did to this sinning member is of great importance in the discussion here. Paul not only told the Christians in Corinth to pass judgment on this member but he suggested such a terrifying sentence that probably shocked them out of their socks. He commanded them to deliver that vile person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. This sinner was supposed to be turned over to Satan for destruction. It is incredulous to believe that this sinner was simply handed over to Satan to be oppressed so that he might repent of his sin. The actual words used to describe the punishment for this sinning member was destruction of the flesh. This punishment was made more horrifying by the fact that the executioner was none other than Satan himself.

This vile person would be given to Satan to be dealt with the way he saw fit. Satan is no shrink. Paul did not send this man to Satan so that Satan might sweet talk him back to the most holy faith. To suggest that Satan could not have touched him or

taken control of him including his body would seriously undermine sound interpretation and application of the Scriptures. This would also suggest that Paul's authority to carry out such a threat was suspect. The objective to deliver this sinning member was for the destruction of the flesh that caused his grievous sin so that his spirit might be saved. This is a saved person being dealt with. As to the process and means employed by Satan, this could very well include taking control of his physical body for the purpose of destruction. However, it is also of note that Paul was not the only one who has the authority to deliver the sinning member to Satan. Paul told the Christians in Corinth assembled as a church body with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise this power to deliver the sinning member to Satan as a punishment for his sin.

One should appreciate the severity of the sin of this person that required the service of Satan to execute judgment on him. To suggest that Paul did not have the power to carry out this threat and execute judgment on this person is to fly in the face of Scriptures. Some may argue that this fornicating member might not have been a Christian bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ otherwise he would not have sinned this great and terrible sin of cohabiting with his father's wife. This is clearly not the case as Paul at the beginning rebuked the church for their shameful indifference that the unbelieving Gentiles would not even commit fornication of such nature. The distinction was clearly made to compare this fornicator who was a believer in Christ with the sinners of the Gentiles in general who would be more righteous than this sinning church member of Corinth in this case. Moreover, the subsequent restoration of this person after he had repented of his fornication with his father's wife clearly showed that he was a Christian to begin with.

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:1-11).

So the desired result was obtained when the Christians in Corinth carried out Paul's instruction to deliver this sinning member to Satan for the destruction of the flesh as a punishment for his sin of fornication. Thankfully, this sinning member repented and the execution was stayed. To prevent this repentant from being overcome by excessive sorrow, Paul told the Christians there to forgive him as well as to comfort him for what he had gone through during his punishment lest Satan would get an advantage over them on this matter. Should this fornicating member not repent of his fornication, Satan would have destroyed him. It would not simply be a case of oppression of this person by Satan because this would make Paul's sentence look impotent before the Christians in Corinth. In fact, this was not the first occasion Paul issued such judgment on sinning Christians. Paul also told Timothy what he did to two other persons who had caused harm to him and the church.

We read of the incident in 1 Timothy 1:18-20, ***This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.***

The charges here have to do with doctrinal issues concerning faith. Over here, Hymenaeus and Alexander failed to hold forth faith and a good conscience and resulted in causing shipwreck to their faith. Paul accused them of putting away their faith which they once had. They had become apostate from their faith and they were seeking to destroy the faith of other Christians. On the surface, the sins of these two persons might seem relatively minor compared with the fornicating member in Corinth. However, upon closer examination, their sins were indeed very serious.

In his second letter, Paul revealed to Timothy what these two evil men did to him. In 2 Timothy 2:15-19, Paul while commanding Timothy to study to show himself approved unto God, he warned him the serious consequences for negligence that led to the errors of Hymenaeus and Philetus. ***Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.***

Hymenaeus here was one of those instrumental in proclaiming that the

resurrection was already past and caused the faith of some Christians to be overthrown. His vain babblings in departing from the truth and faith caused ungodliness to increase. The words of error from such people were cancerous and spread like worms. Like a spreading ulcerous sore, they caused to infect and corrupt the body of Christ in the purity of doctrine and faith. They had become active agents in contaminating the body of Christ with their false doctrines undermining the work that Paul had done to the believers. There were now enemies of the cross and nothing short of divine judgment would be sufficient to contain the damage these apostates had done.

Before Paul closed his swan song, he informed Timothy what Alexander did to him, *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion* (2 Timothy 4:14-17). Paul charged Alexander for greatly withstanding his words that almost resulted in Paul being put to death by the then popular form of execution to be devoured by lions during Roman's time. Alexander here sought to undermine the work of the apostle Paul but divine intervention prevailed as Paul's preaching was made available to the unbelieving Gentiles.

Again, the instrument chosen for this task was none other than Satan, who seemingly was Paul's preferred tool, as Paul being an apostle of Jesus Christ guided by divine mind exercise his apostolic authority. So Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan for the expressed purpose that they learned not to blaspheme. As for these two sinners, there was no record that they ever repented of the errors of their way. Blasphemy is an extremely serious matter. The Pharisees accused the Lord Jesus of blasphemy and they sought for his death sentence.

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death (Matthew 26:63-65).

The blasphemy of Hymenaeus and Alexander caused great harm not only to Paul but to the church as well. Their errors corrupted the body of Christ and the increase in

ungodliness was the direct result of their works as faith was shipwrecked when they departed from the truth. Alexander's betrayal of Paul was regarded as much evil done to him. They were no doubt qualified candidates fit for Satan's consumption.

It is however of note that these two characters were not merely sinners of the world seeking to destroy the body of Christ from without. There were acquainted and associated with Paul and other believers in Christ. Paul made it clear to Timothy that Hymenaeus and Alexander were some of those who had put away faith that they initially had and this departure of faith had led to serious theological errors overthrowing the faith of some other believers.

In contrast, Paul's attitude towards sinners of the world was rather tender and forgiving though some of them had caused him great physical harm. Paul told the Christians in Corinth the motto for his life. *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you* (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Paul also told Timothy what he had to endure and how he lived his life for salvation of lost sinners. *But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Timothy 3:10-12).

It was obvious that Paul's life was governed by the motivation for salvation of lost sinners for Christ. Paul also made known his desire for his brethren, the children of Israel, despite the persecutions and sufferings brought upon him by his own people. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh* (Romans 9:1-3).

But for those who trouble the church from within, Paul explicitly denounced them with no uncertain terms. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be*

some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you (Galatians 1:6-9, 5:10-12).

These were indeed extremely severe denunciations for the troublemakers of the church who perverted the gospel of Christ. Paul commanded to let such people be accursed and he wished that they were even cut off that troubled the church in Galatia. Paul made clear that the curse would be applicable to anyone, angels or men, including those of his associates who would preach another gospel. When dealing with the carnal Christians in Corinth, he concluded his first epistle to them with a curse, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha* (1 Corinthians 16:22). Anathema is an extremely strong word to use on anyone. No recipient in his right mind would count it an honor to acknowledge such vehement denunciation if he had sin against God. So one can see the seriousness for causing harm in any form, shape and size to the body of Christ and those involved in such endeavors will definitely face frightening prospect of judgment, including being delivered to Satan for destruction.

Moreover, Christians are commanded to make judgment calls among believers on matters relating to this life. *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person* (1 Corinthians 5:12 & 13). As for sinners outside of the body of Christ, judgment is the prerogative of God. Concerning offenders outside the body of Christ, Paul told the Christians in Rome, *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord* (Romans 12:19). There would be no need to judge them and deliver them to Satan when in actual fact they belong to him. They are called children of disobedience where Satan, the prince of the power of the air, whose spirit is now working in them (Ephesians 2:2). This is consistent with the teaching in other passages of the Scriptures.

In Romans 8:1, we are told that, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. This promise is conditional upon those who walk not after the flesh but after the Holy Spirit. There will be some condemnation for those saved by the blood of Jesus who would walk otherwise. The word condemnation does not necessarily mean punishment in hell

fire for the offenders. It is clear from the Scriptures that there will be such offenders. ***For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God*** (Romans 8:5 & 6).

So to be carnally minded is death but this is physical death and not spiritual death for a believer in Christ. For an unsaved person, he is already spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. It is further explained that, ***For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*** (Romans 8:13). This verse is clearly meant to be applied to the believer in Christ because for an unsaved person, he does not have the Holy Spirit in him or her to help him or her to mortify the deeds of the body. Without the Holy Spirit's indwelling, the unsaved person will do what is natural to him and he is incapable to mortify his flesh.

The Scriptures also teach that the body of a believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit and if any believer defiles this temple, him will God destroy. ***Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*** (1 Corinthians 3:16 & 17). Those carnal and ignorant Christians in Corinth were notorious violators of their temples.

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

They have sinned so frequently against their own bodies through fornication that they became indifferent to the sinning fornicating member in chapter five who did the act with his father's wife. Paul had to rebuke them sharply so that they may be sound in the faith. In fact destroying the temple was nothing new. In the Old Testament, God used the heathen to destroy the temple built for him when the children of Israel defiled the temple by committing fornication with false gods in Israel.

When Solomon had dedicated the temple that he built, the Lord appeared to him

and told him the conditions for the preservation of this temple. *And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil (1 Kings 9:1-9).*

The temple would be there as long as the children of Israel remained faithful to Jehovah God. If they should depart from the faith, God would not only destroy this temple dedicated to him, but he would do it in such a way that would amaze even the unbelievers and he would make an object lesson out of the children of Israel for their breach of promise. During the reign of Manasseh, the Lord pronounced judgment upon Jerusalem including the temple and his people.

And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD (2 Kings 21:10-16). God promised that his judgment would be sure, swift and catastrophic.

Though there was a revival under the reign of Josiah, judgment could not be averted for what Manasseh had done. ***And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched (2 Kings 22:15-17).***

While revival was sweeping the land in Israel under king Josiah's reign, it was confirmed that judgment would still have to follow. ***Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there (2 Kings 23:26 & 27).***

Some Jews thought that since God was present at the temple and as long as the temple was standing, all would be well. Unfortunately, that was definitely not the case. ***Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit (Jeremiah 7:3-8).***

Eventually, Jerusalem was sacked and the temple destroyed by Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar who typified Satan. And history repeated itself again in A.D. 70 when Israel was once again completely destroyed together with its temple by Titus during the Roman empire about 40 years after the Jews rejected their Messiah and had him crucified under the hands of Rome. So it had been demonstrated that God would not preserve his temple if his people chose to defile it. The instrument he used could include Satan himself.

Some Christians argue that since the Holy Spirit is residing in the child of God, there is no more room for Satan to enter. This is only true provided the child of God is being filled with the Holy Spirit and this is not a one-time exercise. It is a continuous spiritual exercise that requires much discipline and stamina. It can only be achieved by God's grace when the child of God is completely yielded to the will of God. Consider what Paul told the Christians at Ephesus, *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil* (Ephesians 4:26 & 27). A child of God should observe that there is a possibility that he might give place to the devil if he is not careful. If it is impossible to give place to the devil, Paul will be confusing the believers at Ephesus. Then the commandment "Neither give place to the devil" will be redundant and meaningless. Giving place to the devil can be literally true. It had also occurred to the temple in the Old Testament via Satanic agents.

And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place (Nehemiah 13:4-11). So the adversary gain entry into the temple meant to be reserved for God's service under the charge of the Levites.

No Christian should be naïve enough to claim that since "greater is he that is in you than he that is it the world" would protect him from all evil and trouble if he chose to sin against God presumptuously. The author who wrote that phrase also wrote the following:

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of

God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (1 John 5:16-19).

As to what is a sin unto death, there is no point in engaging in unprofitable speculation. The statement “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” is at best a conditional promise when a child of God lives his life right before God. The child of God must be conscious of the fact that the Holy Spirit is now residing in him after he is saved. A child of God must also know that he is no longer his own for he is bought with a price, even by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He should seek to glorify God in his body and not sin against his body, which has now become the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Knowing that Satan is also an agent under God’s directive control, no child of God should think that God would not use Satan to deal with him. Sometimes God’s judgment may come down quick and hard on a sinning child of God like in the case of the members in the church of Corinth with regards to the Lord’s Supper.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

Some of them made light of the Lord’s Supper and partook of the bread and cup of the Lord unworthily and as a result many were weak and sickly and some even died. The term sleep here refers to the death of a believer in Christ. The admonition is to judge oneself lest he falls into condemnation. The consequence for not discerning the Lord’s body is very serious and no one should doubt the Lord’s quick and swift chastisement on the sinning child of God, which includes the physical death sentence.

Often times, God chastises his child for sinning against his body like in the case of fornication and other bodily abuses. Therefore, we should expect to find Scriptures concerning how a child of God should treat his body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour (1 Thessalonians 4:3 & 4). Here we have a directive will of God for a Christian to abstain from fornication and to keep his body in sanctification and honor. Failing which, being delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh is one

high possibility. Even Paul confessed that he had to deal with his body as well, ***But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*** (1 Corinthians 9:27).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1 & 2). A child of God should voluntarily present his body as a living sacrifice, not a dead sacrifice, to the Lord and this is simply referred to as only a reasonable service for what the Lord has done for all believers on the cross of Calvary. Indeed a Christian is actually an unprofitable servant and should do as commanded by the Lord for his great love and mercy shown towards his people.

Paul further admonished, ***Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*** (Philippians 2:12). How a child of God lives his life has very grave repercussion. For he is no longer his own. ***For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's*** (Romans 14:7 & 8). What a child of God does with his earthly life do have eternal consequence. Having obtained salvation, he is supposed to work out his own salvation in fear and in trembling. Here is not a command to work for his own salvation. It is impossible to work for one's salvation as Christ has already completed the work of redemption for all men who will believe.

If a child of God refuses to walk uprightly before God and men, no amount of faith in “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” will exempt him from evil and trouble, including being touched by Satan himself. Sinning Christians are miserable creatures. When they fall under the hands of Almighty God during the period of chastisement, they often lapse into depression and even despair of life. Suicidal tendency is also possible for a backslidden Christian if he continues to sin and live a life that dishonors God and causes his great and holy name to be blasphemed by unbelievers. This experience is true for the child of God as the Scriptures said in Hebrews 12:11, ***Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby***. This experience can be exceedingly grievous for a child of God who is not teachable and rebellious. Nevertheless, peaceable fruit of righteousness is promised for those who humbly submit themselves to God for his loving correction.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28 & 29).

*Beware lest any man spoil you
through philosophy and vain
deceit, after the tradition of men,
after the rudiments of the world,
and not after Christ.
Colossians 2:8*

Clowns At Work

Exorcism is undoubtedly an intriguing subject and it is of considerable interest for many people. It is popularized by filmmakers depicting many different frightening and exciting plots in their movies and deceiving the men in the streets that men do have special power with God and the means to cast out devils. It is also common to see a religious priest, sometime even a layperson, holding out a crucifix trying to cast out devils from a victim or to protect himself from devils.

Even outside Christendom, movies also show many different ways of performing exorcism such as witch crafts, black and white magic and among others including special power from spiritual mediums. The general idea is to show that men can acquire this special power to deal with devils. Some would go so far as to suggest there is a profession in exorcism. Those who have this special power are usually respected and sometimes also much feared. There are also reports that many of such religious charlatans claiming to be able to command the underworld have taken advantage of the simple. The common victims are usually female who lose not only money but also many a time, their bodies as well.

In the Bible, there was a group of people who also tried to imitate what the apostle Paul did by commanding the evil spirit to leave the victim but ended up as victims themselves.

And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified (Acts 19:10-17).

The word “exorcists” is mentioned only one time in the entire Bible which is of great significance. This term is applied to a group of vagabond Jews who thought that they had the special “calling” to deal with evil spirits. Interestingly, the word vagabond is first applied on Cain for his punishment for murdering his brother Abel.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me (Genesis 4:9-14).

When the word “vagabond” appearing so early in the Scriptures, and used only on Cain and this select group of Jews, it certainly warrants special attention in the discussion of the subject. So Cain was the first vagabond on earth. As a vagabond, Cain became homeless who moved from place to place as a wanderer living and drifting aimlessly in an unpredictable environment that would no longer yield the increase for his labor. His life was also in constant danger but God had graciously marked him out for special protection.

So these vagabond Jews, a term employed in an unusual sense in that to the Jews were given the oracles of God and they were supposed to know the law and requirements in worshipping the true and living God. They should be living in constant expectation of the appearing of their Messiah and the restoration to the kingdom of Israel. Though some of the Jews who were dispersed abroad not residing in the land of Israel at that time, they were supposed to be a closely knitted people living together in their own community. This is also true even today as they would congregate as a people and the synagogues they built where ever they live testify to this fact. The apostle Paul also chose to use this legal platform in the synagogues to preach the gospel to the Jews first during his missionary endeavor.

The Jews are not supposed to be vagabonds. Unless they have been cast out by their families and cut of from the community, merely existing with no sense and purpose with their lives. In effect, they are the social outcasts, unwelcome to live among their own people. Some may suggest that those Jews not living in Israel are regarded as vagabonds but this cannot be the case. Even when the Jews were not living in Israel in those days, they made it a point to travel to Jerusalem to keep the Jewish feasts and worship God in the Temple. This is clearly evident when some Jews in Asia accused Paul of defiling the Temple by bringing some Gentiles into the Temple in Jerusalem.

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered

into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) (Acts 21:26-29).

The Jews residing outside of Israel is never referred to as vagabond Jews unless their own people have excommunicated them. The term “vagabond” associated with these Jews is singled out to record an event concerning the matter on exorcism. Nowhere in the Bible were Jews living outside Israel being called vagabond. Gentiles converted to Judaism are called proselytes recorded in Acts 2:10 when they worshipped in Jerusalem during the day of Pentecost. Neither were they called vagabond!

Moreover, the background of these seven Jews is of note as they were descendents from the priestly tribe and their father, Sceva, being a chief of the priests. The reason why these seven sons of Sceva are regarded as vagabonds is not recorded in the passage. What offense did they commit to warrant their expulsion from their family, especially from the family of a chief among the priests? Your guess would be just as good as mine! Coming from such a closely bonded community of theirs, to be wandering and living among the Gentiles would have quite an impact on them. Have they completely renounced their Jewish customs and traditions and adopted the practices of the Gentiles whom Paul clearly distinguished to be inferior in Galatians 2:15, *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles?* Have they broken some cardinal Jewish laws? Have they failed to live up to the high expectation from a priestly family, especially the family of a chief priest?

However, the ministry of the apostle Paul was remarkable for God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. Like Moses in the land of Egypt, Paul was undoubtedly very well known by those living there as from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. It was definitely an amazing feat for a man who could accomplish what no physicians and religious elites could do for the people, who were then suffering in debilitating diseases and tormented by evil spirits. Certainly, these seven sons of Sceva were well aware of Paul’s ministry and the special works he had performed on those poor and needy people. It is recorded that they took upon themselves to try to imitate the work that Paul did but with disastrous results. In as much as they would like to believe in their “high calling,” it was not an honor for them to repeat what Paul did for the glory of God. They were not Jewish converts saved

under the ministry of Paul but vagabond Jews expelled from their own people. Banished from Jewish religiosity and their social gathering, they were perhaps in search of a new meaning to life and casting out evil spirits might seem to be a worthy cause.

Whether or not they were trying to cast out evil spirit for self-glory, one fact remains; they must have known Paul or at least acquainted with him. They attempted to cast out evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus but they ascribed it to the Jesus whom Paul preached. They must have witnessed the amazing power that Paul possessed and the demonstration of incredible deliverance to those physically and mentally tortured by evil spirits only God knows how long they were subjected to such devilish torment.

Unfortunately, they were simply third parties to the exercise and it was blatantly obvious that they did not know Jesus nor did they have a personal relationship with Christ. Yet they had the gall to adjure the evil spirits to depart and presumptuously expecting their compliance. How brutally foolhardy they childishly imitated Paul's apostolic sign gifts in casting out devils when they were no giants of faith! The evil spirits must have laughed them to scorn for Jesus and Paul certainly they knew but as for these "clowns" disowned by their own people, were surely suitable candidates for devilish entertainment. Their clownish acts of pretending to be what they were not undoubtedly amused the evil spirits. How miserably pathetic and silly to enter the dungeon of darkness bearing the shield of self-confidence and weapon of carnal imagination! What delusion, to rely on such false hope of self-approbation, to tread the serpent under foot believing to be coming forth as shining knights returning from glorious victory over the adversary. It was definitely no child's play in Satan's realm. They were only building their own piped dream. So, the evil spirits had them for lunch!

"Why it did not work," they might have thought. "We have seen Paul performed such miracles many times before and the means were so simple and available via the name of Jesus," they might ponder. "Furthermore, we are from no mean family," they might argue. "Born into a priestly family, we are sure we have all the pre-requisite for the task at hand. After all, Dad is a chief among the priests," so they presumed. "The oracles were transmitted and committed to be kept by the priestly tribes. Armed with knowledge and talent, we would be more than conquerors," they probably boasted. "To make up for any lack in any unforeseen areas, we are united in seven, one for all and all for one. There is strength in numbers!" they assured one another. All such deliberations were now unnecessary and too late! They had severely underestimated their adversaries and highly inflated their own capabilities. Unfortunately, the admonition in Proverbs 17:12 was conveniently forgotten; *Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.*

Perhaps, these seven sons, eager and desperate to prove their worth might have

found the prospect of conquering evil a suitable means to prove a point or two on why their vagabond title forced on them were unfair and unjust. Like the leprous longing to return to the camp, they were hoping to be received back to the fold with respect and warm embrace. Had they been successful in their pursuit, their new found power over evil would have brought them fame and possibly even fortune even if their people refused to admit them back as their own. They would have made themselves a name even wearing the band of vagabond from the Jews would be a symbol of pride as they would be loved, respected and admired in the world of the Gentiles. Would it not be good to spite those who renounced and rejected them? So, either way, it would have been a win-win proposition, a worthwhile cause notwithstanding the danger exposed to the unknown of the dark world of spirits. After all, if others like Paul had done it, they probably thought they could have done it as well, perhaps, even better! The demonstration of subduing evil spirits had been repeated many times in Ephesus for one would have to be exceedingly ignorant to be uninformed. The task look so simple and there was power in the name of Jesus. How easy the formula and only a person so dumb that he could not learn the art of exorcism! So like many have said, “A little learning is dangerous.”

Soon, euphemisms gave way to desperation and vainglory departed as reality set in. The sons of Sceva learned the hard way that Paul’s faith was none of theirs to claim. Jesus whom Paul preached was also not the same Jesus they called upon to bid their doing, actually their own undoing. They did not have the same free access before the throne of grace that Paul had and they actually found themselves to be strangers to the covenant of promise. So they learned to their own horror that dangerous business of such nature could not be done by proxy no matter how much faith they thought they had and no amount of appealing to their priestly lineage even all the way back to Abraham would be of any use in moments like this. Gripped with fear and perspiration, the next best thing any sane man would do was to flee. At least they came to their senses in this trip of self-discovery. Their hope of self-actualization vaporized into thin air as they fled wounded and naked.

