

April - June 2015

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



Forgiven

The Matthew 24 Olivet Prophecy: The Great Tribulation • The Spirit that Works • Courage

“Forgive and Forget”

“Forgive and forget” is a popular saying. It is hastily uttered, yet hardly kept. And to those who put forth the effort to observe it in the letter and in spirit, it is a pleasant step towards mending deteriorating and failing relationships. It is the fastest way to patch up old grudge and put an end to prolonged disputes, resulting in restored friendship and true reconciliation.

“Forgive and forget” is the opposite of trying to settle scores, tit for tat, revenge and concealed hatred. These mind-sets are in essence on the verge of breaking the 6th commandment in Ex. 30:13. The concept of putting up and giving way is fulfilled in the breach rather than in actuality. And Jesus warned that harbouring hatred by itself is risking the possibility of being thrown into the fires of hell (Mat. 5:22-23).

During His crucifixion Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) After His resurrection, not even a hint of inflicting pain or exacting revenge, or words to that effect against His killers can be found in the Bible. (Of course an accounting before His presence will usher in at the appointed time, 2 Cor. 5:10.) God said it is not for us to effect revenge saying, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” (Rom. 12:19).

And listen: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18) God's forgiveness allows us to begin life with a clean slate. Definitely He has a perfect memory (Luke 12:7), yet He choose not to remember our shortcomings. And He wants us to act the same way He did (Mat. 6:14).

Eleno S. Mellomida

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Forgiven

By Winston S. Co

Blessed are those
whose transgressions
are forgiven, whose
sins are covered.
Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord
will never count
against them; Paul
wrote in Romans 4:7-
8. True Christians are
indeed blessed for
they are redeemed,
cleansed, forgiven
and passed over from
death into life! This is
how Paul puts it in
Romans 5:9-10. Thus,
Christians must all
feel amazingly good -
having been forgiven
with the confidence
to stand before the
Lord. How blessed
and wonderful one
must feel!

Forgiven

To be forgiven is precious, priceless and profound. Forgiveness is an act of grace by one individual towards another. Most of the articles on forgiveness centers on the forgiver – why we need to forgive those who trespassed against us. Very few articles focus on the forgiven, the one to whom forgiveness is granted.

Jesus' parable in the 18th chapter of Matthew illustrates a lesson on being forgiven. Surprised at Jesus' declaration Peter asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' (Matthew 18:21-27).

This servant is in a dire predicament. Imagine yourself in his situation; put yourself in the shoes of the debtor. Some of us may have experienced the same tight situation.

Imagine yourself being arrested by an officer on an estafa charge,

dragged into the police station, committed to prison after the fiscal found probable cause, denied bail, towed to court for hearing and faced with a potential jail sentence. Like the errant servant, you will be filled with fear, guilt and increasing anxiety. On the day of the hearing, you are brought before the judge with your hands cuffed as you are led into the courtroom. The judge called the court to order, pulled out your file for sentencing. Your heart starts pounding and your mouth goes dry as you watch him read out the sentence. Your life depends upon his judgment. He calls your name and reads: "The court finds the defendant no longer guilty. A benefactor paid the debt you owed."

Not guilty! Debt fully paid! What a relief! A ton of weight lifts from your shoulders! The sheriff comes to unlock your handcuffs and you hear the judge declare, "You are free to go." You are free from condemnation! Life all of a sudden takes on a breath of fresh air and new meaning. You turn to hug your benefactor and shaking this hand so tightly saying a million 'thank-you.'

The above scenario is similar to what happened to the borrower who could not pay. The master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

That is how your Creator redeemed you from the death penalty. He forgave all your sins. Cancelled the debt and set you free. Imagine the euphoria of being forgiven! A true Christian - one who

truly repented - should always be excited with the experience of being forgiven of sins and freed from its penalty, which is death!

Story of Jacob & Esau

Another story about forgiveness is the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 32. Esau and Jacob were brothers, and they separated ways. Jacob offended his brother Esau by “stealing” his birthright. In his anger Esau vowed to kill Jacob (Genesis 27:6-41).

Out of fear, Jacob took refuge towards his uncle Laban's territory. He worked hard and was blessed by the Lord. And the time came for him to move out from Laban's household with his own family and to return back home. (Gen. 31).

Having unfairly treating his brother at one time has taken its toll on Jacob. Guilt, apprehension and fear undoubtedly keep hounding his conscience. He expected a violent meeting with Esau. He knew Esau has some scores to settle against him, and having a large family with him now, exposing them to danger compounded his fears (Gen. 32:7-11).

