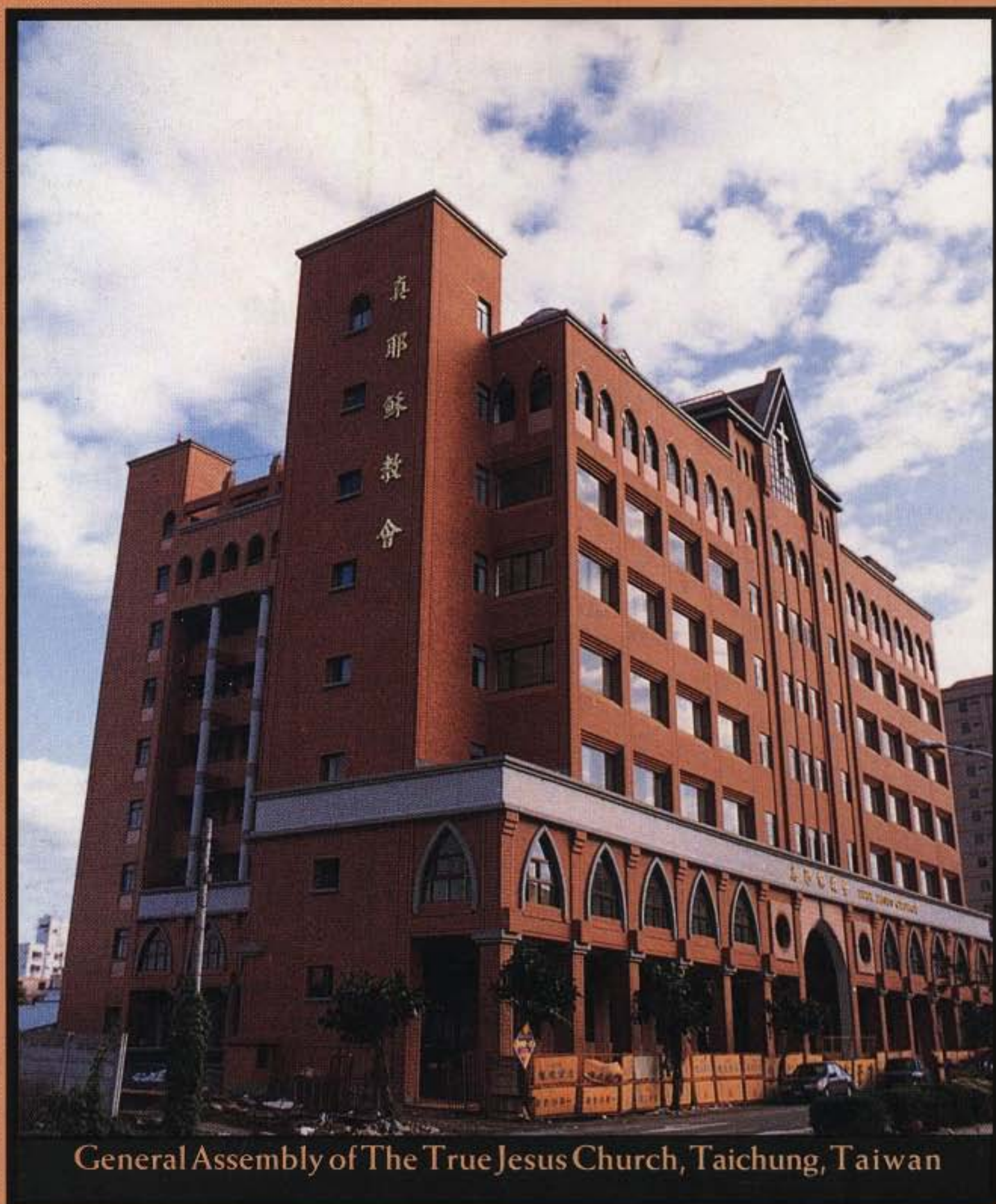


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General Assembly of The True Jesus Church, Taichung, Taiwan

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World Delegates Conference twice. The I.A. office was moved to the U.S.A. in 1986. We just wonder if it is feasible for the I.A. office to move back to Taichung again since G.A. Taiwan can provide all the facilities and personnel. Moreover, Taiwan has the most number of delegates in the I.A. organization. If it is feasible, the I.A. office in Garden Grove can remain a centre of propagation to the secular churches and the gentiles in the western sector like Paul's setting up of his outpost in Antioch in his ministry to the gentiles. Let Taiwan be the Jerusalem of today!

In this issue the lead article, entitled, "The Slanderer and The Slandered" tells us that when we are slandered it could be out of jealousy or misunderstanding on the part of the slanderer. The cause of action for the slandered is to exercise tolerance if explanation will not improve the situation.

The English proverb says, "A friend in need is a friend indeed". But very often when we are urgently in need of a friend he is not there. But there is a friend who will never fail you. Find out more about him in "A Truly Good Friend". Jesus in His ministry had three "bosom" apostles. They were Peter, James and John. They had good reasons to be so close to Jesus, especially John. Go over it and find out for yourselves why they were so close to the Lord. "Active Faith" is a sermon delivered by Pr John Lo in Singapore during his brief stop over enroute to Malaysia. It is an encouragement to both new converts and veteran believers.

June, 1992
Singapore

SLANDERER *and* the SLANDERED



WHAT should a Christian do when others speak evil of him falsely? Godly people have always been the subject of criticisms and abuses. It will be useful to examine the great men and discover their response as a guide for our behaviour. But in order to know what to do when we are slandered, it is necessary to know why others would want to slander us.

I. Why Are We Slandered?

1. For believing in Jesus

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Mt 5:11). Peter also has this to say, "For the time past for

our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentile when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (1 Pet 4:3-4). The people of the world hate those who believe in Christ Jesus.