What pinnacle of embarrassment, exposed to the whole world to behold, the folly of these self-made professional exorcists severely lacking in credentials, promising to deliver the oppressed and the possessed, were now overcome with nakedness, wound and shame! These sons of Sceva got more than what they had bargained for. The wages of self-delusion was indeed unacceptably high and costly. Instead of redeeming their lost pride as sons of Jewish descendents, especially the prestige from a priestly tribe, perhaps believing to be unjustly rejected by their own people, the sons of Sceva added to their already unsavory title of vagabond-hood now made infamous their reputation as naked and wounded vagabond Jews. Who else will trust them from that day onwards?

While the once much scorned adversaries made a spectacle of the sons of Sceva, the Lord Jesus' name was magnified and the right and healthy kind of fear descended upon the citizens of Ephesus. God can definitely use unusual means to glorify his own name. Those who think that they can take advantage of the power of God not belonging to them to further their own cause will find to their own dismay that God will not allow their scheming to prosper. Who in the world so deluded would think that they could get away with their conniving using God's name? Perhaps this privilege was reserved for this select group of sons from a Jewish priestly family to demonstrate that God was not mocked even when his chosen people close to temple service committed such odious offense. God's spiritual battles are not meant for those whom he did not call. ***He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.*** (Proverbs 26:17) Do not be surprised if the dog bites when one handles it the wrong way!

So the game plan of these sons of Sceva backfired and their folly was known not only to the Gentiles but the Jews as well. After this incident, they could not possibly go back to the Jews nor could they turn to the Gentiles. They had proven themselves to be untrustworthy characters rejected by the Jews, without power with God, laughed to scorn by devils and now despised by the Gentiles.

What many religious charlatans try their utmost to display their mystical power to impress the naïve and ignorant are not what the disciples of the Lord commanded to perform as a primary function in their ministries.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:17-20).

When the disciples became elated by their newfound power over devils, the Lord flatly directed them to rejoice in their eternal salvation instead. "How unkind to deflate and rob the disciples of their joy for overcoming devils," one might ponder! But there is no room for self-glory in the Lord's service. It is good to put into perspective the purpose of God's gifts to serve the right end. Power over devils and power to perform physical healing are only means to bring a lost sinner to Christ.

Years ago, the author was told by a preacher friend of a serious accident that he suffered as a result of casting out an evil spirit from a teenage girl. The author had also visited the family of this girl once and was aware that evil spirits as revealed by her

mother was troubling the girl. This preacher friend did not elaborate on how he was injured but he attributed the accident to what he did for the girl. He suffered serious injury to his palm and he could no longer play the beautiful guitar which he owned. As for his claim that he managed to cast out the evil spirit from that girl, the author was not sure whether he was successful as the mother mentioned that the spirits were still vexing the girl during his visit. Confrontation with the power of darkness is no small matter. According to Jude 1:9, ***Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*** However, many religious charlatans are seen rebuking the devil during their prayers to impress their own people. Indeed such people do not know the depth of Satan and they are playing with fire. Though Satan is the much-hated foe of God and his people, he is still an agent in God's hands for the purpose of executing judgment in certain cases.

The miracles performed by the apostles and disciples are only incidental to their main task in the preaching of the glorious of gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation of lost souls to be redeemed for all eternity. They are only meant to play a complementary role in the preaching of the cross but never to be employed to further anyone's "career" in the ministry. As far as miracles and healings are concerned, they are only temporal matters regarding a person's natural life on earth under this present sun. Though a person might have been healed or delivered from evil spirits, he will still eventually have to die physically like any other man. If a person is not saved by appropriating faith in the blessed Son of God, no amount of healing and countless deliverance from evil spirits will do him any good for such a soul will still finally perished in hell fire. There is no Scriptural support for anyone being called for a special ministry such as exorcism in and of itself alone.

**The LORD will give strength
unto his people; the LORD will
bless his people with peace.**

Psalm 29:11

Infiltration In The House Of Worship

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee (Mark 1:23-28).

And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about (Luke 4:33-37).

This incident took place in one of the synagogues at Capernaum, which is a city of Galilee. This man with an unclean spirit was inside the synagogue on the Sabbath day worshipping with the Jews. No record was there to show how long this man with an unclean spirit was worshipping with the Jews there every Sabbath day and it was also unclear whether the rest of the Jewish worshippers recognized that this man had a problem with unclean spirit also called unclean devil according to Luke. If the worshippers there had known of this man's condition, they must have tolerated him for quite sometime now assuming that that was not the first time the man showed up that Sabbath day. As to why they were tolerant of him, we can only speculate. Perhaps, this man was not disruptive during worship and the people put up with him. It could also be that they had run out of means in trying to help the victim and when all their efforts proved to be impotent, they had to leave him alone. Maybe, he was even seen to be sober worshipping like everyone else pretending to be like one of them. So it might be possible that no one knew this man had a problem with unclean devil until the Lord Jesus showed up that day. Based on the Scriptures recorded here, it would not be unreasonable to expect people with unclean spirits be found in places of worship with believers during the day of worship.

But something had to change that day when Jesus went to the Synagogue. When

the Jews worshipping God generations after generations hoping and waiting for their coming King failed to recognize their Messiah in the flesh, unclean devils would not fail to make such a mistake. For they were there on creation's morning witnessing the glorious Lord of all universe enthroned on high in majestic splendor to receive worship and adoration from his grateful creatures. The fear to be tormented before their time for their treason against Almighty God forced them to cry out in pitiful pleadings to be spared for the time being. They were certainly in great fear but the Lord was not there for the purpose of accepting acknowledgement from devils but for the work he had to perform for the salvation of souls of lost sinners. Rebuked to hold their peace and commanded to leave the man, they departed with devilish screams leaving the victim thrown as they tore through his body in desperate flight.

It is of note that the victim had a devil and yet when the devil spoke, it was revealed that they were more than one personalities residing in the man. This points to the physical size of the unclean spirits. Unlike the Holy Spirit of God who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscience, unclean spirits are individuals that are distinct from one another and limited by time and space. This passage also suggests that these unclean spirits are constantly in search for a place of abode. They will remain in the victim's body until driven out by a power greater than they or until the physical death of the victim when the body returns to dust.

So the Jewish worshippers were amazed at the power and authority that the Lord Jesus possessed as a man walking in their midst. In spite of their diligence in serving Jehovah God, they were helpless in the face of evil from the underworld of darkness. This might suggest that the Jewish religious leaders had tried to cast out the unclean spirit but failed miserably. Moreover, the demonstration of this new power available in a man was of great significance for the Jews were greatly astounded by this amazing power of Jesus whom they only knew came from Nazareth. This power was indeed incredible for the means were mere spoken words albeit words with such authority and magnitude that the forces of darkness from hell had to obey at once. Such amazing demonstration of power and authority over evil spirits was remarkable and as such, the fame of the Lord Jesus Christ had to spread like wild fire bewildering the helpless Jews been so used to living under the dominant of the power of darkness. So alas the light shining out of the dark place is now available to illumine every sinful heart and dispel the most stubborn of all evil spirits that the lost soul might be saved.

The Jews could have been using all sorts of carnal means in trying to cast out the unclean spirit in the victim. Obviously, their effort was fruitless. But when Jesus spoke, there was no bargaining with his words of commandment. Negotiation was impossible. For the first time the Jews witnessed a man using human words rebuked the devils and they feared him and obeyed him. Never had it been seen so much power in human

words. Nonetheless, it was not a mere human speaker that spoke those words but the very Lord God who gave languages to men. Could he not give his perfect inspired words in whatever languages he chooses to give? What display of deity by the blessed Son of God in the flesh! Jesus of Nazareth must be God manifest in the flesh for no man in the flesh had ever performed such a feat witnessed by the worshippers in the synagogue that day! Naturally, the fame of Jesus Christ spread abroad and round about Galilee. Unfortunately, a prophet is not accepted in his country, including this Great Prophet whom Moses prophesied of old.

**Though the LORD be high, yet
hath he respect unto the lowly:
but the proud he knoweth afar
off.**

Psalm 138:6

Kindness From On High

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw (Matthew 12:22).

And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered (Luke 11:14)

Though the case here was described with only a single verse, there was not any less in significance for the case of this victim at hand. This was a male victim but his age was unknown. No one knew how long the victim was in that condition. The cause for his being afflicted with this devil was anyone's guess. Certainly those people around him could not be of any help to him. The plight of this victim was indeed dire as he could not see or speak. He could not relate to others what he was going through and he could not see anyone or anything that might be of help to him. All of his bodily needs which he required he could not make known to those around him. When he was cold, he probably could not find warmer clothes to put on. When he was hungry, he could not express himself on his needs and even with food available he could not reach them, as he could not see. If he was thirsty he probably had to wait for someone to bring him a drink of water and meanwhile endured the thirst possibly for quite sometime. Undoubtedly, this poor man suffered in silent agony. What immense sufferings!

Deliverance was impossible for him, definitely not possible on his own. He simply just could not take care of himself. He was a hopeless and helpless bodily mass that merely existed by the mercies and goodwill of those around him. His parents must have been grief-stricken over their child's pathetic conditions. How many nights they hugged and spent weeping over such tragic misfortune that struck their family robbing them of the life of their son, only God knew. Possibly the parents might have quarreled with each other and blaming each other for the child's malady.

Sympathy from friends and relatives could hardly alleviate their plight, for this son of theirs was in need of constant care. The parents would have been worried sick for their son for they could not always remain by his side. How many friends can this poor dumb and blind man make in his pathetic state, probably not many. How can a man such as he be endeared to others! More likely than not, people would avoid him and very likely he was shunned by society at large. Who would need such a person to be around let alone to be a friend! He could not possibly contribute to anything or to anyone in any positive way whatsoever. So he merely existed as a sickening poor, blind and dumb man whom nobody wanted or needed. Everyone would have given up on

him.

Indeed deliverance was definitely beyond his reach. Getting healed was beyond his wildest dream. Perhaps, he could not even imagine what it would be like to be a normal functioning human being. He might never have seen a smile before if his was born in this sorry state. Maybe he had already gotten used to his degenerative state and had been conditioned to believe that this was his lot for his miserable life; it must be fate! How sorrowful for such a man languishing with no purpose and without hope, getting through the day with whatever assistance he could obtain from whoever would be so kind to dispense, not sure if the aids received was timely in meeting his needs though.

But that day Jesus came by. Something had to happen whenever Jesus was around. He would not allowed evil to triumph before his holy presence. Though depravity had become the natural manifestation of fallen men, compassion was still found among some people who would go beyond the call of duty. Such are those who have compassion making a difference. These people had certainly heard of the fame and power of Jesus Christ. There must be hope and it would definitely be worth a try for that poor, dumb and blind man. There was no record to inform us as to who were these people and how were they related to this victim of the unclean spirit. Their motives for helping the poor man were also not known. Perhaps they were there hoping to see a miracle by bringing the victim to Jesus. No one knew. Maybe they really had compassion on this poor victim and wished to see him healed. But the fact remained that their effort paid off. This poor man got to see Jesus who otherwise would still be languishing in his poor, hopeless, helpless and miserable state.

After all, all other feeble human efforts had been exhausted. The religious elite of the day could not heal him. The secular physicians found that such a severe case of physical infirmities would be beyond their training and calling. So they brought this helpless man to the Great Physician, ever tender and merciful to the helpless and hopeless. The man was instantly healed not because of the victim's faith. Here was the demonstration of the mighty power that the Son of God possessed to prove that he was and is their Messiah.

Wonders of wonders that this tormented soul was alas set free! What new found freedom it was and how the poor man enjoyed his new faculties. He saw and spoke for the first time, perhaps. Ability of speech was immediately given unto him. He needed not learn the language. It was beyond human comprehension how this could be possible that a deed such as this could be done by a man walking among their midst. Truly a man Christ Jesus, yet his presence was so authoritative that even the power of darkness had to flee at his appearance. When he spoke, devils trembled. Obviously, the

people wondered and to expect any less would be insanity.

In this record, the victim's blindness and dumbness could have been caused by the devil that possessed him. According to Luke, the devil in question here was a dumb spirit. This of course does not imply that anyone born to be dumb must be due to being possessed by a dumb spirit. Glory to God in the highest for loosening the tongue and opening the eyes of this person to praise and glorify the Savior for his goodness and mercy.

*For the LORD most high is
terrible; he is a great King over
all the earth.*

Psalm 47:2

Rescued From The Graveyard

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts (Matthew 8:28-34).

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell

them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel (Mark 5:1-20).

And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him (Luke 8:26-39).

This case here is of significance because the chosen habitation of these two men possessed by devils is a cemetery outside the city, a place for the burial of the dead. These two victims suffered immense torment as living souls living among the dead. Luke and Mark mentioned of one man in this condition while Matthew recorded the actual number to be two. It was not clear whether Luke and Mark described the plight of each one of the two or the same victim of the two, but the fact remained that the victims here were living in horrid circumstances abandoned by men.

According to Luke's account the men had been living among the tombs for a long time. They were not simply there for a certain period during the day and then retire under shelter of a home during the night. They were exposed to the elements of nature

and their plight made worse for the fact that they were living by their skins with no clothes on their bodies. The heat of the scorching sun would be piercing them by day and the cold chilly night would be tearing at their sun burnt bodies at night. One would shrink to imagine the unforgiving environment when winter arrived! It would be amazing that these two poor souls could have endured such devilish punishments for so long.

What terrible state they were in and who would pity them in such a place where no living souls abode! In fact what little pity shown to them by the people was to bind them in chains and fetters out of concerned for public safety. What kindness from fallen men whose assistance to these two men was one motivated out of self-preservation. But how useless carnal human means that severely underestimated the power of darkness. Chains and fetters were no match for devilish beings. How silly for fallen men to attempt to tame the captives of devils with human means!

Where were the religious priests and scribes who had been holding sway in the lives of the people with their religious creeds and dogmas on spiritual matters? Could not they convene a council to examine the matter as their high calling and religious training should have equipped them for their professions? Could not they do something for these two men agonizing in devilish torture? Could not they allay the fear of those sane souls who had to use the way to the cemetery that was now made impassable? So dogmatism in theological discourses for the religious circles had no practical application in the frontline of a real spiritual war. It became brutally obvious that the religious leaders of the day were spiritually impotent in a real spiritual conflict. No “faith-healers” dared ventured beyond their crowd and circles of influence to lift a finger to alleviate the sufferings to these two poor men. So the cemetery remained closed and no man could pass that way, no, not until God in the flesh came by that day!

So as Mark reported, the victims here were slowly but surely being tormented and would eventually be put to death by means that included self-mutilation with stones. How horrific was the sufferings of these two poor souls served on dishes of devilish delights! Alas, there was hope for these two poor tormented souls for Jesus passed by that day. While eyes of sinful men cannot behold the glory of God, devilish beings would not fail to recognize this King of glory whose majestic presence though clothed only in human garb struck fear in these devils no matter how fearful and terrifying they were to fallen men. Again, the Son of God was not there to receive worship from devils that day but to deliver men from the power of darkness into his marvelous light.

The unmistakable cries and pleadings of these devils betrayed their temporal power over the bodies of these sons of men that pointed to their eventual doom in the deep. They had an appointed spokesman speaking through the vessel of their choice

and they revealed that they were many whose name was Legion. Their requests were not to be tormented in the deep before their time but to seek alternative accommodations and their next best choice happened to be a herd of swine feeding not too far away.

What a choice! What poor choice, one might think! Amazing indeed that devils should choose lowly and unclean animals when no suitable candidates were available. Certainly they could not have asked for other human bodies of any of the men present with the Lord's entourage knowing that their request would surely be denied. So there and then ended their funs for they could not possibly use the vessels of swine to demonstrate their incredible power to taunt and spite fallen mortal men for their spiritual impotency. Though with permission granted by the Lord, unfortunately, it was a suicidal attempt to possess the vessels of these unclean beasts. Although these devils being unclean spirits themselves, they had no affinity with unclean beasts. The beasts soundly rejected them as they chose to perish in the waters of the sea than to accommodate these guests from hell. This caused no small stir as about two thousand pigs perished as a result of devilish madness. What economic devastation to the owners thereof!

Once again, deliverance was immediate and done without hands. Faith from the two victims was not required as a precondition for their healing. But for the long imprisoned souls of these two unfortunate victims, sweet and sure deliverance was theirs to keep. Once raged with madness, they were now found with soundness of mind sitting at Jesus' feet. Long been tormented on their naked bodies, they were now clothed and comforted at the presence of the Savior and seeking to follow him. Hellish nightmare became history and they walked in newness of life proclaiming the loving kindness and tender mercies of God Almighty. Indeed God had done great things for them whereof they were glad. Once again, there was power in the spoken words of God. Jesus did not need to lift a finger when dealing with the forces of darkness. Jesus must be God manifest in the flesh!

Unfortunately for fallen men, depravity had the better of Adam's race. For commercial reasons, the people preferred these two victims remained possessed by devils than deliverance from on high. Personal gains came before other's plight. How selfish and insane were lost men dead in trespasses and sins! Wherein may compassion be found in lost humanity? Indeed just like Solomon had said, *To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress* (Proverbs 28:21). So these belly worshippers bade Jesus leave their coasts so that they may walk on in darkness rearing swine than to behold the glory of God and be fed with the bread of eternal life.

*O that one might plead for a man
with God, as a man pleadeth for
his neighbour!
Job 16:21*

Faith Conquers All

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour (Matthew 15:22-28).

For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed (Mark 7:25-30).

This record shows a Gentile woman pleading for her poor helpless daughter possessed by an unclean spirit to be healed from her vexation by this devil. Her pitiful plea fell on deaf ears as the Lord of glory ignored her. Silence from heaven need not imply all hope is lost. More often than not it serves to demonstrate the spiritual reality that true faith can indeed move mountain. But for her case, being a gentile woman, it would be pointless to approach the Jewish religious leaders as to expect help from them would be silly to say the least. Perhaps she could have already spent a lot of money and effort seeking help from her own people but resulting in fruitless cure for her daughter.

Again no one knew how long this woman's daughter had been tormented by this fiend of Satan. But it was clear from the woman's cries that the tormentors were exacting every pound from her daughter and it was grievous. Which mother would not be grieved at the sufferings of her little darling especially afflictions so great and from none other place than from the gates of hell? No one could tell to what extend of torture the daughter was subjected to but who would want to underestimate the agony of a soul going through the baptism of hellish fury? The mother must be broken hearted and pained to the bones to witness the power of darkness wrecking havoc to the body of her dear child. No words could possibly describe the mental and emotional anguish of this

woman adequately. As if her trials were not already unbearable, her cries for help for the Son of David to heal her poor daughter was completely ignored, rejected and ridiculed. Heaven was now brass and earth a parched ground. Where could she go? Who else could she approach just for a very slim chance that her daughter might be healed?

Just as when the glimpse of hope was all gone, faith in her prevailed above her personal grieves and emotions and perhaps even above her bodily frailty to persevere in her plea for her dear daughter. After all, according to Mark, she had heard about Jesus. She must have heard of the many miracles that Jesus had performed in the land of darkness, though a land chosen to locate the city of the great King. But the trouble was that she was not one of the children of Israel and she must have been painfully conscious of this fact that she was a citizen outside the commonwealth of Israel. Ignored by the Son of God, she turned to his disciples. Instead of been touched by the plight of this poor woman, the disciples asked the Master to send the woman away because she was bothering them. They complained that this woman was such a burden. Oh, how heartless! Where are the sympathies expected from the disciples trained by the Master? Are not the disciples supposed to have compassion making a difference? One would expect that the disciples would at least intercede on behalf of this woman and request their Master to heal her daughter but there was not such spiritual quality found in them. Indeed there was a great divide between the Jews and the Gentiles.

But all was not lost. Heaven must have smiled on this woman when the importunity of her woeful plea for her daughter whom she dearly loved paid off. Her reply to the very reason for her rejection as a suitable candidate to receive divine assistance was so perfect and complete in humility and submission that the Savior and Lover of our souls set aside divine order and granted the request of this woman. How low would she stoop to acknowledge her earthly state to be equivalent to that of a dog? Yet, she submitted to divine purpose for the eventual salvation for all mankind beginning with the chosen people of God, the children of Israel.

Her faith was remarkable as she earned the praise of the Lord of Creation that her faith was indeed great. How many would fall under such heavy trials and turned away in bitterness in situation like this? But not for this very brave woman who set aside her own pride and nationalistic fervor. Her name was not even revealed in the Scriptures yet she earned the only positive exclamation made by the Savior concerning her faith. What glory! Who would not want such positive comment from none other than the Creator himself? With humble and rational supplication, she won her case against the Advocate of our souls in the court at heaven's gate. For this woman, crumbs from the Master's table would be good enough as long as there was hope for her daughter and efficacy in her healings. She had such strong and pure faith in the Lord Jesus that nothing could be

put in her way to stop her from achieving her objectives, that is the deliverance for her poor child.

Perhaps, hell's foundation was shaken that day and angelic hosts rejoiced over the victory wrought by this unnamed woman whose unfeigned faith rescued her daughter from devilish claws sent from hell. Satan probably thought that divine hands were tied and divine intervention on behalf of this Gentile woman was impossible. Alas, what glorious triumph of good over evil. This time, healing was performed without even the victim being brought before the Lord of the whole earth. As for this woman, no assurance was needed when the Lord gave her his words. She did not ask Jesus to go home with her to heal her child. Like Abraham, she simply believed what she was told. No begging was required. No evidence of healings was sought. To require such would be an insult to the Son of God. She left for home in earnest expectation of her child to be healed and she was not disappointed. Indeed how can it be! When his Majesty King Jesus speaks, it shall be done! Hallelujah and all glory to the King of kings!

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:25

Hindered By Unbelief

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:14-21).

And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:14-29).

And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying,

Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father (Luke 9:37-42).

Here was a case of severe bodily possession by a devil and though the adversary here was only a singular personality, the victim's sufferings were no less severe than the other cases discussed previously. In fact, his condition was probably more serious than the rest recorded as this devil had been trying to destroy this man's son for a long time. The age of the son was not mentioned here but he could very well be a young adult. The father informed the Lord that this unclean spirit had possessed his son since he was a child. The usual mode of torment was to cast the child into fire and water. According to the father, the purpose of casting the child into fire and water was to destroy the child and this happened very often. Imagine the agony and frustration the family must have gone through, for this poor helpless child required constant and immediate care. Otherwise, the child could have died long ago when he fell into fire or water. The scars on his body would be too horrid to describe by now.

The desperate father thought that his son was a lunatic and had a dumb spirit. This might imply that the child had speech impairment and could not communicate with his family. This would make not only the child's sufferings more painful but his parents and all those around him as well. They probably would not know how they might help him due to the child's inability to speak. All they could do was to pull him away from the fire and pick him out of the water whenever he was attacked by the devil in him.

