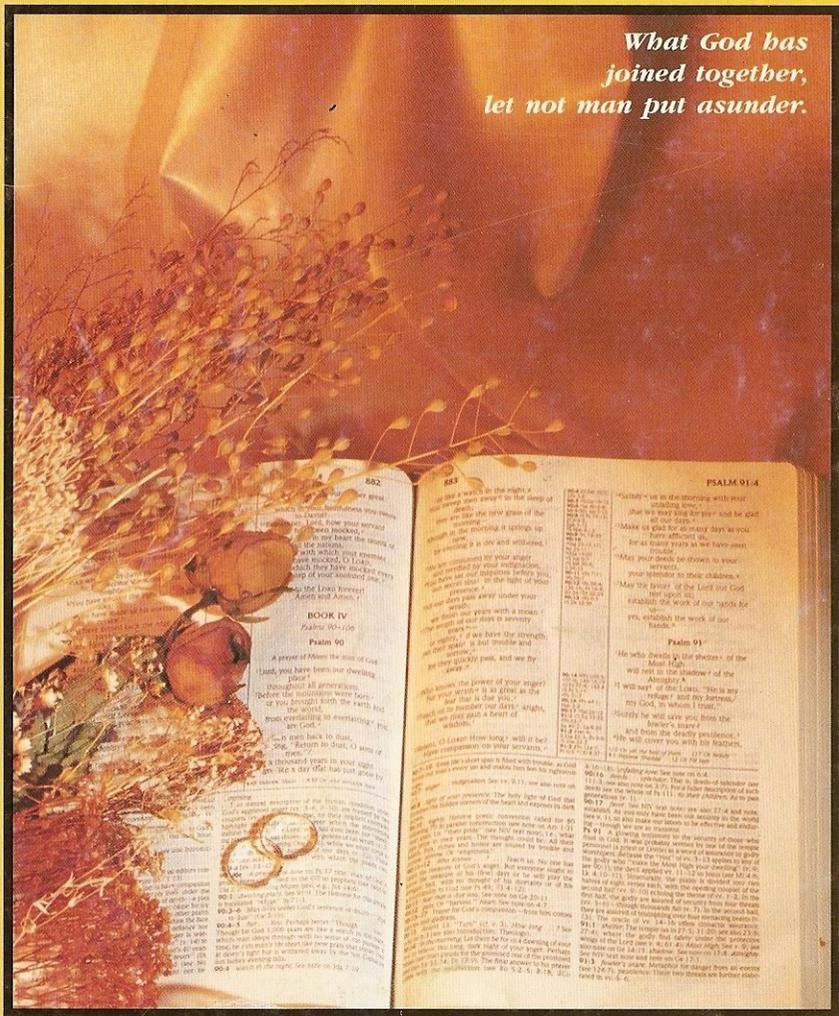


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What God has
joined together,
let not man put asunder.



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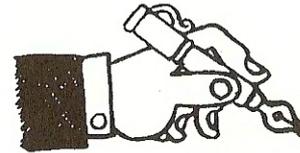
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THE EDITOR'S PERFACE

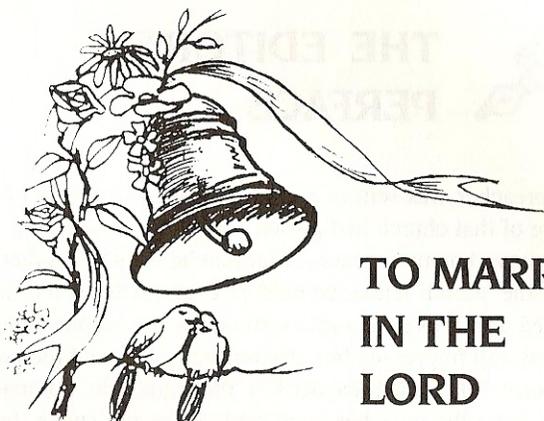
An old preacher was sent to a church to speak a sermon on love because the love of that church had grown cold. His first sermon was so touching that it moved many to tears. After that he went to another place. But the love of the church remained cold as ever. After some time the preacher returned and spoke the same sermon for the second time. The congregation was still impressed but was puzzled : why did the preacher repeat the sermon? When the preacher left, the church did not make any progress at all. Soon the preacher went back again and spoke the same sermon for the third time. This time the congregation's love had grown really cold. They did not wait for the sermon to end. They asked the preacher why he had repeated the sermon? The preacher replied saying that the church had no love. He told them that he would continue speaking the same sermon until the church learns to love. The congregation was greatly moved. Later the church became a church noted for her love.

In our last issue of Manna we made an appeal to our English speaking readers to contribute articles so that Manna can be more internationally represented. But the response is not encouraging. So far we have received only one article and a witnessing. Therefore, we would like to make a second appeal to YOU to contribute articles. Your writings can be of any length and in any form - stories, sermons, an impression, reports of church visits. We like to repeat the statement made in our last editorial that most of the articles published in the "Words of Life" and "Manna" were translated from articles written in Chinese. Where translation is concerned, the beauty of the original language is lost. It will definitely enhance the pleasure of reading if articles in the "Words of Life" and "Manna" were written in the first language.

In this issue, the lead article, "To Marry In The Lord" is a hot topic that many of our ministers have spoken of and is a subject of concern in our church. A woman of virtues is an asset not only to her husband and her home but also to the church. Read the article "Woman and Virtues".

Singapore

January 1992



TO MARRY IN THE LORD

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman, a source of begetting off-springs. If the bond of marriage is terminated in the world then the order of man's life will be destroyed. Other than the people who live in the heavenly kingdom do not get married, marriage remains a top priority to be solved by man.