2. For preaching the gospel

One sabbath, Paul spoke the words of God in the synagogue in Antioch. Many gentiles became interested and wanted to hear more of the truth. They persuaded Paul to speak again on the following sabbath, but there were others who became envious of Paul and spoke evil against him (Ac 13:42-45). On another occasion Paul spoke in a synagogue in Ephesus for three months. Some who did not believe spoke evil against Paul (Ac 19:8-9).

3. Due to jealousy

The Song of Solomon says, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave". One who is jealous over another will loose his senses thus resulting in dissatisfaction and hatred. Moses was the most faithful servant of God. God on many occasions spoke to Moses directly. Both Miriam and Aaron became jealous and they slandered Moses (Num 12:1-5).

4. Out of ignorance

David escaped to Bahurim after Absalom had usurped his throne. While he was there he met Shimei, of the house of Saul. Shimei cursed David as he went, saying, "The Lord hath returned upon them all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son : and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man" (2 Sam 16:5-8). In fact David was very loyal to Saul. This could be seen from the two confessions made by Saul to

David. In his first confession he admitted that David was more righteous than he. In his second confession he said that he had erred exceedingly (1 Sam 24:16-17, 26:21). Shimei, unaware of the fact, had slandered David out of ignorance.

II. What To Do When We Are Slandered?

1. Hold fast to what we believe and be cautious in our words and conduct

One should not feel dejected when slandered. Instead he should be strong and to hold fast to the Words of God and to also be cautious in his speech and action. If one can endure to the end, things will turn out well. Apostle Peter has this exhortation, "Having your conversation honest among the gentile: that, where as they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet 2:12). Paul also exhorts us saying, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good words: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say to you" (Tit 2:7-8).

2. To endure and to give exhortation

The word of God is also known as the word of patience (Rev 3:10). Only through patience can one keep the word of God. The gospel was preached far and wide through the great patience and sufferings of the saints in the past. Paul said, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place. And labour, working with our own hands : being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" (1 Cor 4:10-13). Paul said again, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every

man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col 1:28). Therefore, when we are slandered we must on the one hand exercise patience and on the other give exhortation so that those who speak evil against us may come to know the truth.

3. To check our conscience

The Lord said, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings" (Is 51:7). If we are accused of having done something bad to others, it does not matter if our conscience is clear. Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, was thankful to David. Later David fled from Absalom and departed Jerusalem. Mephibosheth did not follow David because he was lame. However, Mephibosheth felt sorry for David. He had not dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he returned to his palace in peace. Despite all this, Mephibosheth's servant had spoken evil against him. David did not know about this until he personally asked Mephibosheth the reason he had not followed him during his escape. From thenceforth, David came to understand Mephibosheth better (2 Sam 16:1-4, 19:24-30).

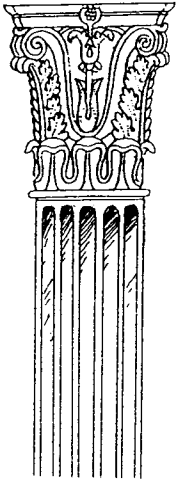
4. To examine ourselves

Human nature is such that we like to receive praise from others, but when we are defamed we feel upset and even angry. As a Christian this should not be the case. The Bible says, "For it is better if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Pet 3:17). As such, we should examine ourselves if we have done any harm to others.

III. Conclusion

If one is slandered for the sake of the Lord and the Word, then it is a worthy cause and his conscience will be clear also. The Scriptures say, "They also that seek after my life lay snares for me : and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not : and I was a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth is not response" (Ps 38:12-14). Everything will be made clear eventually. When the Lord comes again we all shall appear before Him. He will reveal every secret that has been hidden. Then every one will go through the righteous judgment of God.

A TRULY GOOD FRIEND



A man without a friend is a lonely person. Everyone needs a friend. But there are good friends as well as bad ones. Even good friends can become bad ones. Psalms 41:9 says, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

Who is a truly good friend? He is one who will remain with you in adverse circumstances. Only Jesus does that. He understands what it means to be without a friend.

When Jesus performed miracles and fed five thousand people, He was popular (Jn 6:5-15).

After this, the people wanted to make Him their king. But when He told them not to labour for the food that was perishable but for the food that endured unto everlasting life (Jn 6:26-42), the people despised Him and left. Those who left Him included His disciples (Jn 6:66). The Lord during His last supper said to his disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." But Peter answered saying, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Then the Lord said to Him, "Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Mt 26:31-34). True enough, not long after Jesus had finished speaking, Judas led a band of soldiers and came to detained Jesus. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled, including Peter who had declared that he would die for Jesus.

When Jesus was captured, Peter denied Him three times (Mt 26:69-74). When Jesus was crucified on the cross, He cried out with a loud voice saying, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

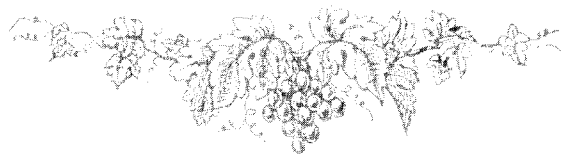
We need only to come before Him to ask for mercy. He will surely grant our requests (Heb 4:15-16).

If you have been misunderstood with no one to care for you be assured that the Lord Jesus knows your sorrows. He will surely comfort you and help you.

The Lord Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He also said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Mt 11:28; Jn 6:37).

The Lord Jesus gave this promise to His disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you" (Jn 14:18). The Lord also promised His disciples saying, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever ... But the comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (Jn 14:16, 26). This promise is precious indeed. If we desire to have fellowship with the Lord, we must receive the Holy Spirit. We must also read the Bible. Go to the True Church. Then we shall get to know Christ better.

The Bible says, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov 18:24). This friend who is closer than a brother is the Saviour Jesus Christ. Are you willing to be His friend?