How inconvenient it would be when fire and water in the home had to be kept in close watch to prevent further injury to this boy and truly how frustrating it must have been if someone forgot to tend to these perils in the home, the child would get hurt. The family probably had sought help from whoever they thought could help them with the child's condition but to no avail. The religious elite's inability to do anything for victims of such nature had been appalling. The forces of darkness had exposed the lack of spiritual power of the religious leaders and they continue to wreck havoc in the lives of the common men.

However, this poor father could have heard of the ministry of Jesus and he hoped at least something could be done for his child. Though earnest in effort in bringing the sick child ravished so often by the unclean spirit to look for Jesus the Great Physician

whom he had heard, it was work without faith and his hard labor came to nought. One could only imagine how much trouble he had suffered in bringing his child to seek treatment and how far he had traveled to seek help but his work was fruitless because of his unbelief. Yet he toiled on for the sake of his dear child. He had been overburdened with much care and sorrows, probably for many years now, tending to his only child.

When he arrived at the place of treatment, the Master was not there. His disciples tried their utmost to help but it ended in complete failure. Nothing could be done for the poor child. Absolutely nothing! This time hellish mockery filled the air when the spiritual impotency of these disciples of Christ was exposed for all to see. Was the training of these disciples inadequate or was it due to their own spiritual states that they had no power over this unclean devilish spirit? Their spiritual poverty was indeed appalling. They were men given the task to herald the kingdom of heaven and supposed to be men able to move mountains! The reality of the message of the coming kingdom proclaimed by the disciples was now punctured by their inability to help this man's long tormented son. So was the coming kingdom credible after all?

How disappointed this desperate father must be? He certainly did not come thus far to be told that there was no hope for his child. Though in his heart hope not mixed with faith, he probably expected to meet Jesus but he was nowhere to be found and only to be told by his incapable disciples that they could do nothing more for him and his child. Providence would have it that this man's labor of love for his only child would not be unanswered. So the Master appeared at the opportune moment to comfort the sorrowful and heal the sick. The first words for this poor father from the gracious Lord revealed his loving kindness, when he inquired how long had the child been in that condition before he tenderly drew the unbelieving father to realize the poor spiritual state of unbelief in his heart that was hindering the healing of his son.

How sweet when a hardened heart gave way in humble submission to providence from on high. Now there was hope for his only child. Tears of repentance mixed with joy followed when the child was to be treated by none other than the Great Physician himself. Unlike the previous cases where devils rushed to acknowledge and worship the Son of the Most High, this devil was one of nasty rebellious character defiant to the end. This was a foul spirit that majored in dumbness and deafness. No desperate pleadings were heard from this devil and no alternative accommodation was granted to him.

Under the Lord's stern rebuke, he had no choice but to leave the victim but not without much anguish defiance causing much suffering to the child leaving him almost dead. It was a pathetic sight to see the poor child on the ground wallowing and foaming in the mouth and now left lifeless when the devil tore through his body as he departed in furious retreat. For a moment, the anxious father must have been broken hearted as

everyone thought his child was now dead. Bitter thoughts probably raced through his exhausted mind pondering, “Could not the Mighty Creator had prevented the child’s death?” Of course it was not to be. No one ever died in the personal presence of His Majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry because he was and is the Giver and Sustainer of life. So the child was cured that very moment when Jesus came onto the scene and the father rejoicing with his only child left happily for home. What a perfect ending for this episode!

Nevertheless, the disciples had some lessons to catch up on. They were puzzled as to why they could cast out that devil which the Lord did it without any effort. They learned that it was due to their unbelief as well lest the fault was only laid to the charge of the father of the poor boy. Another profound truth that a child of God must learn is that certain spirits can only be cast out through prayer and fasting.

However, fasting is omitted in the other English translations and that will seriously undermine the believer in this very important aspect of spiritual warfare. The Devil does not want the child of God to put on his whole armor and equip himself with all the weapons at his disposal. This is satanic effort in corrupting the Scriptures. To believe otherwise is to be spiritually naïve. Any Christian thinking that he can take on the forces of darkness presumptuously will find to his own dismay that he is no match to the adversaries who have had thousands of years of experience in this conflict while the average life span of men is only seventy years whose combat experience would be beyond comparison in this regard.

Presumption and complacency have no place in the arena of such spiritual battles. The consequences of self-will and self-delusion are too costly to imagine. The adversaries are not mere flesh and blood. They exist beyond the visible range of the human eyes of flesh. What can be seen are only cruel manifestation of their power of torment and destruction. It is better to be brutally honest with oneself before he jumps into the ring to engage such foes where carnal weapons are totally useless and a complete waste of time. Take heed to the Lord’s instruction. Prayer and fasting are a must without which the presumptuous child of God travels at his own peril.

**Wherefore be ye not unwise, but
understanding what the will of
the Lord is.
Ephesians 5:17**

Heart Exercise

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23). This is the primary commandment given to a child of God to keep him out of trouble in this life under the sun. Solomon who wrote this commandment under the inspiration of God also explained, ***For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee*** (Proverbs 23:7). This heart that Solomon mentioned here is the seat of the very thoughts and emotions that controls the body of the person. This is where the real person that resides within the body of a person is found. Every thoughts, intents and purposes that the body carries out into action originate from this very place itself.

As such, a child of God is specifically commanded to guard the motion and movement of his heart. This act of safe keeping of the heart is not to be carried out with a *laissez faire* attitude. It is also not to be performed just with diligence but with all diligence. The effort required in this exercise is of huge proportion and minute care. This commandment is imperative and directive and no compromise is to be expected or allowed under any circumstances. Any variance from the observance of this commandment in any fashion or in any degree will severely affect the outcome with serious consequences. It is the very issues of life the child of God has to grapple with and he can ill afford any mistake in this great undertaking which will chart the course of his life whether to joy and happiness in the Lord or bitterness and regret in disobedience to God's directive will.

The reason given by Solomon is that when a person thinks in his heart, he will act out his thoughts with the body that he possesses. The prophet Jeremiah also described the frightening propensity of this heart that Solomon discussed, ***The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*** (Jeremiah 17:9) This is the unavoidable misfortune of fallen men. The natural tendency of the heart of men is inclined towards evil. The Lord has also said that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth in Genesis 8:21. No one needs to be taught or trained to acquire this undesirable capability for he is born with it. It comes together as a complete special gift package during the conception of life when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden. And king David also testified of this fact, ***Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*** (Psalm 51:5).

As if this evil propensity of fallen men is not already serious enough, Jeremiah amplified such abnormal aberration of the human heart from the quality of goodness as being not only deceitful but deceitful above all things. The description is so absolute in measurement that there is nothing in this world that is more deceitful than the heart of fallen men. For what else can be above all things? Therein stops all comparison in any

form or shape. It is no longer necessary and impossible because it is indeed beyond comparison. Moreover, besides this serious defect of the human heart, it is also wicked to the extreme. The words used by Jeremiah suggest that should the heart of men be forbidden to act out its wickedness, it will immediately become desperate. So as far as wickedness is concerned, the human heart is rotten to its core. How terrifying to be in possession of such a dangerous and unmanageable time bomb that seeks to explode into deceitfulness and wickedness and drowns its owner in perdition!

Therefore, for a child of God to keep his heart with all diligence is an absolute must and there is no two ways about it. Anyone who thinks otherwise is welcomed to venture out at his own perils as a fool running to the correction of the stocks. With what Jeremiah already pointed out regarding the conditions of the human heart, safe keeping of the heart is a matter of high priority and great urgency. For Jeremiah's question at the end of that verse implies a forgone conclusion of the matter. No one can honestly be certain to know his heart perfectly in its entirety. This means when the heart has managed to escape its prison wall under the owner's close watch, the owner is still unaware of the breach in defense due to the depth of his own depravity. Here lies the stark reality of the human heart in fallen men.

So men continue to be defiled by the out-breaking of iniquity engineered by its own depraved heart and many times, the owners are not even aware of it. So the Lord Jesus Christ explains, ***There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man*** (Mark 7:15 & 16, 21-23).

No interpretation is required. It is a fact that external environment does not defile a man. There is no alibi for anyone to seek refuge in external environment when he sins against God's holy and righteous laws. It is clear that all sins originate from the deceitful and wicked heart of the sinner and he is thereby defiled. A child of God though saved by the precious blood of Jesus and sealed unto the day of redemption by the Holy Spirit is not exempted from this horrifying effect of his own heart that is still as perverse and depraved as any sinner in the world. A child of God when defiled by the sins due to his failing to keep watch over his own heart will face terrible consequences for the apostle Peter tells us that, ***For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*** (1 Peter 4:17) So keeping his heart with all diligence for a child of God is no laughing matter. He will be the first to be dealt with by God on this issue.

The apostle Paul has also warned the Christians in Corinth concerning the defilement of his body which they apparently did not know that their bodies were the temples of God in 1 Corinthians 3:16 & 17, ***Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*** The warning here is exceedingly clear that God will destroy the body of a Christian if he causes his body to become defiled because his body is now the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit will not dwell in a defiled temple. The Christian's body being the temple of God is supposed to be holy, undefiled, sanctified and meet for the master's use.

In the Old Testament, God shows the Christian that when the children of Israel sinned against God, they were defiled in many ways and by various means. Moses commanded the children of Israel not to cause his sanctuary to be defiled by human sacrifices to false gods in Leviticus 20:1-3, ***And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.*** The penalty for this violation is the death sentence. Of course the children of Israel failed to keep this commandment and brought upon themselves God's swift judgment because they defiled God's sanctuary. The Christian's body being the temple of God is also considered as God's sanctuary. As such, in consistence with this precept, the death sentence will also fall upon the Christian who defiles his body which is the temple of God. He does not really own his body anymore after he is saved because he is no longer his own being bought by the precious blood of Christ.

Another commandment given to the children of Israel is in Leviticus 19:30 & 31, ***Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.*** They were told to keep the Sabbaths and reverence God's sanctuary but they failed to keep. They were also told not to have anything to do with those that have familiar spirits and not to seek after wizards. Again they failed and were defiled by them and eventually God destroyed his Temple in Jerusalem and cast the children of Israel out of the land.

A child of God can also become guilty of this sin that the children of Israel committed when they give heed to seducing spirits that Paul warned against in 1 Timothy 4:1-3, ***Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;***

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. All these false doctrines are called doctrines of devils and the defiled Christian is in great danger to be destroyed by God for departing from the faith. This is confirmed in the Scriptures when Paul explained in 1 Timothy 1:19 & 20 the very reason for sending Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan for their departure from the faith, ***Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*** Apostasy is a punishment worthy of death and the child of God is no exception.

The children of Israel were also explicitly commanded not to be defiled with idols of which they also failed to keep. ***Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt*** (Ezekiel 20:7 & 8). For a Christian, the equivalent to this commandment is ***Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them*** (Colossians 3:5-7). Covetousness is considered as idolatry. Failing to mortify the deeds of the body and allows the out-breaking of sins will incur God's wrath that falls on these children of disobedience. The child of God is commanded to flee from idolatry in 1 Corinthians 10:14, ***Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.***

The child of God has no excuse for allowing himself to be defiled because defilement avoidance is possible and it is an act of the will which he can exercise. The Scriptures shows clearly this matter in Daniel 1:8, ***But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*** The record here shows that Daniel deliberately made a decision in his heart not to allow his body to be defiled by food very likely had been offered to the false gods in Babylon during his captivity.

For a Christian, he is to take heed to Paul's warning concerning food offered to idols, ***But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot***

drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils (1 Corinthians 10:20 & 21). The reason is given in 1 Corinthians 8:7, *Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.*

The gravity of this matter is amplified in 1 Corinthians 8:9-12, *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.* Sinning against the conscience of another Christian is tantamount to sinning against Christ. Not to expect judgment from above is simply incongruent with the teaching of the Scriptures on God's dealing with his sinning child.

In Hebrews 12:15-16, the child of God is warned to be careful of another form of defilement which may not be so obvious and discernable, *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* The root of bitterness can defile a child of God and he is regarded as a fornicator or a profane person who defiles the temple of God. As a result, the natural consequence is to expect God to destroy his body for sin of such nature as well.

The apostle John also admonished, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen* (1 John 5:21). Idolatry is not the exclusive practice reserved only for the unbelievers. Christians are also susceptible to this corruptive influence that warrants God's chastisement upon the sinning child of God. And this includes the destruction of the body of the believer when he defiles the temple of God in his body with this vile practice of idolatry and alienating his mind from his Savior.

As Solomon says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he," the Lord will not leave the child of God clueless as to how he should conduct his thoughts life and what are the things he should focus his thoughts towards. Paul told the Christians in Philippi the eight primary objects of their focus in Philippians 4:8, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* It is imperative for a child of God to direct his thoughts towards all the positive aspects of the issues of life.

A child of God is a true positive thinker in every sense of the word. He does it not for worldly gain but for his own spiritual growth in obedience to God's directive will for his life. Paul's admonishment here is instructional for the child of God. He is specifically told to think on the eight things that are positive. If he actively trains his thought patterns on positive things, he will have no room and time to spend on developing evil thoughts in his heart from which the Lord warned in Mark 7:15 & 16, 21-23 that defile him. This exercise of positive thinking requires discipline and it takes time to cultivate. Spiritual stamina is absolutely essential in this undertaking because this is in fact a spiritual exercise. This is how a child of God should diligently keep his heart for out of it are the issues of life.

**Set your affection on things
above, not on things on the
earth.**

Colossians 3:2

Mind Renewal

And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:) And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be showed them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death (Leviticus 24:10-16).

Here was an incident in which this man blasphemed the name of the Lord. The children of Israel sought the Lord to know how to deal with this blasphemer. They wanted to find out what the Lord thought about this matter. So they waited for the Lord to reveal to them his mind on how to deal with blasphemy against him. Of course no one could instruct the Lord what he should do in any matter just like Paul asked in Romans 11:34, *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?* Obviously, no one! However, Paul also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:16, *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.* Again, the answer to the question is no one. But at the same time, it is now revealed that the child of God has the mind of Christ. This is a new revelation. Unlike the saints in the Old Testament who had to seek and wait upon the Lord to reveal his mind on matters of faith and practice, the New Testament saints have this complete capability to know God's mind on spiritual matters as an individual and this exercising of the mind of Christ is also confirmed in the council in Jerusalem on the matter of circumcision for the Gentile believers in Christ as recorded in Acts 15:1-29.

However, with this new gift of the mind of Christ, no Bible believing Christian will go so far as to claim that whenever he exercises his thinking faculty or engages in the process of thinking, he is using the mind of Christ that he has and the outcome is always the will of God for his life. What the child of God has now is the potential to unlock all the mysteries and revelations of God in the Holy Scriptures, which was not possible for him in the past when he was still in his unsaved state. The reason for an unsaved person being unable to understand spiritual things is given in 1 Corinthians 2:14, *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually*

discerned. Without the mind of Christ, it is impossible for anyone seeking to know spiritual truths to be able to find them. Because when he reads the Bible with an unregenerate mind as a natural man, he considers the things of God to be foolishness due to his own high mindedness.

For a child of God, the potential for him to comprehend spiritual truths is now infinite according to 1 Corinthians 2:13, *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* He is now able to compare spiritual things with spiritual and he does not need to approach any Greek and Hebrew scholars to confirm his own findings in the Holy Scriptures. The apostle John also spoke of the same matter in 1 John 2:27, *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* But this does not imply that the mind of Christ has taken over the mind of the child of God completely. The child of God is still in possession of his own mind. However, he now has no excuse for not knowing God's will on spiritual matters because the mind of Christ is now given to him and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, he can understand the Scriptures which is not possible for him in times past. With the mind of Christ, he can now see so many wonderful spiritual truths from the Bible and that he is amazed how blind he was during his unsaved state.

According to Proverbs 23:7, a man thinks with his heart and Jesus says that out of the heart of man proceeds all the depraved wickedness that is inherent in fallen men. While the heart carries out the thought functions, thoughts are then formed in the mind of man. The mind of a man is like a person who is equipped with all the senses of a normal human being and the mind can receive, process and analyze information fed to it. The mind of man forms part of his soul that resides in the body of man. Its functions are like the brain to the body and it is the processing center of the soul of man. The Bible says that the mind is capable of receiving God's law in Hebrews 8:10, *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* The same is also mentioned in Hebrews 10:15-17, *Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* So the mind is like a computer that is capable of being written over with a program but this program here is the law of the Lord that will be written in the minds of men.

The mind of man also has emotions and it is commanded that a child of God is to

love the Lord with all his mind in Matthew 22:37, *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* So the mind of man is capable of loving an object of its affection. Likewise, the mind can also be fickle and can change according to perception of events and circumstances like the incident recorded in the passage of Acts 28:1-6, *And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* Traditionally, based on the experiences gathered by these people, their collective consciousness would conclude that Paul was definitely an evil man when they saw the poisonous snake fastened unto Paul. But when nothing happened to Paul, they changed their minds. The information gathered and processed by the mind in times past are subject to changed when newer and more reasonable and rational inputs are provided to the mind of man. The mind of man can also be normal or abnormal like the man possessed by devils being delivered in Mark 5:15, *And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* But when a man is troubled, he is like a dead man out of mind. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel* (Psalm 31:12). So when the man was troubled by the devil, he was out of his mind. When the Lord delivered him, he got back a right mind. This right mind is also called a sound mind in 1 Timothy 1:7, *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

That is why the Christian is commanded to renew his mind after he is saved because all the thoughts and conclusions formed in his mind during his unsaved state cannot be used as a reliable judge and guide for his future decision-making in enabling him to walk in newness of life. *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:2).* If a child of God is obedient to this commandment, it is promised that he will be able to proved what is the acceptable and perfect will of God for his life. After all, who would want to live in God's imperfect will for him? This renewing of the mind is an urgent matter because the mind of men is capable of vanity mentioned in Ephesians 4:17-22, *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of*

their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. It is natural for an unsaved man to have a vain mind that produced a life alienated from the life of God. The walk of man is guided by his mind and so a vain mind will guide a man to walk in wickedness according to his own deceitful lusts, which originates from his own wicked and deceitful heart. This is further confirmed in Ephesians 2:3, *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* So before a man is saved, the mind's desire is to fulfill the lust of the flesh.

As such, it is imperative for a child of God to know how he should treat his own mind and be obedient to the commandment in Ephesians 4:23 & 24, *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* This process of mind renewal does not happen overnight though the mind of Christ is already given to the believer at the point when he gets saved. It will take time for a child of God to practice exercising the mind of Christ given to him to know God's will for him as he continues his pilgrimage here on earth. This spiritual exercise of the mind is especially important because the Bible reveals that the mind of men is totally given over to depravity.

If a child of God is not careful, he can allow his defiled mind to control his life according to Titus 1:15 & 16, *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* The child of God does have a mind that is defiled before he is saved and such works of corruption can still surface in his life if he does not actively seek to renew his mind. This is also explained in Romans 8:5-7, *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* The mind of the flesh will feed the flesh and this carnal mind will lead to death. God is displeased with a child of God yielding to his carnal mind because this carnal mind is always in enmity with God and it cannot be subject to the law of God. To expect any compromise from this carnal mind to obey God's law is insanity because just like fire and water, which do not mix, no one can bridge the great divide between the carnal

mind and the law of God.

Moreover, the mind of the flesh can beguile a Christian into error according to Colossians 2:18 & 19, ***Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*** The damage done by this fleshly mind is indeed serious as it seeks to alienate the believer from seeking after the Head even the Lord Jesus Christ for all his needs. In Proverbs 21:27 a wicked mind can also offer sacrifice, ***The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?*** The boundaries of the fleshly mind are limitless in its ingenuity in warring against the law of God. And the child of God is no exemption from its wicked works according to Colossians 1:21, ***And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.*** Because the child of God is now reconciled, he should not allow his own fleshly mind to dictate his new life in Christ.

Ezekiel speaks of the mind that is spiteful, ***Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with spiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey*** (Ezekiel 36:5). What vehemence of enmity that the mind of fallen men can devise against Almighty God which no man can comprehend! It is defiant unto the end and as such it will always be in enmity against the law of God. The mind can also become evil according to Paul, ***But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren*** (Acts 14:2). This does not imply that the mind is good before being caused to become evil. Instead, capacity for evil being a natural propensity of the mind of fallen men is being unleashed and it energizes evil men into action against all goodness of God manifests in his works under the sun.

Paul warned Timothy about wicked men whose minds are corrupt who will set out to hinder his gospel works, ***If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain*** (1 Timothy 6:3-6). This warning is once again repeated to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:5-8, ***Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the***

knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. Men of wicked minds will seek to turn people away from the Lord and cause their minds to become corrupted and this is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:3, ***But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*** So the mind of a child of God can be corrupted and the enemies of the cross are working overtime trying to achieve their objectives.

This is because the minds of these people are blinded according to 2 Corinthians 3:14, ***But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.*** Being blind, the Jews went about destroying believers in Christ. Paul before his conversion was once such a person clothed in his own self-righteousness and he sought to destroy the church of God. The culprit for blinding the minds of the people is none other than Satan as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:3, ***But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*** One of Satan's chief objectives is to ensure that sinners be crowned with a reprobate mind, ***And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient*** (Romans 1:28). Any sinners who chooses to rebel against God, his mind can become hardened as in the case of king Nebuchadnezzar, ***But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will*** (Daniel 5:20 & 21). How delighted must Satan be when he succeeds in turning the hearts and minds of sinners to rebel against the Most High God!

While the mind of the natural man is inherently wicked, carnal and corrupt, when speaking of his own spiritual warfare, Paul concluded that he can serve God with his own mind, ***I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin*** (Romans 7:25). This is possible because the child of God can activate the mind of Christ given to him to enable him to direct his mind to the things of God. The mind of a child of God must be reminded to perform certain right and positive functions like those in Titus 3:1 & 2, ***Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.*** By doing this, it will help the child of God to avoid

unnecessary trouble in this life. For a child of God, he has a pure mind like a computer diskette ready to be formatted and be written with the laws of God. ***This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*** (2 Peter 3:1 & 2). This pure mind of the believer needs to be stirred to remember God's words. This is in contrast with a foolish man who utters his mind in Proverbs 29:11, ***A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.*** The stirring up of the pure mind is in direct opposition with emptying of the fleshly and corrupt mind of a fool.

For a saved man, his mind is ready to be put to good use for the Lord. ***For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many*** (2 Corinthians 9:2). This mind here is ready and anticipating in helping the people of God in need. This pure mind of the believer is also ready to received God's words. ***And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*** (Acts 17:10 & 11). Not only the words of God were received here, the spirit-filled believers in Berea have a mind that is ever ready. The elders whom the apostle Peter mentioned are exhorted to lead God's flock with a ready mind. ***The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*** (1 Peter 5:1-3). King David also encouraged his son Solomon to serve God with a willing mind in 1 Chronicles 28:9 ***And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*** It is crucial for a child of God who is serving the Lord Jesus Christ to be sincere and whose mind must always be ready and willing without which he cannot persevere in this great undertaking. Besides, this mind of the child of God must be fervent in order to be effective. ***And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more*** (2 Corinthians 7:7). The apostle Paul was refreshed by the fervent minds of the believers in Corinth.