The Institution of Marriage

When God had created everything on the earth, including the first man, Adam, He allowed Adam to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over everything that moves upon the earth. Later, God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him." So God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and took a rib bone from him and made a woman called Eve. God brought Eve before Adam. Adam was delighted and said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh ... Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:18-24). This records the first and foremost marriage of mankind. By studying it carefully we can find the following teachings :

- 1) The marriage was instituted by God :
It was out of God's mercy and not out of the request made by Adam.
- 2) The system of monogamy :
God did not create two women or two men (Mal 2:15).

- 3) The relationship between husband and wife is very intimate :
They are of one body and two become one.
- 4) Marriage between husband and wife for purposes of helping each other :
God made Eve so that Adam will have a helper to administrate the earth.
- 5) Unless one is endowed with the special gift it is not good to remain single (Mt 19:11; 1 Cor 7:7). One should lawfully be married.
- 6) Husband and wife should love each other :
As told in the Bible, "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh".
- 7) The woman was made for the man and not the man for the woman:
Generally, a woman is weaker than a man and so as a man, he should show love and concern for the woman who is weaker.

Parents' Responsibility Towards Their Children's Marriage

Since the first marriage was instituted by God, that is after God had created Eve, He brought Eve before Adam indicating that our heavenly Father has concern for His children. As parents, we should be concerned over our children's marriage. But as children they should emulate Adam and Eve when they were in the Garden of Eden, to obey the heavenly Father as obedient children, and not to go for free courtship. For when Eve was created God did not encourage Adam to go and woo Eve nor did Eve go to Adam by showing him her love. But it was God Himself who had brought Eve before Adam and so the two were married (Gen 2:22).

Apart from the marriage of Adam and Eve mentioned in the Bible, there are two other marriages which were also being mentioned vividly. First, the marriage of Isaac and then the marriage of Jacob; each representing its own type which is extracted as follows for our reference :

1) The marriage of Isaac

"Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his

servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, 'Put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.'" After the old servant had sworn to his master, he went to the city of Nahor, praying in his heart by asking God to accomplish the great errand that his master had entrusted him to do. He prayed, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, grant me success today ..." In the end God accepted the faith of Abraham, granted the request of the old servant by allowing him to meet Rebecca. Rebecca's father, Bethuel, had consented the proposal but would not decide for himself and so he had to seek the opinion of his daughter, Rebecca, saying, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." Then the old servant took Rebecca to Abraham's house. Isaac obeyed the will of God and submitted to his father. He brought Rebecca into the tent of his mother and married her.

From the above marriage, we may derive the following teachings :

- a) The parents of Isaac wanted their son to marry within their kindred. "My kindred" denotes the house of God or the church.
- b) The old servant (Gen 24:4) denotes the ministers of the church. They are entrusted by God to see that the believers married within the Lord.
- c) The old servant had carried out the duty faithfully by first seeking the will of the Lord (Gen 24:12) and not his own will. Then he took a long journey in order to get to the country where the kindred of Abraham are (Gen 24:10) without murmuring a word.
- d) Bethuel, as a father, did not force the issue through but was kind enough to seek the opinion of his daughter if she was willing to go with the man (58).
- e) Abraham sent his old servant to seek a wife for his son with only one condition, that is, that the girl must come from his country and his kindred. As for Bethuel, he wanted God to fulfill His will and so he

did not say yes or no (50).

- f) Concerning the beauty of Rebecca and the wealth of Isaac, all these were God given. Neither of them had actually asked for it.
- g) Despite Rebecca having only seen Isaac once and after which they were supposedly engaged, yet she did not reveal her emotion as a fiancée but instead took the veil and covered herself (65).

2) The marriage of Jacob

Rebecca gave birth to two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau despised the status of his birth-right, even so he had also despised the will of the Lord. When Esau was forty years old, he took to wife Judith, the daughter of Be-eri, the Hittite, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebecca. And so when Rebecca saw that the belief of her two daughters-in-law was different she said sadly to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?" (Gen 27:46). Isaac, too, was worried that Jacob might also marry a Hittite woman and so he sent for Jacob and charged him not to marry a Hittite saying, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother" (Gen 28:1-2). Later, when Esau learned that his father, Isaac, was not pleased of him marrying a gentile woman, he went to Ishmael and took to wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael. To Esau, Mahalath was the kindred of his father, but actually she was the offspring of the gentile. Similarly, today, there are members of the church who marry members of other churches by thinking that they are also children of God, when in fact they are not. They are but children of the flesh and not children of promise (Rom 9:7, 8). As members of the True Church, we should take note of this. Although Isaac was not responsible for Jacob's marriage because the latter had to escape from Esau's revenge, but before he escaped to Laban's house, Isaac did not spare the chance to exhort him not to marry a gentile woman.

From Jacob's marriage we can derive at the following teachings:

- a) Jacob stayed in his uncle's house as a refugee. He had entrusted his marriage to God. He did not ask for the hands of Laban's daughter before Laban made a deal with Jacob (29:15-18).
- b) The good thing about Laban was that he did not measure Jacob base on his position and wealth. It was possible that Jacob did not have much money when he escaped to Laban's house.
- c) The bad thing about Laban was that he had lied to Jacob by first marrying his daughter Leah to Jacob on account of practising their tradition. As a result, Jacob did not show affection to Leah throughout their entire marriage life (29:30-32).
- d) Jacob by obeying his father's instructions left him no choice but to marry his uncle's daughter. Even though he was deceived by his uncle, Laban, in marrying Leah whom he had no love for on account that Leah's eyes were weak he had not forgotten the beauty of Rachel. Jacob had deep affection for Rachel because she was beautiful but little realizing that she was a barren woman (30:1).
- e) By right, Jacob should love Leah after marrying her and he should give up the idea of marrying Rachel so as to avoid the quarrel between Leah and Rachel later on (30:15).