ACTIVE FAITH

What is "active faith"? It is lively faith. Faith that is dynamic. This kind of faith is full of power and strength. The Bible tells us that Jesus is a living rock, the Holy Spirit is a stream of living water, and God is a fiery furnace. So God Himself is very active. As believers we must also be active.

On the other hand, passive faith lacks initiative. It is lukewarm faith. People with passive faith still love the world. Many believers fall have passive faith. If we are not careful we will also become like them.

Read Psalms 103:14-16. The passage says, "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass : as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

Life is very short. When we are young, we are like flowers just blossoming. Youth is called the golden age. Whether a person is successful or not depends very much on what he does or does not do in his youth. Whether he goes to heaven or to hell and whether he becomes a noble vessel or a useless one depend very much on what he does or does not do in the days of his youth. Many old people shed tears when they reminisce. When they look back they find that many of the paths which they have trodden were all wrong. They say to themselves, "If I can but live this life once again."

When I was returning to Los Angeles from Hawaii, I met a seventy-year old woman onboard the plane. She was sitting beside me. I saw that she was very sad so I shared with her the gospel. She told me her life story and then she said, "It is all too late. My husband is dead. All my children have their own families now. I have done them gross injustice. If I could live my life once again, I will help my husband and teach my children." She was sobbing when she spoke these words.

If you are given an opportunity to live again, you may not live the way you have lived. So why not start to live the way you should live right now? It is when we are healthy and young that we have the ability to serve and work for God. Therefore, we must live an active life of faith right now.

There was a brother who was very zealous when he was studying in university. He got a job after he graduated. He said to himself, "Right now I have no family and house. Therefore, I must earn a lot of money." So he took leave from God for ten years to earn big money. During the ten years, he only attended church once a year on New Year's Day. He became the manager of a big corporation and was sent to the United States. He commanded a very high salary and purchased many pieces of land. After ten years his children have grown up. He said to himself, "I must return to church. My children requires religious education. I want to serve God." He became zealous again. But, very pitifully, after a while he became ill. He lost his appetite and his belly bloated up. His eyes and skin became yellow. He went for a medical examination and a scanning showed that his liver was not functioning normally. The doctor did a biopsy on his liver and found that 90% of his liver was defunct. He only had 3 or 4 months to live. Lying in bed, he started to think, "I have amassed for myself so much wealth and properties, but what can they do for me now? I am dying!" He was given chemotherapy. His hair started to fall off and he was feeling very ill.

As he had not been to church for such a long time he had little faith left. Faith is something which is built up gradually. It is not something which can be acquired overnight. Ten years absence from church. It can be said that his faith was covered by three feet of ice. He could not bring out any more

faith. His unbelieving relatives came from another place and informed him that doctors have just discovered a new type of drug which was said to be very effective with a success rate of about 50%. Meanwhile, the whole church was praying for him. During these prayers, many brethren received the Holy Spirit and some even saw visions. His condition improved a little. But because of the words of his relatives, he lost his faith and went for the new drug treatment. Many brethren who visited him, advised him not to go for the treatment. They told him not to depend on medication but on God. But he did not heed their advice. That night, after the first dosage, he vomitted and passed out blood about 2000cc altogether. He nearly died that night. When the church received this news the same night, the entire church prayed for him for fifty minutes. There was no service, only prayers for him. The next day, I visited him at the hospital. He grasped my hand and cried so sorrowfully that the bed shook. He said, "I have never thought that I would die now. Last night, when I passed out so much blood, my tongue cleaved to my jaws like potsherd. I thought of the sufferings of Christ on the cross. It was then that I understood why Jesus had said, 'I thirst'." He was actually in agony. "I was really thirsty." He said that at that time, he wished that someone could give him a drop of water because a lot of blood was passed out from his body. He cried with deep sorrow. He said, "Please pray for me. If Jesus were to give me another twenty years more I would go to Africa with you." I could not reply because I was crying too. I thought to myself, "Why is it that you have not served God when you were young? Why is it that only on your deathbed that you say that you want to serve God?" God's time for him has come. Two months later he died. During his funeral, his body was laid in a coffin. He was aged forty-three. There was a deep feeling in me. I thought, "One day I too will be lying in there. If I do not take hold of my life to love God, to strive for the heavenly kingdom, to work for the Lord, one day when I will be lying there, there will be no more chance to do so." Have we ever thought of this? What is most important to you? It is not studying, finding a job, earning money or seeking worldly pleasures. The most important thing is to be with God in heaven. So, let us live a life of active faith.

We will all die one day. When death comes it does not always give prior warning. I had a nephew who was only ten years old when he died. He was very

mischievous. No matter how he was coaxed he refused to go to church. One day, his mother sent him to visit his father who was working in another place about one hour's journey by plane. Before he boarded the plane he told his mother that he was afraid. His mother told him not to be afraid because in one hour's time he would be able to see his father. The plane took off. In less than 15 minutes it exploded in mid-air killing all the passengers on board. When I heard the news I could not sleep that night. In fact I wept throughout the night. I wept not because he died but because he was not baptised! The grave yard in which he was buried contained not only the aged but also the young.

When I was at a cemetery in California I met an American woman, who is 101 years old. I asked her why she was there and she pointed and said, "This is my daughter and this is my grandchild." So let us be active in our faith.