Like everyone else, the mind of the child of God can speak. ***And when he was***

come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds (Judges 19:29 & 30). In this sad and sorry episode when there was no king in Israel in those days, this man whose concubine was abused and died gathered the children of Israel together and they were asked to speak their minds. A mind is like a person and is capable of speaking but not with an audible voice. Its voice is no less effective as when the minds speak, the people are rallied to war.

The mind of a child of God is not free from troubles though he is given the mind of Christ. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand* (2 Thessalonians 2:1 & 2). Here the mind of a child of God is mentioned to have been shaken because he is troubled. Like a man, the mind is capable of grief. *Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah* (Genesis 26:35). Rebekah was grieved because Esau married wives of the Canaanites. The Lord warned the children of Israel not to follow after false gods and the punishment would cause them sorrow of mind. *And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life* (Deuteronomy 28:64-66). So just like a human being, the mind is capable of receiving sorrows.

For a child of God, he is exhorted not to allow his mind to faint under any circumstances. *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin* (Hebrews 12:2-4). This can only be achieved by considering Jesus Christ for what he has done for the child of God. Otherwise, the mind of a believer can become weary and faint. So when the child of God considers the Author and Finisher of his faith, his mind can be kept by the peace of God. *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ*

Jesus (Philippians 4:6 & 7). On the contrary, the child of God will have a doubtful mind if he does not fix his mind on Christ. ***If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you*** (Luke 12:28-31). This fallen mind is very capable of doubting God and his goodness and it does not require a lot of provocation to get into this state.

Because of all the inherent weaknesses of the fallen mind, it is critical that the mind be cultivated in the right direction and for the right purpose. As the mind of man can focus and it must be trained to focus on the right object. If it is focused on the Lord, the result is extremely pleasant for the child of God. ***Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*** (Isaiah 26:3). Perfect peace is promised to those who keep his mind focus on God and ensured that this mind is stayed on Christ. The mind has the ability to recall events as in the case of Peter's denial of the Lord. ***And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept*** (Mark 14:72). So the actions of a man will either come back to haunt him or delight him as he walks down memory's lane. That is why the child of God should take heed to Peter's admonishment in 1 Peter 1:13-16, ***Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*** Here is the mind personified having the loins to be girded up. The mind is to be equipped and prepared, always ready for action of any kind in the spiritual warfare.

The safety of the child of God is to be conscious of having the mind of Christ and be conformed to this mind of Christ in humility. ***Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*** (Philippians 2:3-8). The child of God is expressly commanded to walk in lowliness of mind even as Christ has humbled himself to be a servant and become obedient even unto the death of the cross for the redemption of lost

sinners. The child of God is told to let this mind of Christ be in him and humility will become part and parcel of his life. The apostle Paul also spoke of his walk as being one in humility of mind in serving the Lord. *And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews* (Acts 20:18 & 19). He also commanded Christians to do likewise in Colossians 3:12 & 13, *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* Humbleness of mind for a child of God is a quality of Christ likeness and a prerequisite for effective Christian service.

Only with humility of mind can a child of God be of one mind with other Christians to further the cause of Christ. *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you* (2 Corinthians 13:11). The same is also written in Romans 15:6, *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Likewise, the apostle Peter also exhorts Christians to be of one mind, *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing* (1 Peter 3:8 & 9). This one mind here is dealing with interpersonal relationships among believers in Christ. With this regard, the apostle Paul's desire is also that Christians should be striving in one mind for the faith of the gospel serving the Lord, *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel* (Philippians 1:27).

If Christians are truly of one mind, there will be no conflict in their midst. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment* (1 Corinthians 1:10). Single-mindedness and conflict are in inverse relation to each other. This one mind and like-mindedness in Christ will draw believers together in love and joy. *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind* (Philippians 2:1 & 2). The apostle Paul emphasizes that as Christians walk in the faith, they should all mind the same thing recorded in Philippians 3:16, *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* The apostle Peter also talked about

arming of the believer in the same mind in 1 Peter 4:1 & 2, ***Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*** This same mind is concerning abstaining from the lust of the flesh and living according to God's will. This same mindedness in Christ is apparently something very precious as the apostle Paul singles out two persons in particular to exhort them in this regards, ***I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord*** (Philippians 4:2). He also urged the believers in Corinth to be of the same mind to avoid division within the church, ***Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*** (1 Corinthians 1:10).

With so many Scriptures exhorting believers to be of one mind and the same mind, it appears that this is not something Christians will naturally put into practice. Indeed it is difficult for believers in Christ to agree on everything pertaining to this life and the apostle Paul commanded that every child of God is to be allowed to be persuaded in his own mind on any issue as recorded in Romans 14:5, ***One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*** Everyone has a mind of his own and it is unique in its own right. He is capable of making judgment calls on issues. No two minds are made to be exactly alike in every aspect of its functions and actions. It is pointless for anyone to impose his will and convictions on others as this will easily cause division and bad feelings to develop. Even when the apostle Paul requested for Philemon's slave to serve him, he asked Philemon for permission, ***But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly*** (Philemon 1:14). The same apostle telling everyone to be of the same mind striving for the Lord will not impose his mind on others. This is what he meant to be of one mind by granting deference to others.

The mind of man actually forms the personality of the soul of man. It has all the faculties of emotions and it can reason, doubt, speak, love, change, recall, receive and renew. Like a human, it can be grieved, shaken, faint, willing, forward and persuaded. Endowed with the mind of Christ upon salvation, the child of God is equipped to renew his mind to be in tune with spiritual things of Christ. This renewed mind of man will choose to function on areas that will further the cause for the Lord and remain focus on spiritual things that have eternal values. On the other hand, the natural mind of men is wicked, corrupt, evil, spiteful, fleshly, vain and carnal. The child of God does not dispossess these depraved qualities of the fallen mind when he is saved. That is why the call to renew his mind so that the child of God can be transformed to serve the true and

living God rather than to allow his own natural mind to dictate his life and conform him to worldliness.

What is in the mind will be revealed into actions through the body. This is confirmed in Isaiah 65:2 when the Lord said, ***“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.”*** The Lord accused these rebels for walking after their own thoughts. Vain thoughts formed in the mind will lead a child of God to walk in vanity. Carnal images formed in the mind will lead a child of God into carnality. Wickedness harbored in the mind will lead the child of God into out-breaking of sins in his body. Having the mind of Christ is no guarantee of spirituality. Renewing the natural mind of man to conform to the mind of Christ is the key to spiritual success, peace and happiness in the Lord. Believers in Christ must heed what the apostle Paul warned in Romans 8:6, ***For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*** For those who think otherwise, he is welcome to let his own mind be the master of his own destiny. Loosing of a right and sound mind awaits those who follow the son of the morning who in his own mind thought to have set his throne above the stars of God as well as thinking he could be like the most High.

**Lest there be any fornicator, or
profane person, as Esau, who
for one morsel of meat sold his
birthright.
Hebrews 12:16**

New House Rules For Adopted Children

And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well (Acts 15:23-29).

During the formative days of the early Church, there arose a question with regards to the Gentile believers that they were required to be circumcised in order to be saved. This issue was ironed out at the Council in Jerusalem whereby a decree was subsequently given by the church in Jerusalem to the Gentile churches to confirm that there was no such requirement concerning the Jewish rites of circumcision to be applied to the Gentile Christians. However, the Gentile believers were admonished to abstain from four main practices that were common among the Gentiles. These four abstinences are to be observed not for the salvation of the believers in Christ but for their spiritual and physical well being. The four abominable practices are namely, pollution from idols, consuming blood, eating meats from animals that are strangled and fornication.

The apostle Paul affirmed the fact that the Gentiles have a predisposition towards idolatry, *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led* (1 Corinthians 12:2). Since the Gentiles major in idolatry, it will not be surprising that such abomination can be carried over into the life of a Gentile believer and therefore, this decree to abstain from food offered to idols is necessary. Paul explained that idolatry is Satanic and it has to be avoided at all cost in 1 Corinthians 10:18-21, *Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.* The apostle John also gives a similar commandment with this regards, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen* (1 John 5:21).

Before the flood, men were vegetarians in their diet and eating of meat was not allowed. However, eating of meat was allowed after the flood but under a strict specific restriction that blood from animals is to be removed prior to consumption. *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat* (Genesis 9:3 & 4).

Moses in his commandment given to the children of Israel also forbids blood to be eaten with the meat. *Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water. All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep. Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household. And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart. Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water* (Deuteronomy 12:15 & 16, 15:19-23). This commandment is also given in Leviticus 7:26 & 27, *Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings. Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.*

Moses explains the rationale behind this commandment, *And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood* (Leviticus 17:10-12). The life of the flesh is in the blood and it must not be eaten. The blood is meant to be offered to God on the altar for the expressed purpose of making atonement for the sinners. The penalty for non-compliance to this commandment carries the severe sentence of being cut off from the people.

So the children of Israel have to observe this law but the Gentiles are not told to keep such a law as far as the written oracles for the children of Israel are concerned. Therefore, it is also an acceptable practice that blood is also part of the diet of the

Gentiles. However, after the flood God did command Noah and his family not to eat meat with blood and the Gentiles had no excuse for violating this commandment. About thirty years ago, wild lives were commonly sold in the streets in Chinatown not far from where the author used to live. Pythons, monitor lizards, turtles, pangolins and other animals were slaughtered and their meats sold openly to the public. Pythons with heads chopped off and hung on hooks with their bodies twisting and turning for hours before they finally expired were a common sight. Lizard meat and turtles' flesh were laid on the ground to be sold. One such morning, the author witnessed the slaughtering of a pangolin. The blood of the animal was poured into a bowl and left on the ground. Soon a man walked over, took the bowl of blood and drank all the blood in the bowl in public.

It was nauseating and disgusting to say the least. The author then asked his dad why the man drank the blood of that animal and his dad suggested that the man might believe that there was some healing power in the blood for certain diseases or perhaps there might be spiritual power in the blood as well.

During religious festivals, chickens are among other things offered to idols for worship. The author's late grandma used to kill a chicken in the home for such purpose. The chicken would be held by its wings and with its neck pulled backward, a sharp knife would be used to slit the throat of the chicken. The blood would be collected in a bowl and the chicken left in the bathroom and allowed to die there. Of course the chicken would then be struggling and fluttering all over the bathroom and spluttering the remaining blood on the floor and the surrounding walls of the bathroom. The chicken would then be removed of its feathers, cooked and offered to idols for blessing before being eaten by the family. As for the blood collected, it would be allowed to solidified and then boiled and offered to idols as well before being cut into cubes to be eaten.

So blood consumption by the Gentiles is nothing new. But for a Christian, a diet of blood is explicitly forbidden. Beside such practice being disallowed, eating meat from animal with its blood not properly removed is also forbidden. It is also clearly stated in Moses' commandment in Leviticus 17:13 & 14; ***And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.*** Here is a commandment on how meats are supposed to be prepared with the complete removal of the animal's blood from the flesh before it is fit for human consumption.

If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too

far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike. Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD (Deuteronomy 12:21-25). Here is another passage that deals with proper treatment of animals' blood before the flesh is to be eaten. A promise of God's preservation is given not only for the person obedient to God's commandment but for his children as well.

Fallen men with their depraved nature are very capable of cruelty and perversity. There are some people that eat monkey's brain. However, the monkey is not killed to harvest its brain for consumption. It is commonly reported that the monkey will be secured in the middle of a table or a cage with its head protruding through a hole held with a clamp. Its skull will then be sliced or break open while the people will eat its brain with the monkey still alive struggling and kicking and tears will be running down the terrified monkey's eyes. Though God allowed animals to become part of men's food source, cruelty towards animals are clearly warned against with no uncertain terms.

When opportunity arises regarding the capture of the parent and its young, the commandment given is to take either one of them so that the days of that man might be prolonged. *If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days* (Deuteronomy 22:6 & 27).

The same goes for killing the mother and its young for food in Deuteronomy 14:21, *Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.*

Concerning animals to be offered as sacrifices to God, the commandment given is to allow the young to spend seven days with the parents before they can be offered to God. *Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me* (Exodus 22:30).

When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven

days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day (Leviticus 22:27 & 28). Killing of both the parent and its young on the same day is forbidden. God who is holy, just and righteous is concerned about animals' welfare too. Godly men will also exhibit this same virtue when dealing with animals. *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel* (Proverbs 12:10). Sometimes animals are drowned before they are killed. Complete removal of blood from the dead animals might not be possible in such cases. It is no surprise that meats from strangled animals are not allowed for human consumption and in particular for a Christian. So the commandment given to Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:3 & 4, "**Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat**" is still a valid commandment for the child of God to comply.

Finally, the fourth abstinence is concerning the human body. For a child of God, his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and he is no longer his own. Fornication has a direct impact on the body of the believer as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* The child of God is not only told to abstain from fornication but to flee from the frightening consequences of such practice. Abuse of the body will bring swift judgment from God.

Fornication is such an abomination that God will not tolerate his child from engaging in such evil practices. *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus* (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Bodily destruction is fit for those who indulge in such sinful practices because they disregard their body as the temple of God and cause its defilement.

The Scriptures suggest that fornication is a common practice among the unbelieving Gentiles. ***For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God*** (1 Thessalonians 4:2-5). The child of God is told not to be like the Gentiles who do not know God and the child of God is not to adopt their sinful and perverse lifestyle in fornication. On the contrary, the child of God is supposed to possess his body as a vessel in sanctification and honor. Abstaining from fornication is a directive will for a child of God and he needs not pray about the matter for an answer. God's will here needs no other interpretation.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them (Colossians 3:5-7). Here the instruction is to mortify the flesh and fornication is listed as the chief culprit that will cause the wrath of God to descend on the children of disobedient.

Many years ago, the author heard about the trauma his former colleague related to him when his buddy died in an accident during military training. This buddy of his was supposedly a Christian. According to other classmates of the author who also knew this accident victim, this Christian was living an immoral life and boasted of his fornicating lifestyle. The author's former colleague mentioned that the last words uttered by this Christian was "Oh my God" before he died. This former colleague being an unbeliever had to burn incense and joss sticks to appease the dead and evil spirits believing it would protect him from harm and trouble so that he could sleep with peace after the incident.

If anyone thinks that fornication is not a very serious offense before God, consider what happened to Sodom and Gomorrha in Jude 1:7, ***Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*** The very reason for the wicked men there that were destroyed by fire from heaven was due to fornication. They were completely given over to fornication. As though the stench of their sins were not already reaching heaven, they went after strange flesh in their quest for fornication in the extreme form. If a child of God makes light of his body and indulges in this sinful and obnoxious practice, he can expect no less from the hand of an angry God. Satan may very well be the chosen instrument for the purpose of punishment for the child of God like the case in 1

Corinthians 5 concerning the man who fornicates with his father's wife.

Therefore, the four abstinences decreed to the Gentile believers in Christ are not merely some suggestions for their consideration. Though the salvation of the believer is secured once he has trusted in Jesus Christ's shed blood on the cross of Calvary to wash away his sins, there are great perils ahead for his earthly journey. To think that the decree given by the Jewish church in Jerusalem is not spiritually binding for the Gentile believer is sanctified insanity. The decree is given for his protection and spiritual well being provided he observes the abstinences diligently with no reservation whatsoever. Otherwise, the threats of punishment for violating those commandments will become a reality for the child of God thus marring his joy in the Lord and even possibly resulting in the destruction of his physical body when he despises his spiritual birthright being a wild olive branch now grafted into the natural olive tree.

**For consider him that endured
such contradiction of sinners
against himself, lest ye be
wearied and faint in your
minds.**

Hebrews 12:3

World Of Insanity

Recently, a male student of mine shared with me an incident that occurred at school. While the school assembly was singing the national anthem during the flag raising ceremony, a female student about age fifteen began to perform the “national workout.” Her antics caught many by surprise as they were supposed to be standing in attention during this solemn event. While moving and dancing wildly oblivious to everyone’s gaze, she seemed to be enjoying herself thoroughly.

During another occasion in the library, she approached a male teacher and started singing him a love song from the famous movie, “Titanic.” However, her singing was anything but melodious. It sounded more like screeching and screaming than sweet singing. The whole movie theme song was completely decomposed by this female student. By then the quiet library was pregnant with humor and the red-faced teacher was too embarrassed to laugh so he excused himself to visit the washroom. When he returned, he found her waiting for him and continued her gregarious singing entertaining everyone in the library. No one dared stop her from her delightful experience.

Unfortunately for this student of mine, he was stunned when this girl suddenly ran towards where he was sitting and she loudly accused him for taking her seat, which was not the case. Immediately, this boy jumped out of his seat and she quickly jumped onto the seat rejoicing over her swift and sudden conquest for her much prized property. This male student of mine is quite a burly teenager and being bullied by others is definitely not part of his menu. But faced with situation like this, speedy evacuation from such a scene of madness would be the better part of valor. Removing his belongings without hesitation, he fled the place of harassment and sought another place of peace.

Another male student of mine also reported about the same girl who made history during an event at the sports stadium where inter-schools games were held. While students from different schools were cheering their school teams with orderliness, she became the only self-appointed cheer and dance leader moving ecstatically around harassing others with her erratic movement and unpredictable behavior. Her distraction affected the school’s cheering in no small way.

Witnessing incredible performances by insane people is rather common these days. I used to live with a neighbor whose family was quite problematic. One of their sons was mentally ill. He could whistle with a very loud and high pitch sound and he could be heard from a very far distance away. People could tell how far he was away based on the strength of his whistling. His whistling, though loud, was not some

unrecognizable sounds and noises but popular songs of the day. The only set back was that this man had no sense of time. His whistling could go on and on for hours and very often even late at night into the wee hours of the morning. Knowing his mental conditions, the neighbors of course tolerated him.

Moreover, this man had a strange habit of sleeping on the parapet of the common corridor outside his home. The family was living on the seventh floor of the apartment building. Almost every night, he could be seen lying precariously on the parapet which was less than a foot in width. Perhaps he enjoyed admiring the starry night sky and the cool outdoor air than the confined space of his two bedrooms flat. Anyway, he was often seen without a shirt and wearing only a short. Family members and neighbors had tried persuading him not to sleep on the parapet but he was unmoved. This went on for quite a number of years and he did possess a very good sense of balance on his strange place of retirement. But fortune ran out for him for he had been living on the edge in high places one time too many and for too long. So eventually, he expired one night when he left his much-preferred bed on the seventh floor empty and never saw light again when his body arrived on the ground floor without his knowledge. How tragic but what could one do for him? Several years later, when I went back to the neighborhood, I learned that his younger brother was housed in a mental asylum. Most people would agree that he would be in safer hands. But why did the whistler not find refuge earlier where his brother was now housed? No one had the answer.

A couple of years back I was caught in traffic congestion. There was quite a tailback from the traffic junction all the way back for about a kilometer. I was quite puzzled as during that time of the day, the traffic was usually light. After all it was off peak hours so I suspected that a serious road accident might have occurred further down the road. Eventually when I managed to drive nearer to the traffic junction, I did not see any pileup of vehicles. But the traffic situation at the junction was rather chaotic. I noticed the traffic lights seemed to be working correctly.

Finally when I reached the traffic junction, I saw a man standing in the middle of the junction directing the traffic. However, he did not put on the usual luminous vest of those who worked on the road, neither was he in traffic police attire. His hair was rather messy and his beard was untidy. His clothes were also very dirty as if he had just climbed out of a drain. Upon closer look, his eyes looked quite bewildered and with the erratic gestures from his hands supposedly directing traffic, he caused confusion aplenty at the traffic junction where vehicles had to maneuver dangerously close around him and other vehicles in order to get through the traffic junction. His handling of the traffic looked more like conducting music in a choir than directing traffic as a policeman. Perhaps in his mind, he saw himself as the music director of a symphony orchestra where the vehicles were his musicians and the pedestrians his delightful audience.

Driving on the road, it would not be unusual to run into insane people doing crazy things. However, this incident was one of the most disruptive and potentially more destructive that happened along a busy major road grid. I used to see a man, probably in his fifties, walking along the pavement of a busy road that spanned about five kilometers under the hot afternoon sun. There was nothing on that stretch of road for anyone who would want to take a casual stroll. He would then walk back along the same pavement once he had completed his forward trip. No one knew how many times this man would walk back and forth on this inhospitable stretch of open road. He was definitely not doing a workout for no one in his right mind would walk under the scorching sun and certainly not for a person of his age. From observation, he was simply wandering aimlessly just to past his time. He could be seen taking his walk like his daily routine almost every afternoon unless it was a rainy day. It went on for a few months and no one stopped him. But one day, no one saw him taking his usual walk anymore and as to what happened to this man, your guess would as good as mine.

When talking about people who are mentally unsound, we most likely would have a fair share of experiences and encounters in different forms and under varying circumstances. Our usual response may be one of amusement but when the situation threatens to get out of hand, getting out of the way may be a better option. My daughter who travels to school using the subway system often comes across another schoolboy in the train. This boy for no reason would start talking but he was not using his mobile phone with the earpiece attached to communicate with anyone. He would simply start talking to his imaginary friend or friends and smile at anyone who cared to look at him. Being confined by the limited space in the train, uneasiness was mostly felt by the commuters during situation like this. We always advise our daughter to be careful and not stay too near this boy as people with unsound mind usually exhibit unpredictable behavior. Direct engagement with a person of this nature may not be very pleasant to say the least.

About two years back, my sister employed a domestic helper from a neighboring country. Her bio-data looked normal on paper but when she moved into the home strange behaviors surfaced. My sister was expecting to deliver her second child then and the maid was employed to take care of her and the home. Apart from having difficulty communicating with her, the maid displayed some rather strange behavior. She would be smiling most of the time even when no one was present. She was also very forgetful and almost could not be trained to take care of the daily chores required of her around the house. She was also quite weak and sickly. When we visited my sister, we indeed noticed that this maid really liked to smile a lot but when she smiled with her face, her eyes were not smiling. She had a rather eerie look in her eyes as though she was present in body but absent in spirit. My sister had already given birth then and it was really very trying for her. On top of having to take care of the newborn

baby, she had to take care of her sickly maid as well. Fortunately, she managed to get a replacement helper from the maid employment agency. Otherwise, no one knows for sure what kind of untoward incident might occur in the home.

A friend of mine also had a very unpleasant experience with his domestic helper. The maid had been working for the family for quite sometime. The family went to church every Sunday morning and the domestic helper would be left alone at home. Soon neighbors informed them that while the family was away every Sunday morning, the maid would bring strangers into the home and hold a noisy party there tearing up the peace in the quiet neighborhood. Moreover, the maid would disappear from the home shortly after midnight when everyone was in bed and she would return just before sunrise. It is not uncommon to hear of domestic helpers working part time selling their bodies. One day when they confronted the maid, she ran into the kitchen and got hold of a knife and went into a trance. She was screaming wildly and her eyes began to move in an uncoordinated fashion. It might appear that she had gone into a fit. Sometime she would be rolling on the kitchen floor. My friend and his wife prayed and also phoned the police and called for an ambulance. Thankfully, after a while, the maid was subdued and later the maid was deported out of the country.