Yet, his “worst nightmare” did not happen. To his amazement he was warmly welcome by his brother Esau. His brother Esau had forgiven him of the acts he had committed against him. Genesis 32:1-4 writes: “And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked. And behold, Esau came, and four hundred men with him. And he divided the children to Leah, and to Rachel, and to the two handmaids. And he put the slave women and their children first, and Leah and her children afterward, and Rachel and Joseph last. And he passed over in front of them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck and kissed him. And they wept.”

Jacob's burden of guilt and fear that he carried for years was immediately gone, vanished. All anxiety and apprehension turned into tears of joy, elation, and ecstasy because of the unexpected treatment his brother Esau accorded him. What a feeling of relief from one who is forgiven.

Feeling It

How should we feel when our sins are forgiven us? Being forgiven is not a casual thing that we feel nothing for it. Sometimes, we have the tendency to take God's grace and forgiveness for granted. Christians need to guard against becoming passive and numb towards the grace of God. That's why a simple appreciation of being forgiven will certainly keep the fires of Christianity burning. There are positive emotions we need to feel to help us remember the blessing that comes from having our sins forgiven. These are:

• Relief

The heavy burden of sins weigh us down because of guilt. Guilt is the mental state of knowing you have done something wrong, or

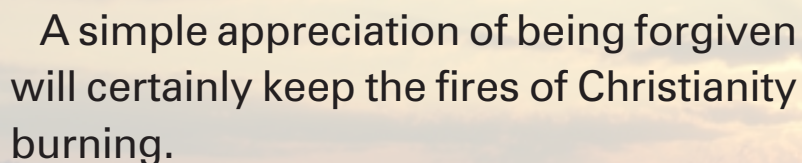
In other words, you “feel relieved” because you have been released from a consequence, obligation or penalty. For this reason Jesus, talking about the forgiveness of sins through His sacrifice and our faith in Him, said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

When we sin against God, we feel the guilt for our transgressions. The feeling of guilt overcomes us and we are burdened. Like Jacob we should break into tears when Christ washes away our sins and removed the penalty of death. We can now breathe out a big sigh of relief knowing we have been forgiven.

• Freedom

Having been forgiven, we are no longer slaves of sin; but Christ frees us from the shackles of death. There ought to be this tremendous feeling of liberty and freedom; the feeling of being free from guilt and the consequences of the penalty of sin.

There is a feeling of rejuvenation,



A simple appreciation of being forgiven will certainly keep the fires of Christianity burning.

committed an offense. We are all too familiar with sadness, gloominess, despair, and heaviness as a result of feeling guilty. The load we carry - worrying and speculating on the possible negative consequences - brings pain, anguish and distress.

Relief is an alleviation of the load of guilt. It means feeling good because the load of burden has been lifted, removed, lightened and a difficult problem has been resolved.

of new life and of a new beginning. You are granted a brand new opportunity to straighten out your life. Paul said in Ephesians 3:12 to use this new feeling of freedom to approach God with confidence.

• Well-being

When the affliction of sin is lifted, a feeling of refreshing and positive emotions set in. The result is general feeling of well-being, goodness and

optimism. Sorrow is turned into cheerfulness, anguish to content, despair to hope, grief to bliss.

When Esau came to embrace Jacob, you can imagine how Jacob felt. A sudden surge of well-being engulfed him. All the guilt, anxiety, sorrow, grief and despair disappeared and within him sprang forth all the positive emotions of love and kindness. We felt this on the day of our baptism- when we alight from the watery grave. The same feeling of well-being should remain in us for as long as we live.

after having been reconciled with a friend or family member after some hurt. The sadness and sorrow of hurt turns into joy when there is forgiveness and reconciliation. The feeling is to skip like a child with gladness in the heart.

•Love

We feel loved when we have been forgiven. When we feel we have fallen short, been inadequate, remiss in our obligation, imperfect in our actions, and yet we were graciously forgiven; we just cannot help but to feel an envelope of

and taken away the penalty of death from us.

Psalms 51 spells out the impact and the full essence of being forgiven. King David could not have expressed it in any other way. The emotions and the appreciation he felt in seeking God's mercy and forgiveness is so touching and is worthy of emulation.

Blessings of being forgiven

It feels wonderful to be forgiven. When loved ones argue about something petty, even silly, when one is able to forgive and say, "I love you. I'm so sorry to have offended you. Please forgive me." Surely, these are the most wonderful words you will hear that will rekindle a warm and happy feeling.