We can see from the above that the parents of both Isaac and Jacob had played an important role in their marriage, and more importantly, the old servant (the church) who had done his best. Therefore, as parents, we should be concerned over our children's marriage and to learn the good example of Abraham. As children, Isaac's marriage is worthy of our emulation. Whereas the marriage of Samson during the period of Judges may well serve as admonition to young Christians today. Samson had no regard for his parents' advice by taking a Philistine woman to be his wife (Judg 14:1-3). When he came back from the war to his disappointment he found that his wife had gone to another man. Then Samson took a harlot, Delilah, to be his wife and eventually his two eyes were gouged out and he perished together with the Philistines (Judg 16).

How To Choose A Partner

As husband and wife are to live together, to be life partners and to go on a pilgrimage to heaven, it is vital that they should be careful in choosing a life partner. However, it is difficult to fix a standard or a marriage pattern for every one to follow, since each one has his or her own view points. But generally there is a common requirement for two, both the brother and the sister, to follow, ie, they must marry within the Lord. It goes beyond doubt that influence brought about by a wife to a husband and vice versa can be very great. For example, the eternal condemnation Adam received by taking the forbidden fruit, the destruction of Esau by marrying gentile women, the destruction of Solomon by marrying Pharaoh's daughter and other gentile women and Samson, the Nazirite, once consecrated to the Lord, was killed by marrying a Philistine woman. This also happens in our present church community. There are brothers as well as sisters who had suffered untold miseries on account of their marrying to the unbelievers. Perhaps some one may say that Paul ever spoke to the church in Corinth, "To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband ..." (1 Cor 7:12-14). Here, Paul was clearly instructing those believers who were already married to the unbelieving spouses to influence them to believe the Lord lest they should break up their families. It is in no way that Paul was indicating that he gives the consent to marry the gentiles. Paul even advocated that a widow should marry only in the Lord (1 Cor 7:39), what more of the first marriage?

Perhaps some one may be so naive to say that we marry the non-believers out of common interest and mutual consent. In future, we can move our spouse to believe in the Lord. This is too great a risk to gamble with. Who knows, you yourself may be influenced by your spouses' unbelief? Besides, the Bible says, "Do not be mismated with unbelievers ..." (2 Cor 6:14). This is the greatest difference between the spiritual and the unspiritual. With regard to conversion through marriage, the one media of evangelism our church does not advocate is due to the fact that risk bearing is too great. Surely, the Lord has many other ways open to us in preaching His gospel. Before the Israelites took possession of the promised

land, God told them to clear the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Ammonites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; altogether seven nations. The Israelites were also told not to make marriage with them (Deut 7:1-7). But afterwards, the Israelites had forgotten the words of God. In the period of Judges, Samson had violated the ordinance of God by marrying the gentile women. During the period of the Kings, Solomon loved and married many foreign women : they were the daughter of Pharaoh, the Moabites, the Ammorites, the Edomites, the Sidonians and the Hittites (1 Kgs 11:1-8). The foreign women led King Solomon into apostasy. God's wrath was kindled against Solomon and so his kingdom was torn down and his people suffered untold miseries for many generations. Until the Persian king, King Cyrus came into power, when Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubabel revived the Israeli nation. Nehemiah admonished the people, saying, "Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin on account of such women?" (Neh 13:27). Nehemiah contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair and made them swear in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves" (Neh 13:25). Nehemiah also chased out the Horonite, the son-in-law of Sanballat, and threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber, than only the Israeli nation was thoroughly revived. From the above we can understand that by marrying the gentile not only we ourselves will suffer losses but can also bring hardship to the church.

When considering the choice of a wife in the Lord, Lemuel, King of Massa has the following to say,

"A good wife who can find?

She is far more precious than jewels.

The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.

She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.

She is like the ships of the merchants,
she brings her food from afar.

She rises while it is yet night

and provides food for her household

and tasks for her maidens.

She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she
plants a vineyard.

She girds her loins with strength
and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise
is profitable.

Her lamp does not go out at night ...

She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household,
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and called her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her :

'Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.'

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord
is to be praised."

(Prov 31:10-30)

From the above passage of the Bible we are told that a virtuous woman has the following qualities :

- 1) She is God fearing
- 2) She is not vain
- 3) She has wisdom and is gracious
- 4) She is cheerful and lovable
- 5) She can do the house chore very well
- 6) She is generous to the poor and the needy
- 7) She is entrusted by her husband so that he lacks nothing
- 8) She clothes herself with strength and dignity
- 9) She receives praises from her husband and her children
- 10) She rises early in the morning and is diligent in her work

Indeed, a virtuous woman is far more precious than jewels. So in choosing a wife one should not be attracted by her beauty, knowledge, status, dowries, etc. Since no one is perfect, it is not easy to find a worthy

woman. However, if we were to rely on God, we shall be able to achieve our objective as everything is determined by God, including marriage which is joined together by Him. Please read this verse, "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Prov 19:14).

Now we turn to the question of a sister who wants to marry in the Lord. Generally, it is more difficult for a sister, to find a life partner in the church. For her scope of activity in the church is rather small, especially those who are shy to mix around. Therefore, the church and the parents should pay more attention to such sisters. With regard to the conditions of choosing a husband, generally, people of the world would look for the wealthy and the educated. Of course, it is nothing wrong for a girl to look for such a candidate. After all, who does not want to live a good life? But a spiritually enriched life is far more important than many splendours of physical life. This is particularly true to one who is religious and who wants to live a triumphant religious life.

As a sister in Christ, when choosing a life partner, she should set her mind base on the teachings of the Bible. She must see to it that the brethren she chooses to marry is faithful. Then she must see if he is compassionate. Will he give a ready hand to help others whom he does not know. If he is compassionate, even though he may not be able to provide her with a luxurious living, yet the care, attention, and consolation given to her are far better than material comfort. Rebecca married Isaac not for wealth but because Isaac was from her own tribe and also by obeying the will of God. So as long as we can be firm in our faith and in everything rely on God, God will surely fulfill His beautiful will.