Sometimes, it is not easy to tell whether a person is really mentally ill or faking illness to escape the unpleasant realities in life. As for this friend of mine, did the maid suddenly suffer a seizure or was she possessed by devils, it would be hard to tell. Was she feigning madness when being confronted by her employer for her nightly rendezvous and Sunday morning partying, it was also highly possible. But the fact remains that a person in such an unstable condition whether suffering from real or fake mental illness is a threat to anyone having to deal with her.

Like the first case mentioned about the schoolgirl whose behavior was in complete disarray from the norm expected of her, some students believed that she was merely trying to get attention. Maybe she was not as pretty as some of her classmates and she was badly in need of some people to take notice of her. However, the interpretation of her conditions would be quite subjective. For the male student of mine being scared by her irrational behavior would undoubtedly think that the girl was indeed sick in the head. As for another person who had not had any close personal encounter with her but observing her from a distance, he might view her conditions quite differently. Of course she could possibly be faking to be mentally unsound initially and then eventually developed into a conditioned behavior that she found acceptable, especially when her objectives had been achieved by her new behavior she was now exhibiting.

Mental illness in some people can be quite easily detected to be genuine mental

case. This illness could be due to many factors or combination of factors. People could become mentally ill due to a serious accident especially injury to the head. There are also people becoming mentally sick when they cannot cope with the demands in life. This stress induced mental illness is rather common and lately many children are also known to be suffering from varying degree of mental illness when they cannot manage their studies. A person can also become mentally ill when he suffered from some traumatic events such as breakdown of relationship with a partner or being retrenched when the company downsized and the list goes on.

I was told of a man with a doctorate degree gone mad when he could not take the stress when he was put on probation to work as an auditor. There was this bank in the States that would only recruit the best men they could find who usually possessed several academic degrees in various disciplines to work as internal auditors. They would then be put together to fight among themselves during the course of their work. The philosophy adopted by the department was “iron sharpeneth iron”. So only the best would survive and unfortunately for this doctor, he fell victim to such an unforgiving system. Stress if not managed properly and carefully could lead to very dire consequences.

Symptoms of mental illness can range from a very wide spectrum. In general, sufferers have lost their mental faculty and become incapable of reasoning. Hence, erratic behavior of the sufferer is the direct result of the failure of the brain to coordinate the activities and movements of other parts of the body. Some sufferers exhibit violent tendencies and need to be subdued and isolated for public safety while others who have lost sense of realities will live in their own world of fantasy or misery without causing any harm to others, albeit a nuisance to those people around them. A person who is mentally ill must be distinguished from a person who is being possessed by devils. The medical classification for such sufferers is called manic-depressive psychosis. Such sufferers often manifest violent behaviors that are self-destructive or a danger to other people around them.

For a person faking mental illness, the symptoms could be just as real as a person who is indeed mentally ill. These people are objectives driven and they can fake it so well that they are often passed off as a genuine mental patient. They can also proceed to condition themselves to the new adopted behaviors and remained in this state for a long time. People faked mental illness for different reasons. Some do it to get attention while others do it to escape from danger or responsibility that they do not want to shoulder. A former classmate of mine feigned madness so well that he was passed off as a normal person who had lost his mind. He was a very fit and stout man who was enlisted into the armed forces. Unfortunately, he found that the training was too tough for him. He was often singled out for punishment and performed unreasonable tasks. So

to get out of the sickening situation, he pretended to be mad and he got away with it. He did not reveal to me what he did but he faked madness so well that he was downgraded on medical ground and served only in the service vocation. He was also not eligible for reserve duties and he had also since migrated to another country.

In the Bible king David feigned madness so well and he got away with it. We read of this incident in 1 Samuel 21:10-15, ***And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?***

Here David was fleeing from king Saul who had tried to kill him not once but twice with a javelin at close range. Anxious to get away from Saul, he went to this Philistines king hoping to find a safe place of refuge where he might reside. When the Philistines realized this defector was none other than their great adversary David and remembered how the Israelites rejoiced and sang of the great slaughter under the hands of David, David became afraid for the harm that might befall him. When fear struck his heart, David changed his behavior from that of a normal person to one whose behavior was abnormal and subnormal. He faked it so well that the king of Gath thought that David had really gone mad. No sane person would like to live with or deal with an insane person. Some are even offended at the presence of an insane person like the case here. Here we see David's self-defense mechanism at work and he managed to deliver himself by feigning madness. David knew men's psychology pretty well that a person sick in head would usually not be welcomed into the home of anyone.

In the Bible, it is made clear that there are people who are mentally unsound as well as those who are possessed by evil spirits. According to Matthew 4:23 & 24, the distinction between the two is given; ***And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*** The Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry went about healing every form of afflictions suffered by the people from sicknesses to spirit possessions and people with mental illnesses. His

success rate was remarkable and not a single case of bodily and mental affliction was beyond his power to heal. There was no blaming any of the victims for lacking the faith to be healed. Jesus Christ is the Great Physician and nothing is too great for him.

So there is a distinction between mental illnesses and spirit possessions. For those who are lunatic, they have lost their senses of reality and most of the time they cannot take care of themselves. They are living in their own world unknown to those around them. As for those possessed with devils, their conditions are much more serious than those who are simply lunatic. They usually exhibit extreme forms of behaviors and they can be a serious threat to safety and public order. They can also be possessed with supernatural power beyond the natural means of a normal physical human body. Science certainly has no answer to such extraordinary phenomenon.

As a redeemed child of God, if we keep God's commandments and have a daily drawing nigh unto God, peace and a sound mind are promised to us. ***Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*** (Proverbs 4:23). ***For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*** (2 Timothy 1:7). All those unfortunate miseries suffered by the people of the world should not be our lot.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever (Isaiah 32:17).

**Now we exhort you, brethren,
warn them that are unruly,
comfort the feebleminded,
support the weak, be patient
toward all men.**

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Expect The Unexpected

It was late afternoon when I arrived for class. I was trying to locate the key to open the door to the classroom when suddenly; there was a commotion nearby. Loud shouting was heard but I was getting ready to begin my class so I did not bother to find out about what was going on. After all, it was not uncommon to have quarrels in the neighborhood every now and then. It might just be one of those insignificant quarrels and sometimes it might be a mother screaming at her child for misbehaving. By the time I settled into the classroom, the shouting had more or less ceased. The neighborhood was peaceful again. Only the little children running hither and thither playing at the nearby playground and youngsters kicking a game of soccer at the field were about the only “disturbances.”

That evening when I was about to dismiss the class, the shouting, that was heard earlier that afternoon, resumed. After my students had left the classroom, I locked up the place. To satisfy my curiosity since I was already free to leave for home, I walked towards the direction of the noise. As I got closer, I saw a man with very short hair shouting into the phone at the public phone booth located just around the corner of the block. He was full of rage as he shouted loudly holding onto the phone. He was not very tall but stout and appeared to be quite fit like those men in the army. It appeared that he was quarreling with someone over the phone. As I walked past, he looked at me but continued his incessant rebuke to the person on the line. There were also other passers-by who took a look at him and then walked away. I simply walked past him and went to my car and drove home. I thought to myself that this man must have been very upset with the other person on the phone.

However, the neighborhood was quiet for a few days, as the man had not been seen since that day he quarreled with someone over the phone. Perhaps, he might have made peace with that person who had offended him! The usual activities were the children and youngster playing in the vicinity of the field and the playground as well as young adults jogging on the tracks and working out at the exercise corner.

One day, while I was walking past the public phone booth on my way towards the classroom, suddenly, out of nowhere, there was loud shouting of, “HONDA CIVIC! TOYOTA COROLLA! BMW! MERCEDES! MAZDA! NISSAN SUNNY! HYUNDAI ELANTRA! JAQUAR!” I turned around and was amazed to see the same short hair man shouting into the phone again. I was completely taken aback because out of the blue, I was abruptly greeted with the loud piercing voice. It was a lovely and peaceful afternoon and I was looking forward to a good time teaching my students. Little did I expect such an unusual welcome on the way to class! The proximity to the source of the shouting made things worse. I was so close to the man and I could see his face red with

fury as he continued to lambaste the other person over the phone. Well, it was none of my business, so I hurriedly walked away as my class was about to begin shortly.

With the names of all the different makes of cars still ringing in my head, I started my class. Some students tried to be funny by imitating what that fellow did at the phone booth. Half way through my lesson, the class was interrupted when someone opened the door slowly. With the door half ajar, the head of a man slowly popped in through the door opening. It was unmistakably the same man who was shouting into the phone earlier. Still standing outside the classroom while holding onto the door, he looked around and he asked me about the time. So I took a look at my watch and I told him the time. He then asked me to call the police because there was a road accident outside. I asked him why he did not call the police himself. He told me the police would not believe him and they would not come. By then, my students were already feeling quite nervous and they were apprehensive where our exchanges would lead us. I told the man that I was busy teaching and I had no time to entertain him. Good thing after that, he closed the door and left. It was a great relief for all of us! Immediately, I went to the door and locked it. Neither my students nor I wished to be disturbed by the man. When my students saw that I managed to get the man to leave the classroom without much trouble, some of them joked about the incident and some made funny remarks about the man. Finally, class ended and everyone went home. Surprisingly, that man was nowhere to be seen.

A few days later, while teaching my class, loud shouting was heard again. Everyone could hear, “TOYOTA COROLLA! HONDA ACCORD MAZDA! HYUNDAI ACCENT! BMW! MITSUBISHI LANCER!” ringing loud and clear outside. This time no one needed to guess who that person was. Ignoring the disturbance, we carried on with class. Again, half way through lesson time, the door was slowly opened. Once again, the head of a man poked through the door opening. My students were quite tensed and none of them dared turn back to look at the man standing outside the room who was still holding onto the door. They looked at me and see what I would do to deal with this fellow. The man again, surveyed everyone in the class and asked me what the time was. I told him the time but he did not leave. As expected, he asked me to call the police because there was a road accident outside. Of course, by now we all knew that the man was cranky and he was imagining things. I told him politely that I was busy teaching and he had to call the police himself. Disappointed with my reply, he closed the door slowly and left. What a relief to everyone again! So, I locked the door to prevent such uninvited intrusion.

So from then on, I instructed my students to lock the door once class was in progress. Those students who arrived late for class would have to knock and identify themselves before the door was opened for them to enter. How troublesome but what

choice had we got! From time to time, we could hear turning of the doorknob and everyone would sit up, stop and wait for the person outside the class to stop his activity. Such distraction was really a nuisance! My main concern was the safety of my students.

What if this guy turned violent? Some students told me that they had to walk a big round to come to the classroom in order to avoid the guy who was spending quite a lot of time at the phone booth shouting as usual. They were also afraid to come early to wait for me to open the door to the classroom because they wanted to avoid unnecessary trouble with the man.

Unfortunately one time, we forgot to lock the door and half way through the lesson, we were greeted by the appearance of this uninvited guest. After asking me the time and requesting that I called the police, which I declined, he raised his voice. Perhaps he was irritated and frustrated that we had locked the door and he could not have access to me for quite a number of occasions. He demanded that I called the police immediately. I told him to leave and I warned him that I would call the police and lodge a complaint against him. He did not believe the threat I made and he refused to leave. I had no choice so I reached for my mobile phone and called the police with this guy still present. I told the police there was this mad man disturbing the class and I requested that they send their officers over to apprehend the man. Upon hearing my conversation with the police, he closed the door and left. My students were quite frightened because they were afraid that this guy might be waiting outside and no one knew what he would do given his state of mind. He might be waiting for us with a weapon!

The police officers arrived and I told them what had happened. There was little they could do because this man was of unsound mind. Furthermore, he had not committed any criminal offense and they could not arrest him. They certainly knew about this man because I was not the first to call the police to complain about him. The police then searched the surrounding area but he was nowhere to be found. He was quite smart, I thought. At least, he knew there was no way he could have the upper hand in the confrontation with the police who would be out there to enforce the law. Maybe he had already had previous encounters with the police and they were anything but pleasant. So that evening, everyone went home relieved that the mad man was not waiting outside the classroom to greet us when we dismissed.

A few days later, shouting at the phone booth resumed. No one was amused. Classroom door was locked and we hoped for the best. Nothing happened to us that evening. It went on for a couple of evenings and as usual, turning of the doorknob was heard. To pre-empt any untoward incident, I called the police. Soon there was sound of silence outside. I guessed the police came and dealt with that guy. Indeed, when class dismissed, police officers were still outside. I spoke to one of the officers and sought

advice on how we should deal with him.

The police again informed that they could not arrest him because he had not committed any offense. He might be a nuisance but as long as he did not harm anyone nor act in any way with the intention to cause harm, there was little the police could do. But I asked what if this man turned violent. I was told that I could exercise my right of self-defense. But I did not think that was a good option at all. However, I was comforted that the police assured me that they would monitor the situation closely. I was also told that the police went to the man's home and warned him not to cause any more trouble. The police told him to come out for a talk but he hid in the house and dared not go out to confront the officer. I was glad that he was at least afraid of the men in blue uniform. At least, this little deterrence offered some comfort to my students and myself.

One morning while I was sitting in my car with windows and doors locked waiting for my wife, I noticed that a man was loitering behind my car. When I turned to look at the man, he was none other than my "dear friend" with "special talent" who had been performing at the phone booth almost everyday. He came to the front and stared at me with rage. I could see his face was turning red and his eyes were furious. I reached for my mobile phone getting ready to call the police. When he saw what I did, he gestured to me to get out of the car for a fight. If he had touched my car, I would definitely have called the police. I ignored him and he continued to threaten me for a while and then left. I had no choice but to put up with his nonsense. Of course, I avoided him because there would be a no-win situation for me to confront him head on.

After, this incident, I decided not to park my car near the classroom anymore. So I parked my car across the street and took a longer walk to the classroom instead in order to avoid him. This practice went on for quite a few weeks. At one time while crossing the road to class, incidentally, my "dear friend" was also crossing the road from the other side. We saw each other. It was too late for me to change course. We were heading towards each other and I wondered what he would do. When we crossed each other's path, we stared at each other and thankfully nothing happened and we continued our walk to cross over the rest of the road. What a relief! I was expecting for the worst to happen since he last threatened me and that was why I parked my car across the road hoping to avoid him. Thank God all was well!

Later, I learned that this man used to be a sergeant in the army. Unfortunately, he met with an accident, presumably, a road accident and he became mentally ill. That explained why he kept shouting different makes of cars and quarreling about road accidents on the public phone. His mum and sister had been urging him to seek medical treatment at the mental hospital but he refused. Since he could take care of himself

most of the time except for his strange behavior at the public phone, they left him alone. Many prayers were made everyday for God's protection and mercy. Prayers were also made for this man that God would subdue him and heal him.

Surprisingly, out of a sudden, peace descended upon the neighborhood. No shouting was heard and this man was nowhere to be seen. No one knew what happened to him. Some thought that the police might have arrested him. Anyway, we enjoyed the peace we once had until out of nowhere this stranger came onto the scene "entertaining" passers-by with his antics at the phone booth punctuating the tranquility of the neighborhood.

Not taking the chance, I still parked my car across the road. I did not mind the extra walk as long as I could avoid unnecessary trouble which I could ill afford. So happened while crossing the road one day, my "dear friend" suddenly appeared across the road and he was also crossing the road coming towards me. I was very sure he saw me. I thought he might have been waiting for this opportunity for quite sometime now just to meet me. It was a repeat of what had happened not too long ago on the "strenuous road crossing exercise" and this time was episode two. Having not much of a choice but to take my chance, I prayed and proceeded to cross the road. Not sure what to expect from this "dear friend" having disappeared for sometime, it was a journey of much apprehension. Pleasantly surprised, my "dear friend" smiled when our path crossed and he even greeted me and asked how was my day! For a moment, I was at a loss for words. I greeted him in return and I went on to my class. I thought strange thing had happened indeed. Of course I was very happy for his change to say the least and I asked my students whether they had met the man recently. None of them did so I reported to them what happened when I had just met him. They were surprised too!

From then on, we had been seeing this man around. He would also come up and greet me whenever we met and we could hold a normal conversation together. We learned that this man eventually agreed to seek medical treatment for his conditions and he was now back to his normal self rather than causing misery to everyone in the neighborhood. Everyone was indeed glad and relieved that we could get on with our lives again with quietness and peace. The neighborhood was again bustling with the right kind of activities with the children unhindered from their natural pastimes at the playground.

Looking back at what had transpired, it was my own lack of faith in God that had contributed much to the anguish and helplessness experienced because even after much prayers were made, it was my unbelief that God would intervene at his own time to make all things beautiful in his time, that there was this lack of peace in my heart concerning the troubles this man had caused us to go through. It was all of God's mercy

and grace that no untoward incident happened throughout that period of time when I had to deal with this man. It was God's restraining hands in my life that I did not resort to carnal weapons when faced with such trying situation. It was all too easy to rely on my own wisdom and lose my testimony in Christ instead of being a help to this person in need and pillar strength to my students in times of trouble. I was of course very happy that I no longer had to park my car across the street when I went to class everyday after this troublous event. But I was most glad that God had undertaken for me in this matter and granted me a favorable outcome over the whole situation despite my lack of faith.

Actually, this was not the first time I had to deal with people of unsound mind near the place where I used to teach. There was also this other man who did not work but loitered in the neighborhood. He was often spotted playing soccer with teenagers at the field and the street soccer court during the late afternoons and evenings. Occasionally, my students would complain to me that this man would approach them to ask for a very small amount of money. On very rare occasions, he would also chase some of my students. Sometimes, he would also look into the classroom through the windows from outside to observe what was going on in class. Everyone in the neighborhood knew that he was of unsound mind and they tolerated him because he did not create a lot trouble for others. He was rather quiet and he rarely talked to anyone.

The police also knew this guy and sometimes, I was told, he would even go to the neighborhood police post to "harass" the police during the wee hours of the morning. He would pour out his family problem to them. I suspected that he might be bored and needed some attention and the police happened to be available while everyone in the neighborhood was still asleep during that time. He was not really a threat to my students nor myself so we adopted the policy of live and let live and we coexisted quite happily without much of a problem. There were also occasions where I joined my students during soccer games and this man would also be involved playing in the opposing team. I must say he was very skillful and fast with the ball. No one knew what caused him to become mentally unsound but his conditions were quite manageable.

Another incident took place nearby while I was fetching my daughter home from the kindergarten. Like everyone else, I parked my car along the side of the road and I walked to the door of the class about forty feet away to pick up my daughter. The place was usually quite crowded with parents and children leaving the classes. Unfortunately, I forgot to lock my car as I was in a hurry to bring my daughter home. When I brought my daughter to the car, a stranger was sitting in the front passenger seat of my car. He was unkempt and dirty, shoddily attired and wearing only a pair of slippers. His eyes were blood red and he probably had not shaven for a few days. He was either drunk or mentally unsound.

Taken by surprise, I told him to get out of the car. He refused. I told him again to get out but he refused. After several attempts, I became quite frustrated with him. I threatened to call the police but he was unmoved. I had no choice but called the police. By then there was already a small crowd gathered around near my car. Soon the police arrived. The police officers approached the man still sitting in the front seat of my car. They asked him to get out but he again refused. They asked the man whether the car he was sitting in belonged to him but he did not reply. With his persistence in not leaving my car, the police officers had no choice but used force to pull him out. He left his slippers in my car when the police managed to drag him out. The police then led him to the police car parked right behind my car. Humorously, this fellow demanded to sit in the front seat of the police car. The police rebuked him and shafted him into the back seat. They also recovered this fellow's slippers from my car and handed them to the man. The man was then driven to the police station. I was not sure what happened to that fellow after the incident but I felt that the police had probably let him off because he appeared to be mentally ill and needed professional help.

I was really in a hurry that day having several errands to run and I was very frustrated with this man for what he did to me. I admitted that in the flesh, I was getting ready to land punches on that fellow. I thanked God for restraining me and I was glad that I did not take the law into my own hands. I thank God that living in Singapore, there is law and order and the Police are very efficient and professional in carrying out their duties. The God of the Bible is the God of order. There are proper authorities to deal with different matters under different jurisdictions. Any rash acts in the flesh could result in very serious and undesirable consequences. As a child of God, trouble avoidance in this world should be of paramount importance for we are encouraged to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. How can we fight a good fight of faith if such trivial matters that are of no eternal value and consequence entangle us? I attribute all glory to the Holy Spirit of God for bringing into remembrance his blessed words during my hours of need.

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God (James 1: 20). He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he (Proverbs 25:28,16:20, 28:26).

**Submit yourselves therefore to
God. Resist the devil, and he
will flee from you.
James 4:7**

Sweet Repentance

I climbed the familiar flight of stairs still thinking why Danny did not turn up for my wedding. When I reached Danny's home, the door was left opened but the metal gate was locked. I reached for the doorbell and Danny answered and came to the door. After getting the keys and unlocking the gate, he beckoned me to go in.

Having exchanged the usual pleasant greetings, we sat down and talked. With the question why Danny did not attend my wedding still back on my mind, we talked about the general to the specifics on the day to day affairs and his children's activities and so on.

Not long after, Danny opened up and told me that he would never forget me. I was surprised and I asked him why! With much anticipation, as though he had been waiting for a long time before he could share this little secret with me, he looked at me intensely and asked me whether I knew the reason why he did not attend my wedding. I shook my head and told him I did not know why he missed attending my wedding. I added that I thought he was busy and might have to work. After all, Danny was a dear friend and a brother in Christ whom I used to visit quite regularly.

He then told me what happened on that faithful day while I was celebrating with friends, family members and relatives during my wedding, he was struggling and fighting for his dear life. On that day, Danny had almost gone mad and could have killed himself, I was told. He revealed that he was on the verge of being possessed by evil spirits and losing control of his mind and body. He described the devilish attacks as intense, painful, unbearable and terrifying. Under such immense sufferings, he thought he was going mad and he also had thoughts of committing suicide if he could bear it no longer.

Two preachers were called to his home that afternoon. One was an American Baptist missionary, which also explained why this man and his family did not show up at my wedding, and another preacher from Danny's previous church with Pentecostal leanings. They were both trying to help but ended up with more conflicts and confusion with their differing theological opinions on what Danny was going through and they quarreled over how to resolve the issue at hand. Their bickering was not doing Danny any good during such a time where theological discussions were the least of importance as far as the ordeal Danny was then facing was concerned. It was by God's grace that Danny managed to calm down and he was restored to sound mind that day.

I asked what he had been doing since that day. With very little hesitation, he told me that he had been reading the King James Bible on his knee and praying very often

ever since. He also revealed that the satanic attacks did not actually stop but each time when he was attacked, he would go to his knees in prayer and read his Bible. He had been reading the Bible from cover to cover because of the trouble the Lord had allowed into his life.