Imagine the emotional impact when children who are disobedient are finally forgiven by the parents; when friends quarrel then eventually regain their lost friendship; when couples fight then all is forgotten; and most specially, when we sin and God says: "your faults and sins I remember no more." Hebrews 10:17

Being forgiven is the most gracious gift that we can ever receive from God. The reason why Jesus came, suffered, and died was to give us the gift of reconciliation – the forgiveness of our sins and letting go of its penalty. What a lightening of the burden that once was heavily laden upon our shoulders. And what a feeling of inexpressible joy, relief, freedom, well-being, peace, and happiness that start to overflow within us – a great blessing.

Let us celebrate the joy of forgiveness and salvation, knowing our sins are washed away through the blood of Christ. He has allowed us to stand before His throne faultless. From now on, we ought to deeply appreciate the greatness of the love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ! **AG**

Jesus suffered and died to give us the gift of reconciliation, the forgiveness of our sins and letting go of its penalty.

•Peace

Knowing we have sinned agitates, troubles and disturbs us. Sin separates us from the love of God. To live in sin is to live in adversity against God. Sinners are classified as enemies of God (James 4:4). Once this separation is removed from us and reconciled to God, we have peace with God anew (Romans 5:1).

Peace is the feeling of tranquility, security, and comfort. When we are reconciled back to God through Christ, we are no longer troubled by the error of sin but a feeling of harmony and serenity will ensue. In Christ, we have peace in our hearts (John 14:27).

•Joy

We must feel happy today – filled with inexpressible joy. We ought to feel happy and joyful after our sins and faults are forgiven and removed from us. (Psalm 51:12 and 1 Peter 1:8)

Certainly, we can all understand what kind of happiness one feels

warmth, generosity, care, and security that comes from love.

The most amazing thing that can happen to anyone is to find love in the midst of conflict, anger, and disagreement. Forgiveness is to offer love to the other party. As the forgiven, we must be able to feel that we are loved.

The source of forgiveness is love. Christ loved us so much that He died for us and He forgave us. Feel the warm embrace and the love of Christ. Feel that you are loved by Christ and The Father! (Romans 5:8 and 8:39)

•Thankfulness

To be forgiven is a humbling experience and should result in thankfulness and gratitude. When the people we hurt forgive us for our offense, we ought to be profusely thankful to the people who have forgiven us in love. We must reciprocate with extreme gratitude in our hearts.

To Christ we must be abundantly thankful for He has forgiven our sins

The Matthew 24 Olivet Prophecy:

The Great Tribulation

A Time of Great Trouble for True Believers

By Rene D. Corpuz

Knowing the future
has always
fascinated us, we
like to read books
that give us a good
glimpse of the
possibilities of
what's ahead. And
there is no other
book that has
accurately
presented future
events as the No. 1
best-selling book of
all time, The Bible!

There is an event in the near future described as “unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” that directly affects true Christians! This was prophesied by the Lord Jesus Himself. Let us revisit these prophecies:

Mat 24:9-13

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Rev 6:9-11

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

Mat 24:15-27

“So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. “So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Hated by all nations, persecuted and eventually, put to death, these

are the situations Christians are looking forward to in the near future. It's a bad time to be a true Christian. But that's not all that's prophesied, the possibility of real Christians turning away from the true faith, and turning against or betraying fellow Christians makes the conditions even worse.

These things will not happen in a day's transition, where Christian neighbors and families sleep as friends in the evening and wake up as enemies the next morning. Why are Christians hated by all nations? Why are they being persecuted? Why are they killed? Why are fellow Christians betraying each other?

Why Hated By All Nations?

The Lord Himself did not tell the specifics of why the hatred. In the days of the first-century apostles and disciples, the hatred came from the fear of their fellow Jews from a possible persecution by the Roman Empire as a direct repercussion of the preaching of the disciples of the Lord. The disciples being mostly Jews, their fellow Jews feared the worst possible reaction from Caesar to the spreading news that a Jewish King shall rise and rule the world, and overthrow all the other kingdoms, including the Romans. The last time such news came out, that a 'prophesied' king of Israel was born in Bethlehem, it resulted in the death of many of their children two years old and below, at least two survived the slaughter, John the Baptist and Jesus.

In the days of Nero, the hatred came from misdirection and blame of the burning of Rome, originally perpetrated, according to historians, by Nero himself, but blamed upon the Christians at Rome.