From Engagement To Marriage

It is a customary practice for a couple to get themselves engaged before proceeding to solemnize their marriage. There are similar recordings in the Bible, "... when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together ..." (Mt 1:18). Paul wrote in his second epistle to the Corinthians also said, "... for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband" (2 Cor 11:2). Again, in the case of Abraham who had sent his old servant to the house of Bethuel. After the old servant had explained himself, with the consent of Bethuel, he brought forth jewelry of silver and gold and raiment and also costly ornaments to Rebecca's

household as token of engagement between Rebecca and Isaac. Later, Isaac brought Rebecca into his mother's tent and married her.

Normally, there is a passage of time set aside for preparation after engagement. It can be anything from six months to three years. In the case of Jacob and Rachel they had waited for 14 years. But it was unscrupulous on the part of Laban. It would be ideal to marry within 18 months after engagement. After the engagement both parties must keep their promise. Unless one of the parties is proven to have committed grave crimes they should not nullify the engagement. In order to avoid the arousing of passion it is advisable to keep a distance between the betrothed. In this regard, Paul has this to say, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7:1).

Concerning the Unmarried

If one wishes to remain unmarried, Paul has this to say, "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has special gift from God, one of one kind, and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passions" (1 Cor 7:7-9). In the same chapter, Paul said again, "Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is ... If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes : let them marry ... it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better" (1 Cor 7:25-38).

From the above passage of the Bible, we can understand that to remain single is a gift from God. Not every one can do it. To those who have the gift of God to remain single so that they can devote their full attention to serving God, of course, it is good but to those who do not have such a gift, and in order to avoid immorality, Paul advocated that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband and to those who cannot exercise self-control, they should marry lest they be aflamed with passion.

Therefore, we should accomplish the will of God according to the gifts given to us.

The Relationship And Obligation Between A Married Couple

There are people who say that the relationship between a husband and a wife has changed with the passage of time. For example, in ancient times, man enjoyed greater honour than woman. In today's context, women rank equal with men. But is this really true? Please read Genesis 2:24, "Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." This verse speaks well that the relationship between a husband and a wife will never change. The Lord Jesus also said, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'" When the Lord said, "one flesh" it means that there is no distinction in status between the two. For God did not create another human out of the dust but He had created Eve out of the rib of Adam. What appears to be of two persons but in reality the two had become one. So the husband and the wife are considered as one person.

With regard to the obligation of a married couple Paul said, "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph 5:28). This kind of love is not an ordinary one. Paul mentioned it to denote the love between the Saviour and the church. Paul has said it rather aptly. He elaborated further by saying, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:22-25). The obligation is reciprocal. When two are married they should have concern for each other. Their wealth should not be divided, their enterprises should not be divided, their children should not be divided. Instead, they should help each other. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (Song 6:3). The Bible stresses further that a married couple should give each other conjugal rights such that, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps

by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:3-5).

Can Believers Divorce?

The Pharisees asked Jesus, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" Then Jesus replied, saying, "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you : whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery" (Mt 19:7-9). Both Peter and Paul had encouraged believers to win over their unbelieving spouses by their good conduct. They did not encourage them to divorce (1 Pet 3:1; 1 Cor 7:15, 16).

Therefore, we can understand from here concerning the unbelieving partner if he or she desirous to separate let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. But since a brother or a sister is married to an unbelieving partner it is the duty to bring his or her spouse to believe the Lord. With regard to unchastity it is the only possible reason for one to divorce. Paul said, "The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord ... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her?" (1 Cor 6:13-16). Essentially, there is a difference between adultery and one who continues to live with an unbelieving spouse. For there is still a chance for the unbelieving spouse to come to believe in the Lord, whereas a believing brother who commits mortal sins there is no way we can exhort him to repent (Heb 6:6).

Can Believers Remarry?

The question of remarrying refers to two different categories of believers : one who has lost his/her spouse, the other, a divorcee.

To the widow, Paul has this to say, "A wife is bound to her husband as long as she lives. If the husband dies, she is to be married to whom she

wishes, only in the Lord” and “To the unmarried and widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflamed with passion” (1 Cor 7:39; 8, 9). We know then, to a widow or a widower who can exercise self-control it is good, otherwise it is best that they marry again. To a divorcee :

- 1) If a husband or a wife was found to have committed adultery and that he or she has been excommunicated by the church authorities, then the remaining brother or she can marry again but must marry in the Lord.
- 2) A wife must not separate from her husband, if she has left him then she cannot marry again but she can reconcile with him if both parties are agreeable (1 Cor 7:10, 11).

Conclusion

Marriage is an important matter to one's life. So, we should be very careful in choosing a life partner. It is vital to marry in the Lord for we know that two cannot be “yoke together” unless they come from the same faith. Since the church does not advocate divorce as we are taught in the Bible, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mk 10:9), we should not be influenced by the people of the world. Instead, we should consecrate ourselves as children of God (2 Cor 6:17). Bearing this in mind immorality is the root of evil. For the sake of our belief, our eternal life, our home and children, even for our church, we should come out from the corrupted world and to keep ourselves undefiled.

WOMAN AND VIRTUES



Man and woman are equal in Christ. Through faith we are all children of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptised into union with him we have all put on Christ as a garment. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female for we are all one person in Christ Jesus. This solemn declaration was made since the founding of the church. It is found in Galatians 3:28.

Man is not superior to woman. Man is not favoured over woman. Before God we are worthless creatures made precious by the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, in 1 Peter 3:7 it is stated that a man and a woman share together in the grace of God.

Not only is woman equal to man, woman is complementary to man. A woman fills up what a man cannot. In Genesis 3:20, woman has been described as a helper fit for man.

This equality and complementarity are even more strongly suggested in the creation story where God made woman from the side bone of a man. Woman is not to be subjugated or elevated. She is, like the side bone, to be by the side of man.

AS WIFE

Proverbs 31:10-31, describes a good wife as such :

“A good wife who can find?
She is far more precious than

jewels.

The heart of her husband trust in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.

She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.