Danny was in his thirties then. He was a self-taught musician and could play the piano without the scores and music sheets. He could play beautiful music pieces whether the music of the world or Christian hymns just by hearing. He certainly had a good pair of ears! I also knew of another person, an American preacher, who had this talent, but he used his talent to glorify God. I heard this man play the piano at church one time when he visited the church.

At one time, Danny was the music director of an organization in producing music and drama. Due to his talent in this field, he used to work in nightclubs and lounges playing the piano to entertain patrons at those places. He told me that the money was really good back then. It was something he “enjoyed” doing with not much effort and he was earning big money as well as having many other side “benefits.” Working in such environment, it is obvious to say the least that getting drunk, drug abuse and other immoralities are part and parcel of the job. This is what most people would call occupational hazards and whether it is acceptable or not, it is really up to the individual’s convictions on such matter.

But Danny is a Christian! Do you think God would allow his child to live a life of such nature without consequences? Can God back out on his threats to chastise his children? ***So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*** (Romans 8:8 & 13). Danny mentioned to me that after the incident on my wedding day, he really began to fear God. He confided that what he really wanted was peace of mind, true peace and of course, he found it in the person of the Prince of Peace – The Lord Jesus Christ.

Danny then realized what the Scripture said in Romans 8:6, “***For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace***” was literally true in every sense of the word. It was definitely no joking matter to fall into the hands of an angry God! He was then having to live through what God promised he would do to his erring child. ***And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have***

had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Hebrews 12:5-11).

He told me with humility that he had promised the Lord that he would repent of all the sins that he had committed while working in those glittering places and he prayed that God would open some other doors for him to make a living. Soon, God honored his request by allowing Danny to work as a real estate agent. I remembered how happy he was when he closed one deal on a property which made him a commission of \$8000.

I continued to visit him for a while, talking, reading the Bible together and praying with him as well. During each visit, Danny would also asked me many questions and we discussed using the Bible as our source of ascertaining God's mind on the matters. Oh how we rejoiced in God's faithfulness and his promises that he would never leave us nor forsake us. Two of our favorite verses from the Bible are Isaiah 26:3 & 4; *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.*

We noted that God promised to keep us in perfect peace on the condition that our mind is stayed on God, trusting in him, especially in his written words upon which we received and appropriate by faith in his precious promises. Oh, how we need God's perfect peace living in a world of full turmoil and uncertainties!

In Danny's darkest hour, he found peace like Paul said in Romans 5:1, *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* As he pursued after spiritual food, he found more assurances, *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all* (Philippians 4:7 & 9, Colossians 3:15 & 2 Thessalonians 3:16). The more Danny read the Scriptures, the more confident and assurances he received, *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen* (Hebrews 13:20 & 21).

Eventually, Danny was no longer bothered by attacks from the forces of darkness. As the Scripture promised, ***Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*** (James 4:7). Danny was diagnosed to be suffering from cancer and died a few years ago living behind his wife and two teenage sons. Danny sought refuge and found peace with God and had now gone on to be with the Prince of Peace. Unfortunately for many people, like the Scripture said in Romans 3:17, ***And the way of peace have they not known.***

For the people of the world, true peace has always been elusive to them. They sought for peace from the wrong sources and the false objects. Peace may seem to them to be free from all harm, evil and trouble. They have a very myopic view of peace. Though a person may be in good health and of considerable wealth as well as being showered with favor and kindness from everyone he has to deal with, true peace would still be absent in the quiet of the night or during the happiest moment of his joy. For a child of God, while the tempest and billows roll all over and around him, he still has this peace that passes all understanding knowing that the Lord has promised never to leave him nor forsake him. What a difference! What glory! And what privilege to be kept in the most holy faith!

How I remembered those days when Danny and I would open the Bible to read and pray together. But now I know and I shall see him again in that glorious day when the Lord Jesus Christ calls me home or when he comes to establish his kingdom of peace and righteousness on earth.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

**Beloved, believe not every spirit,
but try the spirits whether they
are of God: because many false
prophets are gone out into the
world.**

1 John 4:1

Beyond Redemption

The pastor made a surprised announcement to the church that Michael had been called to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Michael would be entering the ministry full time and soon he would be traveling to the States to pursue his Bible education in the Bible College run by the sending church of the missionary pastor. The announcement was received with mixed reaction. Michael had been attending church services faithfully. Besides, he had also been involved in church activities such as tracting, bus ministry, visitation and driving the church van to ferry people to church. However, Michael in his thirties was not very gifted in speaking skills of which according to Moses, he would be considered slow of speech and slow of tongue. Moreover, he did not receive much education and pursuing a Bible education in the English language was certainly a cause for concern. Notwithstanding all of Michael's good works, some still viewed Michael's calling with skepticism. Nevertheless, the American missionary believed that he calling was sure and when the faithful day came for his departure for the State, the church sent him off with the best of wishes and God's blessing.

Just a year into Michael's college pursuit, news came that he was not doing very well. A local preacher handed a letter, which Michael wrote to him, to the missionary. It was neither a letter of exhortation nor a letter of encouragement to the church but a letter filled with bitterness and hatred directed against the missionary. The letter warned the local preacher to be wary of the missionary using demeaning and derogatory terms which were unbecoming of a Christian let alone a God-called man to the ministry. The American missionary then left for the States for his deputation work. He met up with Michael, gave him a hug and Michael's past transgression in his letter written to the local preacher was promptly forgiven.

More was learned about Michael that he was indeed struggling in his Bible courses but he managed to scrap through though. Besides having to study, he also had to work to support himself to pay for college fees, accommodations and other expenses. Michael also had to deal with his skin problem and arthritis which developed while he was in the States. He became very suspicious and the selflessness and sweetness in the service of Christ that were with him in the past became manifestly absent.

As if all these sudden changes seen in Michael in such a short span of time within a controlled Christian environment preparing men for the ministry had been detrimental to him instead of drawing him closer to the Savior, he had also developed an unhealthy habit of imposing upon others to pay for books which he purchased. Unfortunately for me, I happened to be one such victim! He would walk with me into the bookstore and picked up the books that he wanted and made me pay for them. He promised he would

pay me back but most of the time he did not keep his promise. This happened a few times and I had to put a stop to such unethical and God-dishonoring practice. Each time when I confronted him about the matter, he would ignore me and sometimes became very upset and walked away. I was amazed beyond measure at his attitude and behavior. Did not God call him to preach and that God would provide for all his needs? Was not he supposed to live by faith? Or was he misinterpreting and misapplying Hebrews 13:2 thinking that I should not be forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares? Anyway, we remained on talking terms and I simply treated the money he owed me as if nothing had happened because I had already committed the matter to the Lord obeying 1 Corinthians 6:7, “*Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*” trusting in God’s provision.

After four years, Michael eventually completed his studies and came back to the home church. In less than a month, Michael stopped attending church altogether. I tried calling his home but the family denied that there was such a person. So I visited his home personally. I was told that there was not such a person living there. After several visits, I finally found Michael at home and he reluctantly invited me into his home.

I understood that other church members had also tried visiting him but to no avail. Later during my conversation with Michael, he revealed to me that he had actually changed his name and he told me that in future if I wished to get in touch with him, I had to use his new name. I was completely astonished at the revelation. I continued to probe Michael hoping to find out what had actually happened to him after spending four years in Bible College in the States, which was supposed to prepare and equip him to serve in the ministry. His further revelation was truly shocking beyond belief!

During his stay in the States, Michael repeatedly experienced some sort of discrimination and bullying. He mentioned that some members in the church there had tried to harm him. One time, someone tried to poison him when he was offered a barbecued sausage by a man from the church. I asked him how he knew that the man was trying to poison him but he offered no reasonable explanation. He would only say that after he had eaten the sausage, he felt that it was poisoned! He also accused some college faculty members of doing him harm. There were many other very grave allegations and complaints he made against quite a number of people in the college and in the church back in the States. That was probably the only time he ever poured out such grievances to anyone who would care to listen. Even more ludicrous was his accusation that one of one college staff member secretly performed sorcery on him. It

was quite unbelievable that he could bring up all these “crimes” with no evidences and witnesses to support his claims.

To put the nail to the coffin on his spiritual state, he revealed that when he came back home, he had actually consulted with a spiritual medium, someone with a familiar spirit, who revealed to him those people in the States who were trying to harm him. It certainly sent a chill down my spine at such confession; that a Christian and a God-called preacher would turn to wizardry instead of turning to the Lord and the Scriptures for counsel. In the light of Scriptural warning against those who engaged in such practices, nothing short of execution would satisfy God’s holy demands. In 1 Chronicles 10:13 & 14, we read of the reason for king Saul’s death, ***So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.***

Moses had also revealed God’s wrath on such practices with no uncertain terms; ***And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people*** (Leviticus 20:6).

It was glaringly obvious that this Michael sitting before me whom I used to know was no longer the same person he used to be. He must be deliberately blind not to know that God had pronounced a death sentence on those who consult people with familiar spirits for counsel. But at the same time, he also accused others of practicing sorcery on him, which he deemed to be evil.

It was also understood years ago that Michael was the only Christian in his family. When he came home, with all the “evils” that had befallen him, I suppose, his family urged him to approach to mediums, changed his name to a more auspicious name and perhaps by doing so, would grant him a change in fortune. I would not be surprised at all if his family had convinced him that by associating with Christians, he had brought bad luck upon him. This might be the reason why he cut himself off from anything and anyone that had to do with Christ.

I observed also that Michael could not hold much eye-to-eye contacts during conversations in the past and even until then. He would usually look to the ground and always appeared as if he was in deep thoughts before he replied to questions. During theological discussions, he also engaged in hinting on mysteries, which were only revealed to him and not to others, but he failed to convince others how he had access to knowledge of such mysteries.

Before I ended my visit with Michael, I asked him two very important theological questions.

I asked, “How can a person obtain salvation for heaven?” Michael replied that there were many ways to heaven including salvation by good works. So Michael had gone off a tangent as far as salvation revealed from the Scriptures was concerned.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

I then followed with the second question, “Did the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh?” He tried to ignore this question and avoid giving me a direct answer to that question. I pressed him further with the same question to look me in the eye for his reply. Eventually, he affirmed that the Lord Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh. This time, Michael had crossed the point of no return.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:1-3).

With these theological positions established, it was good enough for me to bid my leave. There was not any point in attempting to persuade him to repent given that present circumstances and the change of state and mind on the part of Michael.

What had four years of Bible education done to Michael? Could it be that since God had called him to preach, he thought that the church did owe him a living? This might explain his behavior of imposing on others to pay for things that he wanted. Could it be that he thought he was securing for himself an iron rice bowl when he volunteered himself for the ministry? Therefore when things did not quite work out, he left! Or perhaps, he had been worshipping a god of his own making all along; whose god was his belly! There would always be more questions than answers for Michael's shipwrecked of faith.

There was indeed much searching of hearts after this episode. The lesson learnt here is that church activities do not guarantee spirituality. Salvation and spiritual walk can be faked and disguised in many forms and they can be blended perfectly into organized church activities.

Be warned, *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

There is no room for carelessness in this spiritual warfare! Spiritual casualty is not an option but a reality for the presumptuous!

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

**Where the word of a king is,
there is power: and who may
say unto him, What doest thou?
Ecclesiastes 8:4**

Power Of The Book

It was not an unusual evening for me. Having dismissed my students and cleaned up the classroom, I set off for home which was not far away from where I taught. It was nearly ten at night when I reached home. Not long after I had settled down reading my Bible and getting ready to go to bed, my wife's cousin, Peter (not his real name), telephoned requesting to speak to me urgently. I soon learned that his brother was in great trouble. He told me his brother came home with a stone on his forehead and he was "out of control." He was going crazy, I was told! No body at home could control him! Peter asked whether I could go over to his home and talk to his brother James (not his real name). Without hesitation, I obliged bringing my Bible with me.

Their home was not very far from where I used to live and it took less than ten minutes' drive to reach there. I was praying on the way that God would grant me the wisdom that I needed to counsel James who seemingly out of the blue had gone crazy. I understood that James did not have much education and he worked as a security guard. I was wondering to myself what had actually happened to him. Would he also turn violent, I thought on as I drove. There were too many thoughts that crossed my mind then but in no time I had arrived at their home.

Peter was somber and troubled. Nevertheless, he greeted me and straightaway ushered me into the bedroom where he shared with his brother James. James was lying on the lower deck of the bunk bed he shared with Peter. I observed that he still had a piece of plastic bag taped onto his forehead and he was extremely irritable and he spoke incoherently.

I started to talk with James and to try to find out what actually had happened to him. James replied that somebody was trying to harm him by playing black magic on him. His speech was loud but not very clear due to his present state of body and mind. But I could still make out most of what he was trying to tell me. He was very worried and frightened because he believed that a worm had entered his head and it was then crawling inside his head and he could not get it out. I noted that his eyes were staring blankly upward while he was lying on the bed and he could not remain still. Though we talked and at times he looked towards me but there was no eye contact at all during our conversation. Moreover his eyes looked strange! Then I called to mind what the Scriptures said in Matthew 6:22, *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

He also told me that he had gone to a shop and bought a kind of gem stone and was advised, which he believed, that if he would place the stone on his forehead, that would ward off evil. As such, the plastic bag with an object in it was there on his

forehead. He was trying to keep the worm under control. I tried to persuade him to remove the plastic bag with the object on his forehead in which he immediately rejected. I was thinking of trying to get him to realize that he was simply imagining things and by removing the object on his forehead he might feel better. So I asked if he mind if I read the Bible in the room. He replied that he had no objection.

Then I opened my Bible and started reading from Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians, James, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah 1 and 2 Timothy and many other books in the Bible.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

As I read, I noticed that James was calming down. So I paused for a while and asked him how he was feeling. He said that reading the Scriptures to him had caused him to feel better and that the worm inside his head was no longer moving like it was earlier. He requested that I continue to read the Bible to him. Well, of course I obliged and I continued reading.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are

asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I could see that James was really calming down and I decided to read on.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven:

his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

I read and I read! I lost count of time. But James did not fall asleep. Instead he urged me to read on! So, I had to continue...

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he

hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, [and] from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in [their] hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

It was already passed one in the morning and I told James that I could not read on forever. Besides, I had to work in the morning too! So I suggested that he read the Bible on his own which he agreed. I prayed with him before I left. He was feeling better but the stone was still on head! Peter then thanked me for going to his home to help his brother and he walked me to the door.

As I left, I reflected upon what had transpired during that three hours in which I was indeed greatly amazed. I was amazed at the power of the words of God. How the mere reading of the Scriptures could calm a man down whose mind could be unsound or oppressed by devils. I was amazed that I had read the Bible audibly for, I believed, about two hours. I had never done that before! I do not remember Peter ever offered me a drink either. Anyway I was not really thirsty at all. It was really an experience for me. It was also a privilege for me that the Lord had allowed me and enabled me to read the Scriptures for so long and to minister to James in his hour of need. My sacrifice was indeed so insignificant.

When it was day, Peter called and told me what had happened to his brother after I left. He told me that James had literally sat up and read the Bible out loud until after six that morning. However, he got stuck at one particular verse of the Scripture. James was mumbling and reading out loud continuously, "***I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love....***" This verse is taken from Psalm 119:113. No one knew for how long he had stuck on that particular verse.

Moreover, Peter also revealed something quite troubling. He said that James left home that morning and came home with his clothes all wet and full of sand. He had gone to the beach but he cannot swim! Peter also revealed what his brother had told him. Something was telling James to go to the beach and go into the water, which he did! He thought he could have died there but God had graciously preserved his life. Peter was extremely worried because he understood from the New Testament that there were cases where people were possessed by devils had affinity to water, which was true. He strongly believed that the forces of darkness were putting suggestions into the mind of James to cause him to commit suicide. There was very little we could do but we just had to pray for him. Once again, the Lord had been gracious to him in that the Lord touched James who went to the mental hospital to seek treatment on his own.

He was warded there for a couple of days and was put on medication. Peter and I visited him often and read the Bible to him and prayed with him. Eventually, he was discharged from hospital and he regained his mental faculty. For a while, he attended our church services as well as prayer meetings regularly. He had one problem though. With a record for being treated at the mental hospital, he could no longer work as a security guard. The license to work as a security guard had to be obtained from the Police Department. So he requested that we prayed for him and God overruled in this matter. James eventually obtained a favorable medical report and he got to go back to his job as a security guard.

God has indeed been very gracious to James. As we obey God's commandment, the Lord will fulfill his promises like he says he would, ***Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*** (Philippians 4:6). The Lord we serve is really a prayer answering God and he delights in the prayers of his saints. We can learn experientially what God has promised he is able to deliver because our Lord Jesus Christ is our Advocate and our Great High Priest who makes intercessions on our behalf. ***Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*** (Hebrews 7:25). As such, we are given the invitation to intrude into his presence at the throne of grace, ***Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of***

grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

**Seek ye the LORD while he may
be found, call ye upon him while
he is near:
Isaiah 55:6**

Flying In The Face Of Grace

It was just another usual Sunday morning worship but with an unusual ending. Singing of the Psalms, offering of prayers, preaching of the morning sermon and partaking of the Lord's Supper had all been done. And we were singing the last hymn of the morning service when a man went up to the front, approached the pastor and they left the room to have a talk outside. Shortly after, they both returned and joined in the last stanza of the hymn. After the deacon had closed the service with prayer, the pastor went forward as usual to dismiss the congregation. But there was an unusual announcement made that morning.

The pastor revealed that brother Ben (not his real name) had earlier requested an audience with him just before the end of the service. Ben had shared with him something that he would also like to share with the church. With Ben's permission, the pastor then told the church that Ben was under some extreme form of severe spiritual assault lately and Ben would like the church to pray for him. The pastor also asked the church to approach Ben for more information on what he was experiencing so that the church might be able to pray for him more specifically.

Soon several members gathered around Ben. Ben reported that he had been under extremely severe spiritual attacks for the past two weeks. Most of the time, the attacks occurred at night. As such, he hardly slept and he was very tired which was quite true from his facial appearance. He described the attacks as a dark shadow descending upon him and trying to take control of him physically. He also had difficulty breathing and he experienced pain in the chest during each attack. He could only pray each time when he faced such desperate situations of being put on the verge of losing his body and his mind. His sons were also having acute fever from time to time with no reason at all. He was at his wits end and because of all these attacks which took place almost every night, he was like a walking zombie, mostly present in body but absent in the mind. He was completely exhausted!

He suspected that one of his neighbors, whom he had had some misunderstanding recently, had engaged someone to practice sorcery on him. When pressed upon him how he knew that someone was performing sorcery on him, he did not want to elaborate. He only mentioned that he could sense that what his neighbor did to him was finally returning upon that family and something very serious could happen to them that very day. He looked very disturbed and worried as he continued to pour out his troubles.

Ben revealed that all these incidents happened recently when he decided to come back to the Lord, as he had been backslidden for quite a long time. He began to read and study the Bible for hours. Besides, he had also started to pray more earnestly than

ever before. The pastor then admonished him not to use carnal weapons to fight this spiritual war but to pray and implore the precious blood of Jesus Christ for his protection because the practice of black art was very real. Ben acknowledged that he was well aware of all these and added that he himself was also very knowledgeable in that area too. He pointed out that the adversary would always launch the attack beginning from the mind. Ben then left, clearly a man exceedingly worried and troubled.

The following Sunday, Ben reported that things were not getting any better but he did not stay very long and left soon after the church service was over. Those who had met him that day thought that he was not in control of himself. Ben used to visit our church many years ago once in a while selling Christian literatures. He had not been around for quite a few years but then he started attending our church services regularly for the past few months. However, less than two month's ago, Ben attended the midweek prayer meeting once. He requested prayer for himself and for his family sensing some premonition that he felt might befall him in the near future. Other than that, not very much was known about him.

Unfortunately, a few days later, Ben was dead. A security guard found him under the block of his apartment, having fallen more than fifteen floors and died under mysterious circumstances. It was shocking news indeed. Notwithstanding the extreme severity of the trial and tribulation that Ben revealed he was going through, probably none expected his demise so soon and so tragic.

At the funeral, Ben's distraught wife with swollen eyes full of sorrow and could barely able to fight back tears that threatened to drown out her speech, gave a testimony of her late husband using the text of Isaiah 55:8 & 9, ***For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***

She related how her late husband was a creative man who used to bring the family on do-it-yourself vacations but now he would definitely be sorely missed. She confirmed what Ben had recently confessed that he had been backslidden for a couple of years and Ben had not been going to church until a few month's back before his death. She revealed that Ben had been spending a lot of his time surfing the Internet to research on cults and occult practices for quite a long time and he had also accumulated several files of materials that she would destroy in due course. She also told of how her husband had recently returned to the Lord reading the Bible and praying for hours at times. Little did she expect her husband to leave them so suddenly and without warning.

Recounting the events of the last few days of her husband's life, she really did not get any hint of his intention to leave them prematurely at all, other than the fact that Ben had been trying to spend more time with her lately. He would follow her to her office and then proceed to a park to read the Bible. He would then eat lunch with her during her lunch breaks.

In fact she was quite glad when Ben had finally stopped spending time on his computer surfing the web to find out more regarding his special interest on Satanism and occult practices. She was also happy that her husband had now started to read the Bible and pray as well as going back to worship in a church.

Unfortunately for Ben, what he could find from the Bible was all about retribution and judgment. Without hope and full of fear, Ben fell deeper and deeper into depression and disillusionment. The common men in the street would consider people like him to have lost touch with reality. What he could not see and experience for himself from the pages of the Scriptures was God's mercy, love and grace. He would lament that there was no hope for him and he felt dejected as if the prodigal could not return to the Father. The deep sense of guilt for his willful transgressions weighed heavily upon him. Forgiveness of sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ remained illusive to him though he searched the Scriptures diligently. Perhaps, he thought he might be filling in the shoes of Esau, who found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. He was undoubtedly getting more and more depressed and desperate by the day. Family members and friends had been called to help but to no avail. According to one of his brothers, Ben had developed schizophrenia.

She recalled a week before Ben's death that he was desperate and in great distress. He had become extremely emotional and could not be comforted. She asked him to read the Bible and pray but he could not. She urged him to read a gospel tract, which he initially refused but eventually did. Pressing him to pray the sinner's prayer and ask God for forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ's work on the cross, he just could not do it. The gulf of reaching out to the cross of Calvary was so great as if a crippled was asked to get up and walk on his own. It was after her much pleading and prayers that he finally succumbed and got on to his knees and begged God for mercy and forgiveness openly and audibly. It was such a tremendous struggle to be able to open his mouth even hesitantly to begin the first few words in prayer just like a child learning to speak. It was the last ditch attempt of a desperate and drowning soul wallowing in the wrath of God, wrestling against the forces of darkness reaching out to catch a glimpse of life.

For Ben's wife, it was an amazing demonstration of the God's mercy and God's promise of victory in his written words, (*For the weapons of our warfare are not*

carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10: 4 & 5). She could now rest in the assurance that Ben would be safe in the arms of Jesus no matter what happened.