John 4:35-36 records, "Lift up your eyes and look at the field." The harvest is ripe. We must evangelise. Time is too short. We must propagate the gospel far and wide. We need many servants to work. We need full time preachers, literary ministers, broadcasting evangelism, religious education teachers, people who are talented, and many others to do the work of God. We must have publication houses, TV stations, broadcasting stations. We should have them long ago. But we have none of these. Why? Because we do not place emphasis on evangelism. Some spent so much just on one meal. The cost of that meal could actually establish one chapel in some places. The cost of that one meal can be salaries to a number of preachers. The cost of a car can build a chapel in Africa. Our believers in Singapore, the United States and the United Kingdom have been blessed by God. They have so much money and do not know how to spend wisely. They have been wasting a lot of money. They always want better, more luxurious and enjoyable things. If all these monies were accumulated and used for evangelism, many more souls would be saved. In the Philippines, a chapel was built with a sum of US\$20,000. This chapel has a seating capacity of 200 people. Many were saved as a result of attending services there. Do you know that the money that God has blessed us with is very useful if we apply it on the work of God. Today, how many of us actually earn for God? We need to mobilise the force in the church. We need more people to dedicate their lives to God, especially youths in

Singapore. You have received so much theological training, what is your knowledge for? Why is it that there are so few youths who are doing that? Is it that God's love lacks motivation? Can it be that we are still not clear about our goals in life? I believe that many has this calling to work for God. We must pray and think. A man's life lasts only for several decades. If you do not spend your golden age in doing work for God but keep delaying and procrastinating until you grow old, then you will realise that you have become old and weak and God can no longer use you.

Our body degenerates. Just like the sun rising from the east. Those who are ten years old are like the nine o'clock sun, full of vigour and hope. They do not know what death is, neither do they think of what old age means. After a while they are thirty or forty years old. They have established their career, married with children and have a house. Yet a while later they are over the hill. The evening sun is so beautiful but it is nearing dusk. They are about to finish. We find that old people tend to keep silent. Why? Because they are about to leave this world. They think about a lot of things. "How am I to face God? I have not done my share of divine work. I have earned so much money but have not offered accordingly. Can I be saved?"

A seventy-year old brother was sick. I visited him and he asked me, "If I were to die now, can I be saved?" I could not answer him. I told him, "Only you and God know, but I do not know. How could I know whether you can be saved. If you want to be saved, repent quickly. You are not dead yet. You still have time. You can make your final dash." This is true. So, let us all come out to do God's work. Many preachers are required in the United States, Africa, the Philippines, Malaysia, Sabah, etc. There are too many souls to save. There is a famine of preachers in the entire world right now. Who wants to offer himself? Those who can speak many languages - Mandarin, English, French, Spanish, etc. We must also study for the Lord. Do not just do engineering, accounting or medicine but choose more language courses. Because we need a lot of such skills in world evangelism. To be able to read, write and speak foreign languages. We must equip ourselves now. We must have a goal. Without a goal we can never improve. We must set a goal for our own life. For example, in five years time what am I going to achieve and if God

allows it after ten years what will I do. In order to achieve our ten-year goal to be used by the Lord, engage ourselves in the work of world evangelism. We must now resolve to study the Bible every day, pray half an hour to one hour daily. We must learn different languages. If there are no challenges, no goals, we will never improve. "The Lord has need of it" (Lk 19:31). This is a precious saying. We must be a vessel of God. As long as we are willing to dedicate ourselves, God will use us. Aaron's rod was actually dried up. It budded and blossomed. This is called spiritual rejuvenation. By placing ourselves in the hands of God, we can become a rod of God. That ass on which the Lord rode was the most blessed ass in the world because it was ridden by Jesus. Similarly, if we, foolish, useless as wild asses, are willing to be ridden by the Lord, then our lives will become valuable. The greatest achievement in life is to be used by the Lord. When Jesus uses you and sends you out to work, He works with you. Through your sermons many are moved to receive the salvation of the Lord. Through your prayers many are healed and received the Holy Spirit. Lives are changed. The reward we get is even better than being able to earn a lot of money. This is spiritual joy. Some people ask how I feel as a preacher. I could not explain it. There is a hymn that goes, "The longer I serve him the sweeter it goes". This is the only thing I can say. The more I serve the happier I am.

God will use you greatly. To use your hands to do a lot of work. To use your mouth to speak lots of powerful words from the Bible. Your life would be meaningful. If a person refuses to be used by God, no matter how he lived his life in the end it is but vanity. When you were a child you had toys. After a while, you threw them away and wanted electronic ones. But before long you got tired of them. When we grow up, we go about looking for sports cars. After having them for about 6 months they become like any other cars. Then you would look at the houses of others and start to think that if you were to live in a great mansion how good it would be. But even if finally you have purchased a mansion, you could only stay in one room at a time. Even if you live in a luxurious mansion, but do not work for God you will not have the peace of God and the Spirit of God in you. Everything is vanity. Look at Elvis Presley. He died of an overdose of drugs. How pitiful! Look at the time when he sang the song in his last concert before he died. He actually shed tears while

he was singing. He said, "Jesus, where are you?" He was so empty. He had earned so much money and cut so many records. When he gave gifts to friends, he gave them expensive cars. But he had no joy. When you are young you like toys and when you grow up you like sports cars and houses. When you have everything you still ask whether there are more things to go for. You must have the sense of real values. If you have the correct sense of values only when you have grown old, then it would have been too late. Many people look for Jesus only when they have retired. If you are already 70 years old, how many more years do you have? How much time do you have to work for God?

Elijah put his cloak on Elisha. Elisha was the son of a rich farmer with 12 pairs of oxen. He was a rich man's son but he had perception. When the cloak was placed upon him, he immediately killed the oxen and used the yokes to burn as fuel and invited people to eat of the oxen. He left his job as a farmer. He went for a higher calling. His great aspiration was revealed when he prayed to God, asking for the spirit that was upon Elijah be given to him in double portion. Elisha could see why Elijah was successful. It was the Spirit of God in him. God actually blessed Elisha with double portion of the Spirit. He performed 16 great miracles as recorded in the Bible, which is twice the number that performed by Elijah. He became the chariot and horseman of Israel. Today, we need a lot of Elishas in church to be the horsemen and chariots of Israel. We need more people. The harvest is already ripe. We have too few workers. Everyday I pray, "Oh Lord, please raise more workers. I have but only 2 hands. I hope there are 100 more to be used by the Lord. I am too limited." When God move many people so that all of them become horsemen and chariots of Israel, our world evangelism will have hope.