She is like the ships of the merchant,
she brings her food from afar.

She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and tasks for her maidens.

She considers a field and buy it;
with the fruit of her hands she
plants a vineyard.

She girds her loins with strength
and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise
is profitable.

Her lamp does not go out at night.

She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.

She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

She makes herself coverings;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates,
when he sits among the elders of the land.

She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers girdles to the merchant.

Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.”

While the Old Testament emphasises duty, the New Testament exhorts submission as being an important characteristic of virtue for woman. Ephesians 5:22-24 says :

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.”

And 1 Peter 3:1-6 says :

“Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behaviour of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behaviour. Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of fine clothing, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you.”

AS MOTHER

A good Christian mother must ensure that her children marry in the Lord. It is a sin for Christians to marry non-Christians.

Genesis 27-28 tells the story of Rebecca and her two children Esau and Jacob. Esau married Hittite girls, Judith and Basemath. They caused much grief to Rebecca. Having learnt this lesson, in 27:46, Rebecca said :

“I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

And 28:1-3 records :

“Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, ‘You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company

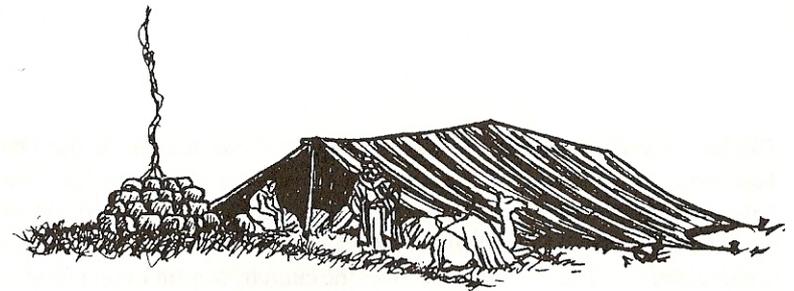
of peoples.”

AS CHURCH WORKER

Titus 2:3-5 says :

“Bid the older women likewise to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited.”

There are many roles for women in the church. If spiritually gifted, she can prophecy (Lk 2:36-38). She can serve the ministers (Mt 8:14-15; Rom 16:1-2), teach the young (2 Tim 3:15), receive itinerant preachers (Ac 16:15; Rom 16:13), or give alms to the needy (Ac 9:36).



ENLARGE THE PLACE OF THY TENT

“Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations : spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Is 54:2-3).

When the Israelites left Egypt and came to the wilderness, God commanded Moses to make Him a tabernacle so that He might dwell among them. This marked the beginning of the tabernacle of God (Ex 25:1-9). The tabernacle was also known as the tent of meeting (Ex 40:34), the place of worship of the Israelites.

After the Israelites entered the promised land, Canaan, King David led the people to gather materials for the building of God’s temple. However, King David did not build the temple. His son, Solomon, spent seven years building the temple of God (1 Chron 29:1-5; 1 Kgs 6:1, 23). When Solomon dedicated the temple to the Lord the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord, signifying that God was pleased with the dedication (1 Kgs 8:10-11, 63).

This glorious temple was burnt down by the Babylonians later on because the kings, the priests, and the people went against God and so God allowed the Babylonians to set foot on the holy land and destroy the people. The remnant were taken captives into Babylon (2 Chron 36:14-21). After seventy years of captivity, the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled. God inspired Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue a decree allowing the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple on the old site (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 3:1-3).

The temple prefigures the church. The church is called “the true tabernacle” (Heb 8:1-2, 5) and “the holy temple of the Lord” (Eph 2:19-22).

The construction, destruction and rebuilding of the temple in the Old Testament foreshadows of the development of the church in the New Testament. The true church established by the apostles through the Holy Spirit deteriorated after the death of the apostles (Rev 2 and 3). The church became corrupt. The Romans took over the church. Martin Luther tried to restore the fallen church but failed. It was not the time. To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Eccl 3:1). But now the time has come. The downpour of the Holy Spirit of the latter rain started in the east. God is rebuilding His Church (Amos 9:11; Joel 2:23, 28-32; Rev 7:2-8; Is 2:2-3).

All God's children should return to Jerusalem, the true church (Gal 4:26), and respond to Isaiah's call to enlarge the tabernacle to all parts of the world (Ezra 1:3).

The word of the Lord said to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech 4:6). By the Spirit of God the Israelites were able to accomplish the rebuilding of the physical temple. The spiritual temple set up by the apostles was also by the help of the Holy Spirit. Today, when we preach the gospel, set up the tabernacle of God in all parts of the world, we have also to rely on the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:8; Phil 4:13).

On the day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter preached a sermon and 3,000 people repented, believed and were baptized. Many of them then offered their entire possessions to the church (Ac 2:1-12, 37-47).

Peter, John and others, filled with the Holy Spirit, were not afraid of the threats of the authorities. They continued to testify for the Lord (Ac 4:8-20).

The Lord wrought many miracles through the hands of the apostles and those who were moved to believe were added to the fold daily (Ac 5:12-16).

Philip, the evangelist, healed many who were demon possessed and baptized even more unto the Lord (8:4-13). The Lord also directed him to

meet an Ethiopian eunuch and through him the gospel was brought to Africa (8:14-39).

While at Paphos Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, chided Elymas the sorcerer who was trying to obstruct Sergius Paulus, deputy of the county, from believing the word of God. The sorcerer became blind immediately. When the deputy saw what happened he believed (13:1-12).

The Lord said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches : He that abideth in me, and I am in him; the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The apostles were able to do things beyond human capability because they had the presence of the Lord. To enlarge the tabernacle, we need spiritual power. We must with one accord pray for this power.

Work Your Own Work



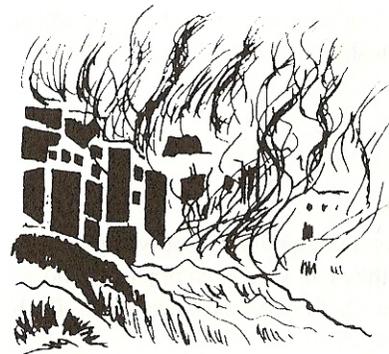
“And the Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15).