Ben broke down and for half an hour sobbed uncontrollably as a soul set free from the bondage of miry clay sinking ever deeper and deeper in the passing hour. It was such a sweet relief and joy to rest in the finish work of Jesus Christ on that old rugged cross of Calvary. Just like Newell, he could now sing, “Mercy there was great, and free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary.”

Alas, it was not long to be. A few days later, he lapsed back into depression. Help was again sought for him. This time it was beyond Jacob’s wrestling with the Angel before dawn. It was late at night when a phone call from a family friend was received to be offering counsel and comfort to him during his hour of need. The call ended in the early morning hour. Ben’s wife was too exhausted to remain awake and had retired to bed not expecting to wake up bereaved of her temporal loss of seeing her beloved husband. It was reported that after drinking a glass of water, he went out of sight without bidding his wife and two teenage sons farewell.

During the funeral, there were too many questions with too few plausible answers surrounding Ben’s sudden departure. To offer and speculate on the mind of divine perspectives on the matter at that juncture would be rather sickening and unkind. It was better to hold our peace lest we turned out to be miserable comforters and physicians of no value like Job’s friends during that darkest hour of the bereaved family. For king Solomon counseled, *Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding* (Proverbs 17: 28).

No amount of human words of consolation would be sufficient to quench the anguish of the surviving family members, having to endure the traumatic ordeal of what had happened that appeared like just a dream; they wished and they hoped! Only God knows, how many nights the bereaved family spent grieving over their loss and trying to find meaning and comfort to fill the void now left behind by this incomprehensible tragedy that threatened to scar the remaining days of their lives. They were however, delivered from the burden and stress of having to live day by day with a distressed and imprisoned soul and unable to handle the unexpected outburst of indescribable torment from a dear one so close to them.

It is our comfort that the Lord, who is rich in mercy, is willing and able to grant

grace and peace to the bereaved family. For what the Lord has promised, he will perform it to the letter. ***The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down*** (Psalm 146:9).

**The LORD hath appeared of
old unto me, saying, Yea, I have
loved thee with an everlasting
love: therefore with
lovingkindness have I drawn
thee.**

Jeremiah 31:3

All Of Grace

The sun was smiling on me but I was not smiling as my mum held onto my little hand and walked me to my school carrying my school bag for me. I had just begun school at the kindergarten not far from my home. Like any other kid, going to school at that age was something to look forward to once we had overcome the initial fear and apprehension of being left in the hands of strangers when our parents had to leave the classroom when the door slammed shut. Anxiously peeling out of the windows to look at the many faces of the equally worried mothers was also common during the first few days of school life for many kids. Before the first week was past, most kids would have found new friends, become accustomed to the teachers' instructions and satisfied the penned up curiosity of our playful nature and created little "troubles" for entertainment.

But that morning was rather unusual. Only my mum and I were walking to the school and though there were other people walking and going to market, no one was near us. For no reason, she started to whisper words that I could barely hear and understand. Initially, I thought she was trying to talk to me but she was looking ahead as she walked and she did not turn to look at me. I asked her what she was saying but there was no reply. Anyway, I was only looking forward to reaching school soon to enjoy my time there so I did not take the matter to heart though I was a little disturbed that morning.

However, the same thing happened again the following morning when we walked to school. Not only that she whispered to herself again that day, she did the same thing everyday when we walked to school. As a kid more interested in having fun, I was not too bothered with what was going on. But then things became worse. Her whispering became louder and louder and it was no longer whispering; it became normal talking during a conversation but it was not a conversation with somebody, but with herself. Her strange behavior was also no longer confined to the trip we took to school every morning but it took place on and off at home as well.

Slowly and slowly, my mum no longer took care of the home. My paternal grandmother had to move in and take care of the family. Mum would then cook her own meals and she ate separately from the family. She did not like to venture out of the house anymore. Most of the time, she preferred to be confined to the bedroom. She became very sensitive to lights and perhaps that was the reason why she did not want to get out of the house. Each time when she had to leave the house, she would put on a hat but she seldom left home. At night, she would rather not have the lights turned on in her bedroom, if possible.

My dad, my grandparents, my maternal grandmother and other relatives

discussed the problem the family was then facing. Mum had become an embarrassment! They believed that evil spirits were troubling my mum. So they went from one Chinese temple to another, hoping to find a solution to bring Mum back to normalcy. They offered sacrifices and burnt incenses and papers to all kinds of gods and ancestors, but it did not do her any good. Some suggested that Mum's trouble came after she had sought advice from a fortune-teller; sometimes, such a person could be a spiritual medium, someone with a familiar spirit. Others suggested that she had caught or touched something unclean.

If I could be permitted to offer my own conjecture on my mum's conditions, I would attribute it to an incident, which I could not explain. It was an afternoon's outing which I could not remember where my mum brought my younger brother and me. I might be four or five years old at that time. But upon returning home traveling on a bus, Mum became extremely agitated and worried. She began searching the whole house for my dad including under the bed. She told me that Dad might become angry which I did not understand why. Anyway, it was just late afternoon and Dad should be working in the office that day. I just did not understand why she was worried. She was actually quite nervous then. What happened after that incident, I could not recall.

How much money and time had been spent in trying to drive out the evil spirits in her, no one could really figure out. One morning, both my grandmothers brought home a lot of flowers whose origins and sources were unknown. They might have at first offered the flowers to the idols at home for blessing. The flowers were then put in a basin of water. I remembered vividly that Mum was having a shower in the bathroom that day. When she emerged from the bathroom fully clothed, both Grandmas splashed and poured the entire basin of water together with the flowers onto Mum head on and she was completely drenched with flowers sticking all over her head, face and body! Mum was definitely caught by surprised at the deluge. Without saying a word, she went to the bedroom and changed her clothes. Alas, there was no cleansing power in the flowers and water as they were supposed to have and Mum remained the same as ever before making everyone's life miserable.

Not only all these running hither and thither from one empty broken cistern to another produced no visible results, Mum's condition had greatly worsened. From talking to herself, she began shouting from time to time. Sometimes, there were different voices coming out from her. She had then developed several personalities. On and off, these personalities would hold a conversation among themselves pretty well but at times they quarreled and hence, the shouting. At first, her sudden outburst was exceedingly frightening but as days went by, we all got used to it. I guessed the adult members of the family had exhausted all means and hope in trying to bring the mum we used to have back to the family. Everyone just adjusted and lived to accommodate this

stranger in the home. I often wondered why they did not send her to the mental hospital for treatment.

Of course Mum had stopped walking me to school by then so I had to help myself to school on my own. Soon I started grade school and my grandma used to walk me to school which was about thirty minutes' walk away. She would also go to school and walk me home carrying my school bag for me, rain or shine without fail. She would bathe me when we reached home and one day when she was bathing me, I noticed that her face near her right eye was bleeding. I asked her about the wound and she told me that while on the way to bring me home from school, she tripped and fell when she crossed the road. Fortunately for her, the traffic was light at that time for she could easily have been run over by a car. I was deeply touched for her sacrifice in taking care of me. Imagine having to walk more than two hours everyday for her between home and school for a woman closed to sixty was no small feat. I had great respect for her.

For a time, I did very well in my studies and I was always among the top in class. When I was six, my grandpa and grandma made me perform a religious rite; wearing a white robe like a Chinese scholar, I burnt incenses and papers and prayed to gods, which were idols at home. Moreover, they also brought me to temples to bow and pray to more gods. They also taught me how to read and write Chinese characters using the Chinese brush and such practice was known as calligraphy. They explained to me that all those gods I trusted and prayed to would give me intelligence and wisdom so that I would do well in my school. It was more than thirty years now and I could still remember how my grandpa and grandma taught me to read from some Chinese classics and memorized those verses in the books which I could still recite them today.

As for Mum, she not only later developed into screaming and shouting without any warnings, she had also become violent and turned abusive. Each time when she beat me, Grandma would shield me and received the beating together with me. My younger brothers and sister were also victims as well. So we had to live with a strange woman we called Mum and I grew up hating her. I vowed that when I had grown up, I would leave my home and bring my grandma to live with me. One time during my teenage years, when I heard from one of my neighbors that Mum had beaten up Grandma, I almost wanted to beat Mum up for revenge.

Soon due to financial problem in the family, Grandma had to work to support the family. By then I was old enough to walk to school on my own and I also started to hang around with the street kids and did many foolish things. My studies of course, deteriorated but still I managed to scrap through my studies though. Eventually, I did not really understand how, but I managed to complete tertiary education. Like any young men upon reaching the age of eighteen, I was the drafted into the army to serve

two and a half years of National Service.

During my time in the armed forces, I learned a lot more about human nature. That was the period of time when they turned boys into men. So getting drunk among servicemen during off duty hours was also the norm. But that was also probably the time I had contacts with Christians most. There were Christians who had lived out a good testimony and there were also others who failed of the high expectations, sometimes unreasonable expectations, placed upon them as Christians by non-Christians. My other time of contacts with Christians began when some Christians came to the neighborhood to pass out Christian literatures and invited people to go to church. I was not interested but I did receive a gospel tract which after reading, I did not understand the message at that time.

When I was in Secondary School, I was invited to attend a Bible study during recess. There were quite a lot of students in a classroom where the teacher prayed and talked about things I could not understand. I did not go back to the Bible study class, as I preferred to play soccer. There was also a time when I was working part-time during my school vacation doing odd jobs when there was this University undergraduate who was a Christian who was also working part-time during his vacation as a delivery driver. It was amazing to most people that a University student would take on such a lowly job as a driver and had to carry heavy goods to customers. He told me he wanted to experience what it was like to work with people at that level that were not so educated. I remembered he chaired a Bible study at the office during a Christian Fellowship meeting and the message he shared was on the subject of "Jealousy."

One more time of contact with Christians for me was during the funeral of one of my cousins. She was only a few years older than I and when she died, she probably had not reached the age of twenty. I remembered Dad brought me to the funeral parlor to attend the wake. That evening, I was sitting at the front row of chairs almost right before the coffin. Many sorrowful family members, relatives and friends went round the coffin for a last look of the dead but I was too nervous to participate in that part of the funeral. I only stared at my dead cousin's picture placed in front of the coffin.

It was told that my cousin complained that she had no friends and she was very depressed. I remembered she was a very cheerful pretty looking girl and I wondered why she ever felt that way. There were also quite a number of her classmates present at the funeral who wept bitterly upon seeing her body laid in the coffin. I really had no idea why she claimed that she had no friends. Superstitious older family members and relatives believed that her death could be something to do with the unclean in the spiritual realm. For the short period leading to her death, she visited a church near her home. Nothing much was revealed about her association with the church. Succumbing

to depression, she went to the apartment block where one of her elder sisters lived and she plunged to her death leaving the surviving family members puzzled, broken hearted and devastated, grieving over the unexpected loss and lost in this incomprehensible tragedy.

When the day came to send my cousin off to her final resting place, there was singing of songs by church members and one of those songs was unmistakably, "Amazing Grace." I was the only member from my family present that day as they believed that the hoary headed persons were not supposed to send off the younger member of the family. One of the lady church members approached me and asked who I was as there were not many other family and relatives present, being a Christian funeral. I told her I was the cousin of the dead and I then asked the lady why they had to sing songs in the funeral. She explained that normally, they would sing some other songs and rejoiced because the person who had died would be in heaven but for that case, some other songs were chosen instead because they could not be hundred percent sure whether my cousin would be in heaven. Of course they meant no malice because such matter was actually an article of faith based on one's conviction on the interpretation of the Bible.

That was actually the second time I attended a funeral and the reality of life and death was awakened in me. My grandpa had died quite a few years back. Due to superstitions, I was not allowed to be present during most part of the funeral. Perhaps, it was because I was born in the year of the Tiger that the religious priest forbade me from taking part in my grandpa's funeral so I did not know what took place there. I was only allowed to be present in the sent off for my grandpa for the burial and I remembered my grandma sobbed bitterly before the coffin that day. That was the first time I saw my grandma so sorrowful and I wept as well.

So my consciousness of death was awakened, especially when I myself had a close brush with death coming to the age of sixteen. My dad brought us to Chinatown for supper and when I returned home that night, I experienced unbearable stomach pain. Shortly after midnight, my dad sent me to the hospital. It was really cold and I was in deep pain. For almost five days, I suffered and wriggled in pain and the doctors did not know what was wrong with me. They thought it might be due to food poisoning and they kept asking me what food I had eaten. Finally, on the verge of death, a specialist came and confirmed that I was suffering from appendicitis and that my appendix had burst. I was already having high fever then and they had to operate on me almost immediately. Very quickly, they sponged me with icy cold water and pushed me into the operating theatre. God was merciful to me and I survived that ordeal and I spent two weeks in the hospital over the lunar New Year, which had always been special to me.

When I completed my National Service, I got a job in the engineering field. It was a demanding job with quite a huge responsibility placed on me to fulfill. It was common that I received phone calls after midnight and I had to give instructions to my technicians to carry out certain tasks. So when I received my salary, I would give some money to my grandma whom I loved but not a cent to Mum. In fact I had stopped talking to her for many years already and I did not see any need to have anything to do with her, though living under the same roof.

But then something terrible happened to me one night. After answering a phone call from office at around two in the morning, instead of going back to sleep in my bedroom, I decided so sleep on the couch in the living room. Not long after, with my eyes closed, I felt a dark shadow descending upon me. My body started trembling and I tried to get up but I could not. I tried to raise my hands and feet but they just could not be moved. I tried to open my eyes, though I was very frightened, but I just could not do it. By then, whatever the shadow was, was stretching my face and tearing at my body. I thought my face could have become contorted. Something was trying to pierce my ears and I could hear an extremely high pitch noise. I was paralyzed with fear and I felt terribly cold and I had never felt such strange and eerie coldness before. I could sense that something was trying to enter my body! I had tried all means but I remained immobile and with each passing moment, I became more and more desperate because by then I already had difficulty breathing. For the first time in my life, I felt so helpless and hopeless, completely abandoned by God and men.

Suddenly at that moment of despair, I remembered what a Christian friend told me during my days in the army of a similar situation that happened to an Indian man who used to pierce his body with steel rods during their religious festivities. This man while sleeping, something came upon him and pressed him so hard that he could not move and breathe. Fortunately for this man, someone had told him about the power of Jesus Christ. So in his moment of desperation, he prayed in his heart and asked Jesus to deliver him. He was immediately set free and he became a Christian after that incident.

So with the memory of what this Christian friend of mine had mentioned some two years ago, while my mind was still working though my limbs were securely bound by this unknown force, I cried out in my heart to Jesus to save me. I prayed that if Jesus was so real like what this Christian friend of mine had testified, I asked Jesus to deliver me from that hour of terror and torment. That was my only hope of escape as I had already exhausted all means of trying to flee physically, which had proven to be useless. Surprisingly, the prayer worked! Immediately, the pressure was getting off my chest, the piercing sound in my ears gradually subsided, the tearing on my face was gone, my body stopped trembling and I could slowly move my hands and my feet. When I managed to get up, still fearing to be seized again for another round of torture, I quickly

ran back to my bedroom and slept.

The following morning, I told my brothers and sister what had happened to me the night before but none of them believed my account. Maybe, they did not want to believe that a Christian God was involved in the incident. They suggested that I was only having a nightmare. So I thought to myself. Perhaps, they might be right because I had over worked lately and I was very tired both physically and mentally. I decided not to take the matter to heart.

But a few night's later, the same thing happened to me again and this time, it occurred in the bedroom while I was sleeping on my own bed! There would be no place left that I would consider safe anymore for me to retire. Having experienced the first encounter and knowing what would work, I did not struggle like I did the last time but I once again, prayed in my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver me. Again, it worked! So the attacks occurred every other night and each time I resisted with this simple prayer to Jesus Christ. I thought in my heart that I had better become a Christian so that whatever that force was would not come and bother me anymore. But I did not know what is a Christian and how to become one. There were so many churches but which one to go to?

Actually having grown up with a troubled and traumatic childhood, I became hardened and I did not need any religion. I had made it so far on my own and so far it had been so good. I could handle any problem and anything that came my way so why should I consider becoming a Christian! Besides, during my army days, a friend had given me a copy of the New Testament. I read it for a while and I put it aside. It was of no use to me. The first chapter in the book of Matthew was so boring, filled with so many names that made no sense to me. And when I read further, I was shocked to learn that if my hands offend me, I had to cut it off and if my eyes offend me, I had to pluck them out in order to avoid hell fire. It was better to enter into life lame and blind than to burn in hell! Goodness! What madness was this? With such stringent requirements, I would never have made it in Christianity. That was my understanding at that time. Of course it was only after many years later that I understood 1 Corinthians 2:14, ***But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*** So I strongly believed I could be the master of my own destiny. But how wrong was I!

It happened during that time that one of the cinemas was showing "The Ten Commandments" and I thought it might be a good idea to watch that movie to get some information on how to become a Christian. Maybe after going to the movie, God would teach me how to become a Christian. But it did not work out. I was still as lost as ever. Providence would have it that I met one of my former classmates who is a Christian. I

told him I needed to become a Christian but unfortunately, he did not know how and what I must do to become a Christian. Neither did he tell me how he became a Christian. But he suggested that I attend church with him that Sunday.

So promptly, I visited the church with him on Sunday though I was having a terrible headache that day. I could not understand nor remember what was preached that day due to the persistent pain in my head. At the end of the service, the pastor asked those who would want to become a Christian to go forward which I gladly did. A Christian man brought me into a room for counseling and later I learned that he was a deacon of the church. He opened the Bible to explain to me who I was, why I must believe in Jesus' death on the cross for sinners and how and what I must do to become a Christian. He then asked whether I understood his explanation and whether I was ready to become a Christian. I replied that I was ready quite sometime ago and I just wanted to get it over with. So he told me to follow after him to pray a prayer which later I was told that it was called the sinner's prayer. I could not remember exactly what I prayed but I felt great after that. It was like a tremendous burden taken away from me. I have never felt that way before, so fresh and peaceful! My headache was also subsiding. I stayed back in church for a couple of minutes while the choir practiced a song "If That Isn't Love" and I was told to join in the practice. After eating lunch with some church members, I went home.

I told my family members that I had become a Christian but they were indifferent to what I had told them. Mum was living in her own world and I had not been talking to her for so long then, there was no reaction from her though she might have heard of my decision to become a Christian. However, Grandma was not pleased to say the least.

The following Sunday, I went back to church and told the pastor, who was an American missionary, what led me to become a Christian. He listened with great concern and suggested that I be baptized the following Sunday. So when the following Sunday came, the pastor assembled the church members at the beach and I was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I went under the water and back to symbolize the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I remembered I fell sick for quite a few days after the event.

However, the most important thing was that I could now sleep peacefully every night without being harassed by evil spirits anymore since I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. Looking back at those times when God allowed those devilish spirits to trouble me, it was indeed harrowing experiences that I would never want to go through again. It was like having gone to hell and back! It was really terrifying to lose control of body and mind and felt forsaken by God and men. God had allowed the devils to bring me to the edge of hell to be hurled into everlasting

unimaginable torment but at my desperate moment, God graciously prevented my never-ending fall into the abyss. I could now pray like King David, ***O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.***” (Psalm 30:3) Through these terrifying encounters, I was completely humbled and accepted God’s simple plan of salvation for hopeless lost sinners through his Son’s sacrificial death on the cross of Calvary. Now I could also claim that, ***“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings*** (Psalm 40:2).

When I broke the news to my family members that I had been baptized, my dad was unhappy and Grandma was furious. Being the oldest person around, she was regarded as the high priestess in the family and many relatives came to consult her on spiritual matters. I was sure Grandma was not only greatly disappointed but broken hearted at my decision to become a Christian, especially after my baptism which non-Christians believed that there was the point of no return. After all, I was the eldest son in the family. There was much expectation placed on me to carry on with the family name and continue in the tradition of ancestor veneration burning incenses and papers to the dead. That would not possible now and her hope was all dashed. I could not blame her for her reaction to my new found hope and life in Christ.

But Grandma was always my object of love and respect and I knew she loved me dearly too. I could remember as a kid those days during the eve of Lunar New Year that I would help Grandma make cookies for the New Year celebration which would last till midnight. It was a great deal and much fun too during those days, especially when firecrackers were not banned. When midnight arrived and the New Year ushered in, Grandma would burn incenses and papers to pray to her gods to bless the coming New Year. Firecrackers would be lit and the whole neighborhood would come alive with joyous celebration. She would then take the red packets containing money inside from the altar having been blessed by her gods and she would then give them to her grand children to keep in our pockets for blessing when we slept. I usually did not sleep but I stayed through to the morning to fix up my model airplanes which Dad had bought for me. It was really an enjoyable time; it was the equivalent of Christmas of the Western world.

It is customary for adults to give out red packets to relatives’ children when they visit each other during Lunar New Year. I learned from experience that such practice in all practical purposes was not really to offer blessing and prosperity to the recipients as supposedly claimed. Adults did worry about how much money they would be giving out to relatives’ children and how much the family would get back in return. Generally, the family with more children would stand to gain from this aspect of the New Year practice. This practice also imposes a great and unnecessary burden on families,

especially the poorer ones, to prepare sufficient money during the New Year for distribution. No one would want to lose face by putting amount that is too small in the red packets. As such, crime rate always goes up before and during the Lunar New Year celebrations. Unfortunately for us, Mum always confiscated all the red packets we received and kept the money for herself and ruined all our joy of New Year. I did not understand why she needed the money as she did not go out of the home. Money became an obsession for her and I really hated her for this

Amazing things began to happen after I trusted in Jesus Christ and accepted him as my personal Lord and Savior. My past attitudes for my mum changed and my hatred for her disappeared. I also started giving her money when I received my salary which she cheerfully accepted. I was glad indeed with the change and the healing that was taking place. But for my grandma, as a gesture of protest for my decision to become a Christian, she refused to accept my money. I was deeply saddened but what else could I do to make her understand!

Moreover, Grandma would set aside food for me that had not been offered to idols and she cut me off completely from all her religious practices. I did not really understand why she did that as to whether it was out of respect for my decision for Christ or to show me her contempt and displeasure to make it clear that I was no longer part of the family. I tried to explain that the food whether offered to idols or not actually would not change in taste or nutritional value.

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Corinthians 8:4–6).

But when I studied the Scriptures further, for the sake of her conscience as well as mine, I accepted her decision to eat food that was separate from the rest of the family members. It was quite odd at first but I soon got used to it.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for

conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved (1 Corinthians 8:7, 10:25-33).

Though I did not show it, rejection from my Grandma hurt deeply. I remembered when I was young and Grandma had to visit China traveling by ship, I would go into the kitchen to weep silently on the day of her departure. I was afraid I would never see her again because her trip usually took quite a couple of weeks. It hurt me badly to see her leave because she had been very good to me. I really missed her! That was how close Grandma was to me.