We must live a life of active faith. Christ died on the cross for our sins. We owe God a debt which we can never repay. Galatians 2:20 says, "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." This was the realisation that Paul had. When a great light shone upon him, he fell upon the ground. Jesus spoke to him personally. It was then he understood that the person he was persecuting was the Messiah. He thought he was gaining God's favour when he slaughtered the

Christians because he did not know that Jesus was the Christ. Now he knew that the person whom he was persecuting was the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for him, and suffered for him. He was in deep sorrow. He asked the Lord penitentially, saying, "Lord, what shall I do, Lord?" In Africa, there was a sister. In a vision she saw how Jesus was crucified and all the blood that was shed. She cried sorrowfully. She said, "Lord, what can I do for you?" Jesus said to her, "You must preach for me." In Ghana, a brother also saw a vision. He saw the Lord bleeding all over his body. He asked the same question, "What can I do for you Lord?" Jesus said, "You must keep my commandments." Today, we have received God's love. Have we ever thought of the agony Jesus went through for our sins? He has given us all. What have we given to Him? Many love the world and do not love Jesus. They seldom come for services. They love the enjoyment of the world - dancing, parties, drinking, socialising with the opposite sex. They put aside God's work and His church.

In Elgin, a town in Scotland, a youth seminar was held there a few years ago. Preacher SK Yang and I were sent there by the church. I was talking to about 20 university students. It was the last lesson and I did not know how to encourage them. So I decided to tell them the most important lesson - the crucifixion of Jesus. It was an old, old story but a very important one. I told them how Jesus died. I had read a book named "The Shroud of Turin". The Catholics claimed to have the shroud which was used to wrap the body of Jesus. Scientists have taken this shroud and examined it. At first these scientists did not believe but after having examined it, they could not but believe that this shroud actually wrapped a man whose sufferings was like that of Jesus. I thought to myself, "This shroud need not be the one that wrapped the body of Jesus, but the person who was wrapped by this shroud really suffered the same sufferings as Jesus." So I told them how He died. His face was bruised by beatings. There were holes on the head and the Roman whip with two hooks were used to whip the back. All were on the shroud. There was internal bleeding and he died when he breathed his last. It was clearly stated. The sufferings of Jesus. The place that the nails went through was both the wrists. You can see a lot of blood on the part of the shroud which wrapped the wrists.

When I said that the nails were nailed through the wrists of Jesus, a brother named Tommy Chan fell from his seat. He was trembling and I saw that something was wrong. So I went over to him and everyone gathered round him. Nobody could revive him despite applying different kinds of ointment on him. I tried to take his pulse and there was none. When I put my finger near his nose there was no breath. His hands became stiff and cold. I have touched a dead person before and he was exactly like a dead person.

I was very afraid. Everyone knelt down to pray for him. They all prayed in tears. Many did not know what was happening. After about ten minutes he started to move and sweated profusely. Then he knelt down and cried very pitifully. Then he told me that when he heard that the Roman soldiers nailed the nails into the hands of Jesus, he felt a nail going through his own hand. The nail went in and in and he could feel his bones breaking. He said that the pain was beyond description. From the waist, the pain spread to his entire body. His flesh was trying to resist the pain but it could not. Then a power filled his whole body, his spirit left his body and went to heaven. In the wink of an eye, he went to a very bright and glorious place. He saw his body in the classroom. He told me, "I am sick of the world!" A first-year university student, and he was sick of the world! Why did he hate the world? Because he has been to heaven. He did not want to come back but a voice told him, "You must go back. There is still a lot of work for you to do." Then he felt as if he was like a leaf floating down. His soul entered his body. He heard everyone praying for him. Then he woke up. He was very afraid. He said, "I was crucified, died, went to heaven and returned." He shivered and sweated cold sweat. He knelt down to pray. He cried out loudly. Why did he cry? He told me he cried for two things. One, he had returned to this sinful world to suffer. Two, He cried because of the Lord's love. One single nail killed him. His bones were broken and the pain was beyond bearing. But Jesus had three nails nailed into Him. How did He bear with them? When he said all these, he cried again loudly saying, "In the past I did not love the Lord. I was cold in faith towards Him. I loved rock music and dancing."

After this, we returned to Edinburgh and I invited him to bear testimony there. There were a number of prodigal sons and daughters, who loved rock music, going to casinos, to dance, and to drink. When they came to church they would not go into the church hall during services but stayed in the car and listened to rock music. Many believers had exhorted them to come to church. They prayed for them, but they did not turn back from their waywardness. That day God brought them back to the church. After listening to the testimony of the brother, they were moved to tears. The more they listened to his testimony, the more they became afraid. I said to them, "Those who want to pray for the Holy Spirit or to be filled with the Holy Spirit, those who want to repent, come to the front to pray." All the prodigals came before the pulpit and prayed. Some have not been to church for a long time. When they knelt before the Lord, they cried sorrowfully in tears. They confessed their sins and repented. There was one who had not been to church for ten years. He received the Holy Spirit. Then there was another who had lost the Holy Spirit for eight years, he received the Holy Spirit again. Another one was greatly filled with the Holy Spirit, his legs were moving and his hands stretching out, and he kept crying to the Lord, "Lord, where are you?" They resolved to love the Lord. Why? Because they understood the love of the Lord. During the farewell service, I invited them to say a few words. The person who had not been to church for ten years, asked me a question, "Can you tell me why the Lord Jesus still loves me so much?" Every one cried. Even today, many of these people are still very zealous. If we have not been really moved by the love of the Lord, we can never have an active faith. So may the Lord fill our hearts with His love.