When God completed the creation of the heavens and the earth and all the things on the earth, He set up the Garden of Eden in the east and put Adam, the man He had created, in the garden. God did not want the man He had created to be idle. God gave Adam the task of dressing and keeping the garden and dominance over the other creatures. Adam gave a name to each animal.

When Jesus was on earth He worked very hard to save men. He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (Jn 5:17).

The apostle Paul said, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess 3:10). Man should work.

We must work for the Lord also. Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians said that our labour in the Lord is not in vain. Remember the word of the Lord, “I must work for the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no men can work” (Jn 9:4).



THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN THE CITY OF SODOM

The nineteenth chapter of Genesis records 6 kinds of people in the City of Sodom.

The Sodomites (Gen 19:4-9)

The men of the city were very wicked. On hearing that there were guests in Lot's house, the men of Sodom compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter had come with evil intent to have relations with Lot's guests. Their debauchery was reflected in their conversation with Lot. And Lot grieved over the deeds of the Sodomites. The world in the end time will be like the City of Sodom (Rev 11:8). Sooner or later, it is going to be destroyed.

Lot's Sons-In-Law (Gen 19:14)

The two sons-in-law were sinners of the City of Sodom. They responded to Lot's serious words with mockery. Similarly today, people will reject and mock at the truth preached to them (2 Pet 3:3-4).

Lot's Wife (Gen 19:26)

She believed the words spoken by the angels and came out from the City of Sodom. She was saved but was struck dead and became a pillar of salt when she turned and looked back at the sinful city. Believers who love

the world are like Lot's wife. Since we have departed from the sinful world we must not turn back and look but must press forward towards the holy mountain of God (Col 3:1-2).

Lot's Daughters (Gen 19:30-38)

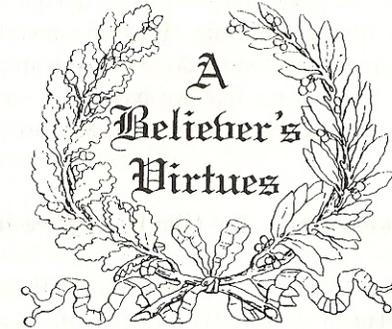
The incest committed by the two daughters of Lot was probably learnt from the City of Sodom where they had seen such practices and so were influenced by them. The Bible records, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal 6:8).

Lot (Gen 19:1)

Lot departed from the man of faith, Abraham, on account of his love for the city of sin. He left Canaan for Sodom. Lot was made an official. He sat at the gateway to judge the people. At first, he seemed to have gained a lot but in the end he lost much more, including his properties and his wife when the city he was living in was destroyed.

Abraham (Gen 19:27-28)

Of all the characters mentioned in this chapter only Abraham remained in the grace of God and was worthy of our emulation. Abraham lived in Hebron in the land of Canaan (Gen 13:18). Early in the morning he would rise up and communicate with God at the altar which he had built for God.



The apostle Peter said, "... make every effort to add to you faith, goodness ..." James, who was a pillar of the church, also said, "... faith without deeds is dead."

The qualities that a Christian must possess are many. Like a string of jewels are these qualities recorded in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 12 verses 8 to 16.

1) In Giving, Give With Sincerity

A disciple should constantly give to the needy (Gal 2:10). Those who are wealthy should contribute more to the needy and be rich in good deeds (1 Tim 6:18). Those who are less wealthy can still contribute according to their ability. The Macedonians were able to contribute even in their 'extreme poverty' and they did this 'beyond their ability' (2 Cor 8:1-4). Cornelius and Dorcas were generous to the poor (Ac 9:36, 10:2). They were remembered by God and received special blessings. However, giving must come from a heart of love and truth, not from a desire for worldly reputation. It is necessary to love your neighbour as yourself so that your giving may be righteous.

2) In Leadership, Govern With Diligence

A Christian must not only be concerned for his own matters but those of others too. He is required to help others. As long as he is able, he must do his best. He who leads is not only concerned for the management of the church's affairs but is also involved in personal matters of the believers.

The Lord Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve ..." (Mk 10:45). Peter said, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" and to do so with the strength God provides (1 Pet 4:10, 11). This means that we have to serve others willingly according to whatever abilities we have so as to glorify God and benefit man.

3) **He Who Shows Mercy, Let Him Do It Cheerfully**

The Good Samaritan is an example of one with a merciful heart and one who renders aid to the wounded (Lk 10:33-36). According to our own strengths and abilities, we must help the needy or those who face hardships. We must not hinder the flow of pity from our hearts (1 Jn 3:17). Neither are we to treat as insignificant the help that may be given in answer to a beggar's humble requests and deny help to such a one. If we are unable to do little good deeds, how are we able to do big ones? The Lord said, "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy" (Mt 5:7). It is also written that judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful" (Jas 2:13).

4) **Love Must Be Sincere**

Love that is false is but a show. It is recorded in the book of Proverbs that empty words and superficial gifts are like clouds without rain.

5) **Hate What Is Evil, Cling To What Is Good**

First, we need to have the wisdom to distinguish between good and evil following which we must stand firm against evil for good. It is too dangerous to confuse good with evil or evil with good (Jn 16:2, 18:40). We must distinguish between honourable people and dishonourable people. In this way, we will find success in our dealings and gain an exceeding advantage. Moreover, we need to have insight and discernment or else, we will be unable to see the difference between right and wrong or good and evil.

6) **Be Devoted To One Another In Brotherly Love**

Treat one another with brotherliness and kindness (Tit 2:5). Interaction

between one another goes by way of peace. With the church as God's house, the element of harmony is love which is the love in the Holy Spirit (Col 1:8, Rom 15:30). Joy, happiness and comfort abounds in the church and there is spiritual soundness in everyone.