What could it be in our time and age? What will bring about the hatred directed toward true Christians in this generation?

Why Are We Being Persecuted? Betrayed? Killed?

Persecution follows as a natural consequence of hatred. It's not as simple as plain hatred, it will progress into betrayal, persecution and death, in that particular order. Two questions that needed to be answered: Who will betray the Christians, and why will they be betrayed?

Luke 21:16-17

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

Luke 21:12-15

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for

Christians are being persecuted for the Lord, which means they're doing the right thing. Yet frustrating because even though they're on the right side of reason, their own family and friends don't see it that way. In John 16:2, Jesus warned his disciples that there will come a time that they will be killed because the people around them think they're doing it for God! They are fully convinced, and sincerely believed they're doing the right thing, but in the words of the Lord, they're not.

Let's consider again what happens during the tribulation:

1. True Christians are betrayed, persecuted and killed because of "the name of the Lord."

2. Unfortunately, those who would be instruments of their betrayal, persecution and death are their own family and friends, even their own spiritual brothers in the faith.

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

Luke 21:16-17

testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

Luke tells us "the who," and partly, "the why." Their own parents, brothers, relatives and friends will betray them. But why would true Christians be betrayed because of the 'name of the Lord'?

In a sense, that is encouraging, and in another, it is also frustrating. It is "encouraging" because true

These are very important questions: If "we" happen to be one of those true Christians, what reason would there be for those that love us, our own friends and family, to betray us, to persecute, and have us killed? What could possibly have changed so drastically between today and the days of the Great Tribulation that would lead to such betrayal, persecution and death?

We know that humans are prone to do extreme and desperate things, and understandably so for various reasons. In Matthew 24:9 & Revelation 6:9, Jesus tells us the

betrayal and death would be 'because of me,' (that is, the Lord) and 'because of the word of God...' The primary causes for betrayal and death is because of belief in the Lord Jesus and the word of God! It is because of what we believe in! It will not be because of hunger, or because of disturbed minds. It is because of knowledge, understanding and belief in the Lord and in the Word of God that shall be the primary reasons.

The Reasons of Betrayal, Persecution and Death

But why would knowledge and understanding of the truth bring about such danger and death? Shouldn't the rest of the world be thankful that amidst the confusion there are those who knew the truth about the Lord Jesus and stand by it? Not quite.

The truth will not be acceptable and will be contrary to "the truth of the world." That brings us to another question: why would a difference of belief lead to betrayal, persecution and death? What could have possibly changed? We have hundreds, perhaps thousands of different beliefs today, but we are relatively free. Christians are not persecuted nor killed because of their belief.

The real reason lies in the prophecies scattered in the Old and New Testament Writings.

Revelation 12:17

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, *who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Daniel 7:21-22

"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the

time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

Daniel 7:23-25

"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this

2Thessalonians 2:1-12

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; *for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and*

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:17

kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. *He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time."*

This personality, this 'beast,' or 'horn' which shall persecute the saints of the Most High, is also mentioned in a few other prophecies in the NT:

Revelation 13:5-7

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and *he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.*

the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

This is the real “why” of the Great Tribulation. It's not because our family and friends woke up early in the morning and suddenly decided it's a good day to betray, to persecute and to have us killed. It's because someone whom the Bible calls the “Beast,” influenced by the Dragon who hates “true disciples,” will make that decision to go after us, to go to war against us. And the beast and the dragon will use, influence our family and friends, by force (or coercion) or by deception, to betray us, to persecute us, and to lead us to our deaths!

The rise to power of a new world emperor, this “beast” and his system of government and worship will bring about our persecution and death. This modern world emperor won't be simply enlarging his borders, he will be allied with a religious leader, (called 'the false prophet') and will enforce, under threat of economic persecution and even death, those who will not 'bow down' to his rule and form of worship.

Betrayed or Betrayer?

At the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy, if we are still alive, we will make very important personal decisions. Which side will we be, the betrayed or the betrayer? According to the prophet Daniel, it is going to last for 'a time, and times, and half-a-time,' which could mean 3½ years, assuming that the understanding of our Bible Scholars regarding this prophecy is correct. The choices that we make at that time, could spell the difference whether we would enter the kingdom of God and be a part of it, or one of those who would be recipients of the “wrath of God” for treachery and betrayal. Are we the betrayed, for the name of Jesus? Or are we the betrayer of the faithful? Will we be strong and brave enough to stand for what we believe?