By John Lo

WHAT TO LIVE FOR

Birth is the beginning of life. Death is the end of life. Death is painful, fearful and that which no one can escape. The Bible states, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this judgment" (Heb 9:27). The Bible states further, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men ... There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death" (Ecc 7:2, 8:8). However, the Christian's concept of life is different from the people of the world. A Christian is optimistic whether he lives or he dies. In fact, there is no reason to be pessimistic for there is hope for a Christian when he dies.

Since Adam disobeyed God sin entered into the world and there was death (Rom 5:12). Therefore it is appointed that everyone must die. And since everyone is under the power of death, when death comes no one can prolong a cubit of his life span (Mt 6:27). We give thanks to the Lord that He had been crucified on the cross bringing salvation to us. Moreover, He had resurrected and overcome death. In 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 it is written, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". This passage of the Bible tells us four things :

1. Death came by sin. If there was no sin there was no death (Rom 5:12).

2. Sin came by law. Sin was not imputed when there was no law (Rom 5:13; 1 Jn 3:4).
3. The Lord had fulfilled the law by His sacrifice unto death and through death He had destroyed the devil who had the power of death (Heb 2:14-15). The Lord had overcome death.
4. Death was destroyed. It's sting is no longer harmful. Death to an unbeliever is a sting but to a Christian it is nothing. Stephen, before he died, asked the Lord to receive his spirit (Ac 7:59).

Paul said that he was hard pressed from both directions. If he had the choice he would choose to die and be with the Lord for it was far better (Phil 1:23). On the other hand, the people of the world fear death because they have no hope. They do not know where they will go after they depart from this world. But a Christian can live a peaceful life in this world and when he leaves this world he will be transported to a reserved place in heaven which is far better (1 Cor 2:9; 1 Pet 1:3-4). So, why fear death?

It is not important how long a person lives. What is important is whether he has lived a godly life and brought benefits to society. Longevity is not the aspiration of the people of God but the hope of the people of the world. One who has kept the truth, worked for the Lord, glorified God and done a lot of good to mankind goes to the heavenly kingdom whether he dies at the age of thirty or fifty. On the other hand one who has lived a hundred years but has done a lot of evil is no better than one who has died in the mother's womb. The Lord Jesus lived slightly over thirty years yet he had done so much good works and left so many teachings that people still remember Him today and shall continue to remember Him till the end of the world.

Since we know that the Lord has overcome death and that our labour is not in vain in the Lord, we should live a godly life and be abounding in the work of the Lord so as to live meaningfully (1 Pet 1:17, 4:2).

Paul said, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15). The Lord Jesus has died for us. We are unable to measure the length, the breadth, the height and the depth of the love of the Lord. Whenever we think of the love of the Lord we are spurred to live for the Lord. Therefore Paul said, "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" (Rom 14:8).

He said again, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). When Paul was alive he had lived according to the image of Christ and left his fine example and letters which had constrained many believers to serve the Lord zealously. We should emulate Paul to magnify Christ in this world, to live meaningfully and to leave good examples for others to follow so that more people will be spurred to love the Lord.

As Christians we should have spiritual insight and be able to see things far ahead (2 Cor 4:17-18) and to live for the Lord and to die for the Lord so that when we have completed our course we shall be able to return to our heavenly home triumphantly to enjoy incomparable glory.

Jonah Fled To Tarshish

Jonah was the son of Amittai from Gath-hepher. He served the Lord from 840-810 BC, from the reign of king of Israel, Jeroboam (2 Kgs 14:23-25). The city of Nineveh of the Assyrians became very wicked. God sent Jonah to warn the people to turn from their iniquity lest God should destroy the city. But Jonah disobeyed God's command. Instead he went down to Joppa and boarded a ship heading for Tarshish (Spain) in order to flee from God (Jon 1:1-3).

After Jonah boarded the ship, God caused the sea to be tempestuous. The sea became so rough that the ship was about to wreck. Both the crew and the passengers panicked - not knowing what to do. Each one started to pray to his own god for safety. They jettisoned their belongings but to no avail. Jonah realized the cause of the disaster. He knew that the tempest was sent by God. Being conscience-stricken, he told the people to throw him over-board so that the sea would be calm again. So they lifted up Jonah and threw him into the sea and truly the sea was calmed (Jon 1:4-15).

God prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. He repented and he prayed. The Lord listened to Jonah's prayers and had mercy on him. He caused the fish to vomit out Jonah on dry land (Jon 2:10). God sent Jonah the second time to preach to the people of Nineveh saying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown". The people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast and put on sack cloths from the greatest of them even to the least of them. God saw that they had turned from their evil ways and so He withdrew the disaster that He had said He would send unto them (Jon 3:1-10).

God is righteous. But God is also merciful. He will not despise one with a contrite heart. On seeing that the people of Nineveh had repented and had turned away from their evil ways, He had mercy on them and forgave their iniquities.

Jonah did not expect the people in Nineveh to repent. But his warnings caused the whole city of Nineveh to repent appeasing the anger of God. In this end time, there are innumerable cities in this world where their wickedness are worse than that of the city of Nineveh.

Perhaps you are a Jonah. Jonah wanted to flee from God and yet God pulled him back. So please do not make any excuse but turn back to Him to be commissioned.



Pray for our leaders



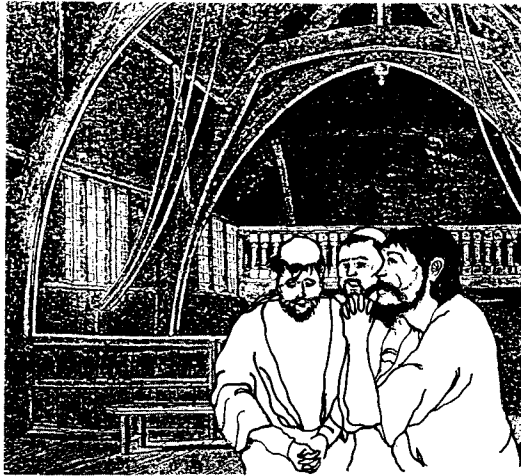
A strong and prosperous nation has a prudent leader and many able ministers. Under Solomon Israel enjoyed some forty years of prosperity. Similarly, a church needs good leaders.