Then barely two years later, tragedy struck home. My other grandma, my mum's mother had suddenly changed in behavior. It appeared that she had a nervous breakdown of some sort but it might be something more serious. She began to hear voices and see things which no one else around her could perceive. She was extremely nervous and panicky because she thought that someone was trying to harm her. She would point in a direction towards an object and asked if we saw anything there. Of course, we saw nothing and we tried to comfort her and assure her that all was well and that she was simply imagining things. She was really very frightened and I noticed she was trembling with fear when the attack came upon her. She was then living in Chinatown on her own renting a small room from the owner of a shop-house. Early one morning, we received a phone call from the owner of the shop-house that something bad had happened to Grandma. We rushed down to where she lived and found out that she had hung herself during the night. No one really knew what had caused her to take her own life. It remained a mystery till this day!

During the funeral, being the only Christian in the family, I became the object of scorn and ridicule from family members and relatives because I would not participate in their religious rituals. I was looked upon as being unfilial and disrespectful. Out of respect for Grandma, I sat at the back and quietly read my Bible and other books throughout the funeral. I quickly learned that the little persecution I suffered was indeed less than nothing compared with what my Savior went through during his trial leading to his crucifixion on the cross of Calvary.

Mum's conditions remained the same as ever. During her outburst of emotional madness, I would sometimes go into the room to confront her and stare at her. She would quiet down but she would not look at me. She dared not look me in the eyes for

her erratic behavior. I thought it might be because of the Holy Spirit in me that subdued the evil spirits in her. There were many occasions when I spoke to her about Christ and prayed with her during her moments of quietness. Sometimes, while witnessing to her, the spirits in her would interrupt us and she became distracted. I would pray in my heart that God would cast out those evil spirits in her so that I might continue witnessing to her. There were twice during her moment of sanity that she prayed to the Lord Jesus to save her but whether she meant it and prayed believingly with her heart or not, I could not tell. There was still no change in her. My only hope was like the reported third stanza of the hymn, "The Love Of God," penciled on the wall of a patient's room in an insane asylum before his death during his moment of sanity. I really hoped my mum might somehow have been saved by my all-merciful and gracious God.

**Could we with ink the ocean fill
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Tho stretched from sky to sky.**

Indeed God's love is manifested everywhere in God's wondrous creation and if the disciples would hold their peace, the stones would cry out. The third stanza of the hymn "The Love Of God" above described how hopelessly inadequate it would be for fallen men to fathom and describe fully the love of God which the apostle Paul wished for the Christians at Ephesus that they, *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* (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Another two years had passed. I fell in love with a girl in my church and we got married. A year later, my wife gave birth to our first daughter. Grandma's attitude towards me had changed as I was now living with my wife on our own. She was pleased that she had lived long enough to be able to see her great grand child come into the world. I thought she felt that it was really her privilege indeed. She gave me a call one day and asked me to return home because she had reserved something for me over the mid autumn festival. I guessed it might be a birthday gift for me as my birthday according to the lunar calendar was just three days before the festival. I was busy and I did not go back that weekend.

Few days later, I got a phone call from home that my grandma was hospitalized

that evening. I rushed to the hospital but it was too late. Grandma was no longer there to see me for one last time. Sadness filled my heart as I went home that morning. Since, I was living on my own, I did not suspect that Grandma's health had deteriorated so suddenly. Her death was just too sudden and none of my family members had any hint that she was unwell. It was full of regret remembering her voice over the phone during the short conversation the week before. Tears welled in my eyes as I thought upon Grandma's tender loving care for me during my childhood years. To say that I was greatly indebted to her would be an understatement. But what can I do for her now? How can I ever forget her kindness and her upbringing!

Nothing in the world could now bridge the great gulf between the saved and the lost. It was forever gone for my beloved grandma. Could my tears forever flow grant Grandma another chance to accept God's saving grace through his Son Jesus Christ? Alas, like the Scripture said, ***And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him*** ((Hebrews 9:27, 2:3). Moses' disappointment at the vision over Mount Pisgah's height would be nothing in comparison of the thought of a poor lost soul forever perished in a Christ-less eternity.

I could not be bothered much about the funeral anymore. After all, I had already gone through it once and this time, ridicule and scorn were no longer a big deal. Greatly misunderstood, by God's grace, I endured it. How could I treat my late grandma who loved me so much with such disrespect during her funeral, some relatives remarked. More importantly, how could I betray my Savior who loved me so much that he suffered and died on the cross of Calvary for my sins and delivered me from darkness into his marvelous light? Would I want to experience how Peter felt when the Lord Jesus turned and look at him during his trial when Peter had denied the Lord Jesus three times?

And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly (Luke 22:59-62). I am sure Peter went through unspeakable agony and grief for his traitorous act. I did not wish to go through Peter's restoration to be asked three times by the Lord whether I indeed love him above all others.

After Grandma died, I visited Mum as and when I could. Not much had changed

as far as I could tell. During one visit, my aunt, Mum's younger sister, was visiting too. Before I left, Mum called out to me and in tears tenderly hugged me. I did not expect her to do this nor did I understand why but that was probably more than twenty years since she was tender to me. It seemed to me that she did not want me to leave her. We were all in tears that day, including my aunt. It was indeed a sorrowful sight as though our parting that day was permanent.

A couple of months later, I received a phone call from home. This time Mum was in hospital and in critical condition. That afternoon, I rushed to the hospital but alas; it was again too late and she was gone. Her left eye was only partially closed with a tear welled up inside. I used my hand to close her eye and wept. For the rest of the family members, it might be a relief from having to take care of a person who is mentally ill. But with great sorrow and tears, I told my dad that after death would be judgment. He probably did not believe nor understand and I would not blame him. I was once dead in trespasses and sins too! Somehow, deep down in my heart, I wish and I hope that Mum would be saved when I witnessed to her in the past. I do not know, but I will find out one day when I reach the other side of Jordan that it would indeed be a pleasant surprise to see Mum again!

Well, it was just another heathen funeral repeated one more time. Like the funerals of my late grandparents, I had to step aside. As the eldest son, I was supposed to lead in the religious rituals but because I was a Christian, the responsibility was then given to my second brother, two years my junior. I gave Dad some money as my contribution to the coffin and I enclosed gospel tracts in Chinese as well as the Chinese versions of the hymns "The Love of God" by Lehman and "Saved By Grace" by Fanny Crosby hoping that God would open his heart to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Love of God

**The Love of god is greater far
Then tongue or pen can ever tell,
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win:
His erring child He reconciled
And pardoned from his sin.**

**When years of time shall pass away
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure shall still endure,
And measureless and strong:
Redeeming grace to Adam's race-
The saints' and angels' song.**

**O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall for evermore endure-
The saints' and angels' song.**

Saved By Grace

**Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But O the joy when I shall wake
With in the palace of the King!**

**Some day my earthly house will fall-
I cannot tell how soon 'twill be;
But this I know – my All in All
Has now a place in heav'n for me.**

**And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story – Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story – Saved by grace.**

However, Dad was unmoved. More than ten years have passed, still no turning from idols to serve the living and true God. Recently, Dad almost died when his lungs collapsed. Sadly, he was still hardened against God's mercy and grace. Even when I witnessed to him during his stay in the hospital, he still refused to believe in the only begotten Son of God who died for sinners so that they might have eternal life. It is my hope and prayers that Dad, my brothers and sister and their families would come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

From young, all that I was acquainted with was troubles at home, satanic

possession and oppression, self-sufficiency and self-righteousness as well as death in the family but most importantly that through it all, I experienced God's all sufficient grace and bountiful care for me. Now that God has graciously given me a good and faithful wife and four lovely children, two girls and two boys, it is important that I testify of God's saving grace of which many eyes of sinful men God's glory may not see. I have been blessed with more than heart could wish. Like Daniel Whittle, I can concur with his experience and can now gladly sing:

**Once far from God and dead in sin,
No light my heart could see,
But in God's Word the light I found-
Now Christ liveth in me**

**With longing all my heart is filled
That like Him I may be,
As on the wondrous thought I dwell,
That Christ Liveth in me**

**Christ liveth in me, Christ liveth in me;
O what a salvation this- That Christ liveth in me.**

Praise God for the full assurance of salvation so rich and so free. From the written Scriptures appropriating faith in God's great and precious promises, I can claim without any hesitation what the apostle Paul had claimed before; that, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Philippians 1:21). Like the apostle Paul, I have mixed feelings though. *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better* (Philippians 1:23). But for the wonderful family God has given me now, I suppose like what Paul told the Philippians, *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you* (Philippians 1:24). Who knows? My time to put of this earthly tabernacle may be at hand!

I often wonder why God would save such a wretched, good for nothing sinner like me. I am painfully conscious of my unworthiness before God. But thank God for his mercy, *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ* (Ephesians 2:12 & 13).

By God's grace, I will seek to live according to what Paul told the Christians in Galatia; *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in*

me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

I know that living in this body of death in the flesh, I am not perfect but *The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands* (Psalm 138:8).

**For we wrestle not against flesh
and blood, but against
principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the
darkness of this world, against
spiritual wickedness in high
places.**

Ephesians 6:12

Reality Of The Spiritual Conflict

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Ephesians 6:13-18).

The day when a sinner gets saved and born again into the family of God is the day that he enters into a new reality, a new realm altogether unknown unto him, and that the spiritual space given unto him is so vast and the potential so great that the forces of darkness will immediately set out in whatever way possible to hinder the spiritual growth of this newborn child of God. If possible, the kingdom of darkness will seek to achieve a stillborn state for this new birth of the babe in Christ. For Satan knows that the threat pose by this newborn in Christ can indeed cause great harm to his cause who has been actively for thousands of years going about to thwart God's divine plan on the perfect, holy and righteous reign over all his subjects in the entire universe. With the child of God still young and new to this new spiritual reality, the danger he is exposed to with devilish slime pits set in his way to stumble him or if possible cause his premature demise in the spiritual warfare is frighteningly great.

Certainly, the naïve babe in Christ is not aware of his kingly position and his royal privileges that once his is saved by the precious blood of Christ that according to Colossians 2:9 & 10, he is complete in Christ who is the head of all principality and power because in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Taking advantage of the experience that is almost nonexistent, the devilish hosts will waylay the child of God with their wiles by various means that will appeal to the specific weaknesses inherent in this child of God. The apostle John categorizes these weaknesses of the flesh in 1 John 2:15 & 16, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

So there are three main weaknesses for the child of God living in this present evil world in his natural body where the forces of darkness will seek to exploit. Living in this glittering world that is presently evil, there are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life that will cause the child of God much harm and trouble as he seeks to walk in the path of righteousness. Depending on his past life before he is

saved, these three fleshly propensities will raise their ugly fangs with one or the other seeking a more prominent role from within to corrupt the righteous seed that is now planted in the heart and mind of the child of God.

The apostle Paul speaks of this conflict that he also has to deal with in Romans 7:23, ***But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*** A more complete picture of his experience in this spiritual conflict is given in Romans 7:14-22, ***For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.***

So Paul realizes that a battle is being waged within his heart and mind threatening to act out through the body which he now resides. This is a serious conflict and he is torn between the two parties seeking to dominate his life in the direction that will lead him to either doing good or evil. His frustration and unhappiness to this trouble he is dealing with is clearly expressed in Romans 7:24 when he exclaimed, ***O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*** He refers the body that he currently possesses as the body of death. He has to resign to the fact the he is now trapped and he has to live with the appalling prospect of either serving God his master or serving his flesh the master of sin in his present body like a lingering disease that will breakout at a moment's notice. But he finds comfort that indeed he has the ability to serve the right master and victory can be obtained depending on his choice that he can consciously make when he concludes, ***I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin*** (Romans 7:25).

As such, the child of God is specifically commanded not to love the world neither the things that are in the world. This is God's directive will for him. This is not a suggestion for him to consider whether or not to love the world and all the things thereof because it is explained that if a child of God lives contrary to this commandment, the love of the Father is not in him. This is an extremely serious charge for the child of God. And which child will not love his father? Unless the father is an irresponsible and abusive taskmaster, the child will give due reverence to his father. So how much more should the child of God reverent the heavenly Father whose love for

sinners is beyond human comprehension and description that he sent his only begotten son to die on the cross of Calvary that sinners might receive the adoption as sons calling him Abba, Father!

Therefore, from the moment a sinner is born again crying after Abba, Father for spiritual food to sustain his soul, the fiends from hell will go about to poison his spiritual food seeking to alienate the child of God from his heavenly Father. Though already a king in the court of heaven sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, while on earth his fleshly propensities will be subject to exploitation by the adversaries, if he does not actively seek to mortify the deeds of his flesh. For the physical body of the child of God is now the possession of God when the Spirit of Adoption given to him begins the work of grace in his life. However, the child of God is responsible for how he manages his conduct with the present body he is still now in possession. He can choose to yield his body as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable unto God as a reasonable service and be transformed by the renewing of his mind to prove what is good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Or he can yield the members of his body as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin in carnality that cannot please God.

Therefore, the child of God is presented with the stark reality of this spiritual conflict that he is now facing whether or not he is conscious of this fact. Every day will be a day of battle until the day his body returns to dust. As such, the fiery darts of the devil will be hurled at him zeroing at the weakest spot of his fleshly inclination. That is why the apostle Paul told the believers in Ephesus to put on the whole armor of God without which defeat will definitely be the portion of the careless and ignorant child of God. The child of God has to be aware of the adversaries design for him. Nothing short of his complete destruction will please the powers of darkness. In consequence, a child of God has to discover his weakest area of his natural propensity and this self-knowledge is of vital importance in his fight against the evil ones. Complacency has no place in this spiritual conflict. Self-will and presumptuousness are elements in the fifth column in his ranks that will no doubt contribute to his downfall in this great battle of the soul.

Knowing the reality of this spiritual battlefield within him, there is little comfort if there are no promises of victory and the means to achieve this noble goal for his soul. With regards to this matter, the apostle Paul poses a series of open ended questions in Romans 8:31-39 which require no answers because the answers are obviously affirmative in the favor of the child of God and victory for the him is a forgone conclusion.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not

with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The child of God is assured of victory because he is more than conqueror through Christ who loves him. The outcome of the battle is already settled from the beginning. The fact that the Christian is not fighting for victory but fighting from victory is a great comfort and encouragement to persevere till the objectives are achieved. This assured triumph is however conditional upon the child of God to walk in the path of righteousness according to the written word of God and guided by the Holy Spirit. The promise of glorious victory is not a license to indulge in the flesh thinking that the Holy Spirit will undertake the spiritual warfare on behalf of the child of God. On the contrary, the child of God is to actively and consistently keep his body under subjection and yield his body unto God for his service in this spiritual battle. This requires spiritual tenacity and discipline.

The child of God is further assured that he has the Holy Spirit in him that is greater than all other spirits that are in the world according to 1 John 4:4, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* He has been promised that he will be an over comer as far as the spiritual battle is concerned. Nothing in the world including spirits can stand in the way of a child of God in his spiritual quest for victory. While it may seem that the child of God's victorious living has been assured by default, it does not imply that he has no active role to play to reach out for the trophy. All these wonderful promises of divine assistance for the child of God are to enable him to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. The child of God is to appropriate faith in God's promises even as he endeavors to work out his own salvation in fear and in trembling.

Nowhere in the Scriptures suggests that the child of God is to live the life according to his own self will while the Holy Spirit will take over the spiritual aspects of his life and automatically results in his spiritual perfection. While it is true that God promises to work in the child of God to will and to do of his good pleasure, this does not mean that the child of God is simply a mindless robot with a computer to be

programmed to follow instructions to the letter. The child of God does have a will of his own. The Scriptures clearly teach the tripartite relationships in the child of God that are always in conflict with each other. The child of God always has to decide whether to yield to his flesh or to the Spirit of God in all his earthly endeavors. This love and death triangle will be there till the day he leaves possession of his natural mortal body.

The outcome is always predictable whichever master he chooses to follow. If he chooses to yield to his flesh, he will reap corruption. On the contrary, if he chooses to yield to the Spirit of God, he shall reap life everlasting. The commandment for the child of God on this matter is clearly spelt out in Romans 6:10-13, ***For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*** The choice is really up to the child of God. He has the ability to decide which way to go and which master to serve.

When a child of God chooses to sin, he has no excuse. He cannot claim that he simply cannot help it when he is already clearly been told that there is a far more superior way by yielding to God. The promise of victory is confirmed in Romans 6:14, ***For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*** The power of victorious Christian living is available to the child of God. For God cannot lie when he puts it in writing that this power is indeed available for the child of God to begin his journey of everlasting life starting from the point he gets saved. Unfortunately, notwithstanding all of God's great and precious promises in the Bible, it is possible for the child of God to live a miserable life with a sad ending for his earthly pilgrimage. For the way of a transgressor is hard and who can harden against God and prosper?

The Christian walk is definitely not a bed of roses. However, the Lord has promised not to leave nor forsake his people. Some Christian workers make the tragic mistake of promising the sinner that everything will be fine once the sinner trusts in Jesus. This is false deliverance promised to the sinner with no basis from the Scriptures. While it is true that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, but as far as the sinner is concerned, he might be looking for deliverance for his present difficulty and has no desire for the salvation of his soul at all. He is actually looking for a short-term salvation for whatever crisis he is then facing. So after the sinner has trusted in the Lord and finds that he is not delivered from his present trouble or when things do not turn out the way he thought it should, he leaves the Christian faith. Here is the folly of promising the sinner what God does not promise he will perform. Such

misrepresentation is cruel and does cause confusion to believers and unbelievers alike as to why God does not keep his promises.

For a child of God who chooses to disobey God, God promises to chastise his child and this chastisement is guaranteed to be painful. The description of the pain the child of God has to go through during chastisement is given in Hebrews 12:11, ***Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*** It is definitely going to be grievous for the child of God receiving the rod of correction from the Father but the end result is always positive and fruitful for the erring child. For a child of God who continues to sin and not repent even when being chastised by God, eventually destruction of his physical body has to come. This is especially so when the sin the child of God engages in defiles his body, God will destroy his body notwithstanding the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer in Christ. This promise of the removal of the child of God from his earthly tabernacle is unmistakably given in 1 Corinthians 3:17, ***If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.***

This is the ultimate goal of Satan, the accuser of the brethren, to engineer the eventual destruction of the child of God. Nothing pleases the devil than to see the child of God walking in the path of ungodliness and returning evil for good for what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for him. His waywardness and sinful conduct is an affront to the gracious Lord Jesus who bore his sins on the cross of Calvary. Disregarding the great salvation he has obtained through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is tantamount to treading under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. No doubt this child of God does not deserve to walk on this earth anymore and causing God's name to be blasphemed among the lost sinners of the world.

When the child of God sins a sin unto death, the sentence of death can be in the form of bodily afflictions to mental incapacitation that will result in mortal death. His traumatic experience can be one of depression and despondency leading to disillusionment and despair and finally resulting in death. The agent to administer this punishment can also be Satan who no doubt delights in waiting for the delivery of such a sinning child of God for his disposal. For the Scriptures do record of cases where the sinning child of God being turned over unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit might be saved in the day of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Moreover, prayers have been forbidden for those who have sinned unto death according to 1 John 5:16, ***If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say***

that he shall pray for it.

His removal not only serves to control the damage done to the cause of Christ but also serves as a timely warning for other children of God not to follow this sinful believer in Christ to turn the grace of God unto lasciviousness. Though the demise of this believer in Christ is unfortunate, all is not lost for him because while he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:15). What a tragedy to be saved as though he is running out of a burning house on fire! He could have a much better estate had he taken heed to the warnings given in the Holy Scriptures.

Putting on the whole armor of God is of absolute necessity. Without which, the child of God is doomed to spiritual casualty. The child of God must not be ignorant of satanic devices. For this adversary has been of old walking about seeking whom he may devour. He is capable of giving subtle suggestions to the child of God to turn him from the way that is everlasting in the strait and narrow path to the broad way that leads to shame and death. The instructions in Ephesians 6:13-18 are to be taken literally and obeyed immediately. This will keep the child of God in excellent spiritual health even as he presses towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

**Wherefore, as by one man sin
entered into the world, and
death by sin; and so death
passed upon all men, for that all
have sinned:
Romans 5:12**

Life After Death

Death is a certainty for men since the day Adam fell in the Garden of Eden. The Scriptures confirm this certainty with no uncertain term, ***And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*** (Hebrews 9:27). Death has been itched into the collective consciousness of men since the first man walked upon the earth and no one needs to question the certainty of death. No one can wish away this morbid fact of death though most people would only like to believe in the mortality of others and not for himself.

Job asked, ***“If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”*** (Job 14:14) Since time immemorial, men have been asking the same question. The answer to this question is also found in the book of Job in which Job believed that he will live again, ***For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me*** (Job 19:25-27). Not only did Job believe that he would live again, he revealed that he had a redeemer whom he would see with his very own eyes in a new body of flesh. The prophet Daniel also revealed that there is life after death, ***And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*** (Daniel 12:2 & 3). The Lord Jesus Christ also confirmed that there is a resurrection of the dead, ***Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*** (John 5:28 & 29). Resurrection is an undisputable fact according to the Scriptures. So the question here is how to attain unto the resurrection of life.

Since the day Cain’s offering of the works of his own hands being rejected by God, men have not ceased from trying to work for his own salvation. So God told Job how he could save himself according to his own ability, ***Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee*** (Job 40:10-14). This is complete impossibility for fallen men to achieve salvation on his own wisdom and power. There is no way a man can subdue pride in all men on earth and destroy the wicked in their place. Only God who is omnipotent, omniscience and omnipresent can fulfill this role.

According to the Scriptures, lost sinners are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, ***Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures*** (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). This is also explained in 1 Corinthians 15:21 & 22, ***For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.***

Like the jailer in Philippi you may ask, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. “What must I believe about the Lord Jesus,” you may ask. The answer is found in Romans 10:9-11, ***That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*** The Lord has promised that ***For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*** (Romans 10:13). Any sincere seeker will come to this truth like what others have already found to be true because as it is written, ***In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began*** (Titus 1:2). God cannot and will not lie!

What God has promised, he is able to keep for, ***Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*** (John 14:6). The Scriptures also say, ***Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*** (Acts 4:12).

Dear friend, if you are not saved, do not delay any longer. For it is also written in 2 Corinthians 6:2, ***(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*** Yes, today is the day of salvation. For it is presumptuous for anyone to think he can prolong his life for another minute because if the Lord chooses to remove his breath from him, he shall perish. The warning against procrastination for salvation is given in Hebrews 2:3, ***How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*** It will be tragedy beyond description to spurn God’s love given to you in this life and to be judged as a lost sinner in the life to come. You will not be given a second chance! Do not hesitate any longer! Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus to save you now! Pray sincerely with your heart the prayer below and the Lord will grant you salvation as promised.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner deserving hell fire. I believe that thou hath died for me on the cross and shed thy precious blood to wash away all my sins. I believe that thou hath risen again on the third day. I accept thee now as my personal Lord and Savior. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always!

If you have been blessed by this book and wish to contact the author, you may write to him at charles@kjb-asia.com.