7) **Honour One Another Above Self**

Everyone should give way to another. As Paul said, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3). We must recognise the good points of others. Every believer has a place in the Lord. Even the weakest part of a body is indispensable (1 Cor 12:22). Therefore, there has to be mutual respect for one another.

8) **Be Diligent, Not Having Laziness**

The servant who buried his talent in the ground was a lazy one (Mt 25:36). This was covering up the grace which the Lord has bestowed. The servant was a useless one and even what he had was taken away from him. Therefore, it is necessary to be diligent in labour so as to bear fruits for God.

9) **Serve The Lord Always, Keeping Spiritual Fervour**

The Holy Spirit is like fire. Fire gives heat and energy. With spiritual fervour, there will be strength to serve the Lord. How then can we stir up spiritual fervour in our hearts? First, we must constantly pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ac 2:3, 4; Eph 5:18). Next, we must constantly read the Bible and listen to the Word in church. The hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were burning within them when they listened to Jesus' explanation of the Scriptures (Lk 24:32). Thus, the Holy Spirit and the Holy Bible are the springs of spiritual fervour. They give us faith, love, hope and forever maintain our spiritual fervour, enabling us to work for the Lord.

10) **Be Joyful In Hope**

Christians experience joy for they are saved. This is the true spiritual joy which can never be taken away (Jn 16:22). It is built upon a living hope based on the promises of God (Heb 10:23). Since such a hope

is unwavering, the joy changes not (Phil 4:4).

11) Be Patient In Affliction

The Lord Jesus says, "In this world you will have trouble" (Jn 16:33). As long as we are in the flesh, we will face troubles and hardships. Our bodies are like tents exposed to rain and wind. We have to expect failures and problems. When we live for the gospel of the Lord, we will face trials and persecutions (2 Thess 1:4, 5). We should endure all the more. Peter wrote that 'if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God' and 'if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.'

12) Be Faithful In Prayer

The fervency of a Christian's prayer is the measure of his spirituality. Prayer without strength is a sign of drooping spirituality. Therefore, the Bible tells us to 'pray without ceasing'. This does not mean spending twenty-four hours a day in continuous prayer but when the situation allows or requires we should pray unceasingly. Our Lord Jesus himself prayed with loud cries and tears in utmost sincerity (Heb 5:7). This was because of his deep conviction. Therefore, with conviction our prayers will be heard by the Lord in his mercy.

13) Share With God's People Who Are In Need

Although Paul was busy spreading the gospel, he was concerned about the poor.

14) Practice Hospitality

Though as Christians we do not mix with bad company, we should welcome guests and provide warmth and sincere reception for them. Such hospitality springs from love and a noble heart. Likewise, God commanded the Israelites not to oppress or mistreat any alien because they themselves had been aliens in Egypt (Ex 22:21). Therefore, the Bible instructs us not to forget to entertain strangers with love (Heb 13:1, 2).

15) Blessed Are Those Who Persecute You; Bless And Do Not Curse

Persecutions will follow a believer as a result of his belief or his work in spreading the gospel. The persecutors are mainly people who do not understand the Word. We can tolerate or avoid them but we must not retaliate at all. Therefore, we need to endure persecution. We ought to know that if we endure persecution for the sake of righteousness we would be blessed (Mt 5:11; Ac 5:41). By enduring wrongs and remaining faithful to the Lord and His teachings, we will surely be remembered by the Lord. As for those who do not believe in the Lord or understand the gospel, they are misled and used by Satan to obstruct the truth and harm the church. We ought to pity these people for they lack understanding. The Lord Jesus prayed for those who caused His death when He was on the cross, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Therefore we have to pray for them to ask the Lord to forgive them, move them and change their hearts. For all we know, there may come a day when they will gain enlightenment and repent. The Lord Jesus asked us to pray for our enemies for they are not truly enemies but people without understanding. It may be that by praying for them, our foes may change to become our friends. In addition, we are not to curse but only bless. This is because man does not have the authority to curse. Even the angel Michael did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against Satan, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

16) Rejoice With Those Who Rejoice, Mourn With Those Who Mourn

To rejoice with those who rejoice is to express the same feeling of joy towards those who are glad. We must not be jealous because of the well-being of others. Saul became jealous of David when David was accredited with slaying 'tens of thousands'. In his jealousy, Saul waited to kill David. Therefore, the heart which is poisoned by jealousy is like a scorpion and a snake. The Bible teaches that 'love does not envy' (1 Cor 13:4). One who has love is able to express feelings that harmonize with the feelings of others. To mourn with those who mourn is to express condolence or offer help to those who lost their loved ones and those who are sick (Ecc 11:35).

17) Live In Harmony With One Another

It is very important for believers to be of one mind. Once Paul and Barnabas disputed over whether they should take Mark along with them on

their mission. Unable to settle their differences, they separated. However, they did not form their own organisations. Later, Paul still liked to work with Mark (2 Tim 4:11).

18) Do Not Be Proud, But Be Willing To Associate With People Of Low Position

It is common to be proud because of wealth and influence. However, a Christian must be humble (1 Tim 3:6).

The Lord Jesus often received tax-collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1, 2). This was to rescue them from sin so that they might receive salvation. By being humble, one will be like the Lord, gentle and humble in heart and able to lower oneself.

The gospel of the Lord must be preached to even the poor because all souls are precious to God.