Generally, the faith of the leaders of the church is stronger than the faith of the believers. Their spirituality is also higher. However, they are flesh and blood too and are vulnerable to infirmities. Paul therefore wrote to the church in Thessalonica to pray for him and his co-workers (2 Thess 3:1). Truly, leaders of the church require the prayers of the believers.

Preaching is a spiritual activity. We need to rely on the power from on high (Lk 24:49; Rom 15:18). Though we face difficulties in preaching the gospel today, we should not lose heart. We should not be worried that our members do not increase in number, our believers are not fervent or the people of the world are hard-hearted. As long as there are prayers, God will take care of the rest. All we need to do is to pray in one accord for our leaders that they will be faithful and humble servants of God.

Peter, James & John

An apostle is one who is sent - an ambassador or a messenger. The Lord chose twelve apostles. These twelve apostles were given the power to preach the gospel, to heal the sick and to cast out devils (Mk 3:13-15). They followed Jesus and witnessed the resurrection of the Lord.



Of the twelve, three were specially close to Him. They were Peter, James and John. When Jesus went to Jairus' house to pray for his daughter He only took Peter, James and John with Him (Mk 5:35-43). When Jesus was transfigured only Peter, James and John saw it (Mt 17:1-9). On the night of His betrayal, the Lord brought with Him Peter, James and John to pray in the garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46).

We may learn from the above incidents that the three apostles were very close to the Lord. This was an honour to them. But why were they specially favoured by the Lord? They were

so much closer to the Lord compared to the other disciples. How did they come to believe the Lord? How did they conduct themselves and what were their parentage?

Peter

The word "Peter" means "stone". The name was given by the Lord after his conversion. Before that he was known as Simon (Jn 1:40, 42). Peter's father was John, a fisherman living by the Sea of Galilee in Bethsaida (Mt 4:18). Peter was married before his conversion (Mt 8:14). Later he brought his wife along with him on his missions (1 Cor 9:5). In his letter sent from the church at Babylon he mentioned Mark as his son. Mark probably was not his natural son, but a "son" born of the gospel (1 Pet 5:13). It was his brother, Andrew, who brought Peter to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He said to Peter, "Thou art Simon the son of Jonah : thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone" (Jn 1:35-42). Then he went to a marriage feast in Cana with Jesus and also to various parts of Galilee and Judea (Jn 2:12, 4:3-4). After that Peter went back to Bethsaida. He stayed with his father and continued to be a fisherman. Later, when he saw Jesus performing a miracle, he forsook everything and followed Jesus (Lk 5:1-11). Peter became a useful vessel of the Lord and he was made an apostle and ranked chief among the apostles (Mt 10:2; Ac 1:13, 15). He was one of the three pillars of the apostolic church (Lk 2:9).

Although Peter was chosen to be an apostle during the ministry of the Lord Jesus, it was only after Pentecost when he received the Holy Spirit that he was transformed into a great man of God. Before Pentecost, he was a man of little faith (Mt 14:31, 25-30); had little faith (Mt 17:14-21); and followed the Lord from afar and then denied the Lord three times (Mt 26:58, 69-75). After Pentecost, he became a man of strong faith (Ac 2:14, 32, 36, 4:12); had great faith (Ac 3:2-8, 5:1-10); and witnessed for the Lord bravely (Ac 3:11-16; 4:8-20).

Before Pentecost, he belonged to the flesh and desired to be the greatest amongst the apostles (Mk 9:33-34, 10:33-45). He had a hot temper

and was easily provoked (Mk 10:41) to the extent of wielding a sword (Jn 18:10). After Pentecost, he became humble and gave all glory to God (Ac 3:12, 16, 4:8-10, 10:25-26). He became a meek person (Gal 2:11; 2 Pet 3:15), enduring mockings and beatings (Ac 5:40-41).

Before Pentecost, he was lazy to pray (Mt 26:36-45, 69-75). After Pentecost, he became diligent in prayers (Ac 3:1, 10:9). He prayed constantly and he also prayed for others (Ac 4:24, 8:14-17, 2:1-4, 14, 18-20, 5:26-32).

His death was prophesied by Jesus. The Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (Jn 21:18-19). The Bible makes no mention of the later part of Peter's life but from his first epistle it is evident that he moved to Babylon - the nickname for Rome at that time (1 Pet 5:13). In the year AD 67, Emperor Nero persecuted the church greatly. Many Christians were killed. It is believed that Peter was crucified upside down by Emperor Nero. He died a martyr for the Lord whom he loved.

James and John

James and John were brothers. James was the elder. They were the sons of Zebedee from Galilee (Mt 4:18-21). Their father was a rich fisherman who had many hired servants (Mk 1:20). Their mother was Salome (Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40, 16:1). She was probably the younger sister of the Lord's mother, Mary (Mt 27:56; Jn 19:25). Salome was a good mother (Mt 7:55, 20:20-21).

John was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. One day John the Baptist pointed at Jesus and said to his disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". Then two of John's disciples followed Jesus. One of them was Andrew and the other was John (Jn 1:29, 35-40). Then John went back to his fishing. After some time Jesus called him the second time by the shore of Galilee when he and his brother, James, were mending their fishing nets. Both he and his brother left their boat and their father and followed Jesus (Mt 4:21-22).

Later both he and his brother were made apostles of Jesus (Lk 6:13-14) and were very close to the Lord, particularly John who was known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved". This was mentioned no less than five times (Jn 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20).

He was the only disciple who saw the Lord suffering on the cross (Jn 19:26, 35). And he accepted the Lord's commission to take care of Mary, the Lord's mother (Jn 19:26-27).

After James and John were converted, the Lord called them "Boanerges" which means "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17). It was probably because they were hot-tempered. When John saw a person casting out devils in the name of the Lord but the man did not follow Jesus he became angry and forbade the man from doing so (Lk 9:49). When the Samaritans refused to receive Jesus, James and John requested the Lord to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them (Lk 9:51-56). After Pentecost they were filled with the love of God. The epistles of John were devoted to the exposition of the love of God.

The death of James was also prophesied. The Lord said to James, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptized" (Mk 10:39). This was fulfilled in AD 44 when King Herod persecuted the church and killed many believers including James. So James became the first apostle to die a martyr (Ac 12:1-2). Tradition has it that when James was persecuted, he undauntedly witnessed for Christ. Herod's judge was so moved by James' testimony that he accepted and believed Jesus immediately. Eventually he was killed together with James.

John accompanied Peter to witness for the Lord. Together, they healed the sick, cast out devils and fortified the faith of the believers (Ac 1:13-14, 2:14, 3:1-4, 22, 8:14). In AD 70 the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. John went to Ephesus and pastored the church there. In Ephesus, John wrote the gospel and the three epistles. Later he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos where he received prophetic revelations from the Lord and wrote them down (Rev 1:9). John was later allowed to return to Ephesus where he continued his ministry till he died at the age of about 100 years old. According to tradition John also died a martyr's death.

Hannah

A Woman of Patience

In the land of Ephraim there lived a man called Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives; one of them was Hannah, the other Penninah. Penninah had children but Hannah had no children. Every year Elkanah would go up to Shiloh to worship God and offer sacrifice. After that he would apportion the meat to Penninah, his children and Hannah. But the portion he gave to Hannah was much more than the portion he gave to Penninah because he loved Hannah. When Penninah saw that God had shut up the womb of Hannah so that Hannah was barren, she provoked her. This happened year after year. Hannah was so provoked that she refused food and drink but wept in the house of the Lord (1 Sam 1:1-88). However, she did not lose her temper. She did not argue with Penninah who had provoked her. She did not ever approach her husband to avenge her. Fools would readily show their anger but the wise



would endure (Ecc 7:9; Rom 5:3-5). Hannah relied on the mercies of God to remove her misery. She was humble, gentle, a prudent woman of few words.

A Woman of Faith

When Elkanah brought his family to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifice, Elkanah and his family, except Hannah, ate their meal after offering. After they had eaten Hannah rose up and prayed to God. She wept bitterly as she vowed to God saying, "O Lord of the hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him into the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head" (1 Sam 1:9-11). It came about that as Hannah was praying to God, Eli, the priest, was watching her. Her mouth was moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought that she was drunk. Then Eli said to Hannah, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee." But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord ... for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." Then Eli answered and said, "God is peace: and the Lord of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou has asked of him." Hannah said, "Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight." Then she went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad (1 Sam 1:12-18).

A Woman of Gratitude

Hannah's prayers were answered. God blessed her with a son whom she called Samuel meaning "that which she had from the Lord." When the child had weaned Hannah brought him along with three bullocks, one ephah of flour and a bottle of wine to Shiloh to pay her vow to God before Eli. Hannah consecrated her son to the Lord as she had vowed (1 Sam 1:19-28).

A Woman of Thanksgiving

Hannah, in her thanksgiving prayer, said, 'My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God ... The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up' (1 Sam 2:1-11). After the prayer Hannah returned to Ramah leaving Samuel behind to minister unto the Lord before Eli. Samuel was able to devote his entire life to serving God because of Hannah who had presented him before the Lord.

Beware of

FALSE TEACHERS

We read very often in the Bible about the people of God being misled by the deceitful teachings of false prophets and false teachers. Christ Himself also warned against false prophets who will arise, coming as wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15). Peter further warned that there will be false teachers amongst us (2 Peter 2:1-3). Their false teachings will deceive and lead people away from the teachings of God and the Bible mentions that some will depart from the faith in latter days. (1 Tim 4:1)

In order to be on guard against these false teachers, we must first be aware of the methods they employ. In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul warned them not to be deceived by persuasive words (Col 2:4). He further cautioned them against philosophies, empty deceits, traditions of men and principles of the world (Col 2:8): There were those who arose to pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:6-9). Some troubled the believers with the traditions of men (Acts 15:24-29), and stumbling their faith (2 Tim 2:17,18). Similarly, some today challenge the existence of God and the Christian faith with their own philosophies. There are also many who claim to be Christians but follow and teach many doctrines and practices which are not in accordance with the Bible. They keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath and celebrate Christmas. They say, "Surely God will not mind whether we are baptised or not, or how we are baptised?" They say some teachings in the Bible are unclear and hence their views are acceptable. They say that the Bible does not clearly teach Christians to marry in the Lord and hence they advocate that Christians can marry unbelievers. Let us not fall for this! The teachings in the Bible are actually very clear. Confusions arise because these people either do not understand the Bible or choose not to submit to the teachings of the Bible.

Second, we must be rooted in the truth. After Paul had warned Timothy against the false teachers, he reminded Timothy to “take heed to the doctrine and continue in them” (1 Tim 4:16). But how can we take heed if we do not know the doctrines in the first place? Hence, we must learn the doctrines. As we learn and desire the Word of God, we grow (1 Pet 2:2) and as we grow, unlike children, we will not be easily deceived by the trickery of men (Eph 4:14).

Third, we must recognise who speaks for God. One who speaks for God must “speak as the oracles of God” and also glorify God (1 Pet 4:11) and not speak his own words to glorify himself.

One who speaks for God speaks as the apostles spoke (1 Jn 4: 5,6). One who is speaking for God will preach that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins, because that was what Peter preached (Acts 2:38).

Fourth, we must reject false teachers.

The Bible teaches us not to receive them. Paul said that false teachers would be accursed (Gal 1: 6-9).

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