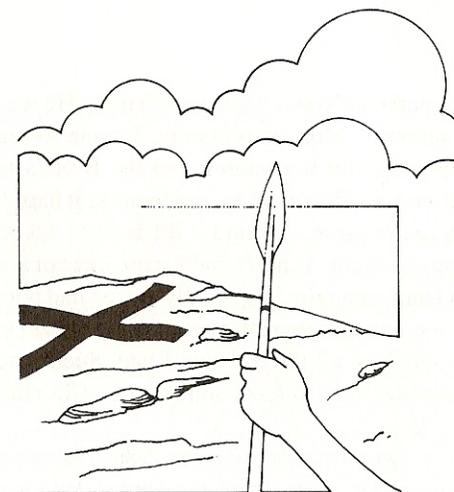
19) Do Not Be Conceited

He who thinks that he is wise is actually a fool without understanding. Such a person takes pleasure in himself and is self-contented. The Bible warns : "You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' He catches the wise in their craftiness (1 Cor 3:17).

20) Do Not Repay Anyone Evil For Evil

As Christians we must follow the example of Jesus in being victorious over evil with good. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate. When He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly (1 Pet 2:23). Another good example is Moses. Moses endured murmurs and slanders but humbly persevered. The authority to repay and avenge lie in the hands of God who is just and shows no favouritism. Therefore do not take it upon ourselves to pay others back for their wrongs. When the time is ripe, God will surely come to show who is right and wrong.

I SAW HIM



My ambition has always been to be a music artiste. I single-mindedly pursued this goal until I felt I was sufficiently qualified to join the fraternity of artistes I have longed to be part of. Yet at the age of twenty, having embarked upon my chosen course in life, I began to experience the stirrings of dissatisfaction. I began to think that perhaps there was something beyond the mundane - a meaning to my existence. I recalled the past years of good fortune and health. Surely there had to be a source. But who or what was it? Was it the power of nature? Or the mysterious source of the universe? Was it a philosophy of life? Or the power of man's mind? I searched for this source, and eventually came to the knowledge that this source is the one true God.

The next thing that confronted me was the multiple and perplexing explanations about God. I believed that there was only one God who is intangible. I had the overwhelming urge to seek this divine being, to find out who he is, and to draw near to him. After a period of searching I found him in Jesus. I went to a church and there I was baptized.

At the age of twenty-three, at Cologne, Germany, a friend introduced me to the True Jesus Church. I was invited to join their winter spiritual convocation. I discovered then that the teachings of the True Jesus Church were in complete accord with the Bible. I began to thirst for the truth and would often travel some three hours each Sabbath to join the brothers and sisters for worship.

After a year of studying the truth, I found that one could experience

God personally and draw near to him. He was to me a friend and a source of support. More importantly, I came to realize that the baptism I had undergone did not conform to the Bible's teachings and was therefore ineffective. However, my pride made it hard for me to come to terms with this major error. I found it difficult to acknowledge that I needed to be baptized again. I also found the prospect of keeping the commandments of God quite daunting, especially since I had not yet received the Holy Spirit. I was concerned that after committing myself to Christ through this baptism I would lose all the freedom I had. Such thoughts ran through my mind, preventing me from becoming a true Christian according to God's will.

On new year's day of 1986, I attended a spiritual convocation in Stuttgart, Germany. At the end of the day's seminar, a group of us thirsting after the in-filling of the Holy Spirit, stayed behind to pray. In that first prayer I asked God whether I ought to be baptized. God answered me in a wonderful way.

I was moved by the Holy Spirit and saw a vision in that prayer. I saw a man wearing a robe and Roman sandals, seated on a rock about a metre away. Although his face was indistinct I perceived that he had an aura of peace and kindness about him. Below him shone a soft light. I knew instantly that this was the Lord Jesus! Overwhelmed with excitement, I requested that others might see this vision too, but he merely smiled. I then told him, "Lord, this heavenly path is too difficult for me to walk. You have to help me to finish it. I am too weak, but if you have indeed chosen me, then please help me to walk on this path." The Lord continued to smile without saying a word. I had a feeling of peace and intimacy with him. Suddenly, I saw myself as a five year-old child dancing and singing in front of him. His smile was still there. Then I saw myself as an adult again, sharing with Him the problems encountered on my journey of faith, and discussing with him doctrinal questions. All the while, he listened, still with that gentle smile on his face.

Just then a bell rang, signalling the end of the prayer. I was so moved by the Holy Spirit throughout the prayer that my eyes were swollen by the tears I shed. When a deacon asked me what happened during the prayer, I took the opportunity to relate the vision to all who were present. Then two deacons who had laid hands on me confirmed that I had received the Holy Spirit. They praised and thanked God for His grace.

For the sake of those who had not yet received the Holy Spirit, we decided to have another prayer.

Immediately after I knelt down and said, "In the Name of the Lord Jesus I pray," the vision continued. The Lord Jesus took my hand and led me to a river. Pointing to the water, he said, "My child, you must be baptized." At that point, the scene changed. I saw Him nailed to the cross wearing a crown of thorns. His body was bruised and clad with blood, and His head was bowed. He appeared to be in excruciating pain. Beneath the cross, several women were mourning for Him. I was among them. A Roman soldier with a spear in his hand, approached the Lord. When he forcefully pierced His side, I yelled bitterly, "No! No!" I saw blood and water flowing from His body. As I cried, I heard the voice of Jesus saying, "My child, do not grieve. You must be baptized." I could not bear to watch anymore the scene before me. Jesus died this cruel death for my sake. I felt the weight of my sins and broke into a sombre spiritual song until the bell rang again. I stopped praying, but was unable to stem the flow of tears.

Later, I shared the vision with others. Many were moved to tears. I had great admiration for the depth of their love for the Lord. I had seen Him personally, they only heard my testimony and yet were so moved.

The following morning, during another prayer, I saw another vision. This time I saw an empty cross. Beneath it lay a body wrapped in linen cloth. I felt as if a member of my own family had passed away. I wept and mourned.

Through these visions, I received God's answer. Unworthy as I am, the Lord revealed Himself to me through His grace and mercy. I thank God that despite my pride, he did not forsake me.

During a spiritual convocation in Heidelberg on 20 April 1986, I was baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus in manner prescribed by the Bible. Now I pray that God will continue to lead me so that I may complete the heavenly path.

W.I.C.
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