The Purpose of Advanced Warning

What is the Lord's purpose for telling us what we are looking forward to in the days of the Great Tribulation? What benefit could we possibly gain by knowing these things well ahead of time? The simplest answer: salvation. The primary objective of prophecy is to warn us of impending danger so that we can take the necessary steps and precautions and be saved!

We are being told ahead of the conditions of the Great Tribulation so that we can prepare ourselves. We are warned so that we can escape the betrayal, so that we do not end up as the betrayer. And if we do end up as among those that will be betrayed, we are not caught by surprise, but that we are prepared to stand for what we believe in, for the truth. It will be a really bad time for us in the end, but we can draw strength from the example of faith and the words of Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah:

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18).

If and when the days of the Great Tribulation comes in our time, let us be brave, let us be courageous, let us be faithful to the end, and as the Lord promised: “He who endures to the end shall be saved (Matthew 24:13).” **AG**

**“Thy word
is a lamp
unto my feet,
and a light
unto my path”**

Psalms 119:105

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The Spirit That Works

By Eleno S. Mellomida

The Holy Spirit is an endlessly tackled, widely discussed and a passionately argued topic. It never runs out of contrary views and adversarial opinions, with every proponent claiming that their position is truly based from the Bible. Now, this article will not deal on the “personage or the lack of it” about the Holy Spirit. Suffice it to say now that the Holy Spirit is a “multi-functional” entity. While none of its “multi-functional” attributes can be construed as less important, a few of them are extremely crucial, and directly affects the life of those who received it upon repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). And these are:

- **It is the deposit that guarantee God's promises of redemption, and endowment of our inheritance as joint heirs of all that which Christ will inherit.**

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:14-17).

- **It is the “tool” through which one can understand and comprehend the things that pertains to God, His plan, and His purpose for mankind - things that most people consider it mysterious.**

Notice: “However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has

prepared for those who love him”, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:9-14)

- **It is the instrument by which God guarantees the resurrection from mortal to immortality if the spirit “lives” within you continually until the end of your mortal life.**

Note: “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” (Rom. 8:11).

- **It is the “channel” that will enable us to recall all of the things Jesus tells us in the Bible.**

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26).

Those are just a few of its functions; and the truly converted Christian is supposed to be familiar with it, and acknowledge that apart from these truths the road to salvation is paved with uncertainties. It is a goal one needs to strive to attain now, and in the future. However, some of them may not be apparently visible in one's life. The effects of the presence of God's Spirit are not always made manifest. Besides, it is beneath one's dignity to

claim he already “mastered” its qualities and achieved the desired results. Paul cautioned “let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12)

Noticeable Virtues

Not all of the mentioned qualities are detectible in the behaviour of a Christian. In fact some are futuristic in nature, one of which is its main role in the resurrection from mortal to immortality – and that hasn't happened yet. What we want to be assured of is what is discernable at this time. Can we know if we are guided or imbued by the attributes of the spirit? Is it possible to know the active presence of God's spirit in one's life? The question sounds tactless but a positive answer is imperative to ensure we are on the right track.

We will then explore other parts of scriptures and find some concrete manifestations of God's Spirit. By concrete, it means it cannot be faked and you can personally determine the results, and others will notice it as well.

Paul said: For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). In this passage Paul emphasized four (4) attributes of the spirit namely fearless, powerful, love and sound-mindedness. Since love is repeatedly pointed out in so many parts of the scriptures, let's just discuss the three (3) qualities that are equally important like those enumerated above. Accordingly, being imbued by God's spirit will help Christians to become fearless, powerful and sound-minded.

Why Fearless

Why are people afraid of earthquakes, floods, typhoons, famine, disease, and all kinds of calamities, natural or man-made – such as war, political upheavals, bank runs, governmental collapse, and even joblessness? One thing is certain; these events will result in dislocations, inconveniences, hardships and eventually death. Death is one fear everyone is confronted with as long as he lives. There is nothing more fearful than death. It is the sum of all fears.

If you are very wealthy, and you know nothing about God's plan of salvation (except the truth that everybody dies), you are most likely beset with apprehensions and fears. You don't know what will happen tomorrow. You are uncertain what will happen to your riches, where it will go, how it will be managed and or spent by the generation next to you. A good example can be deduced from the perspective of one of the wealthiest and wisest person of his time, King Solomon. (1 Kings 3:11-13).

Despite his lofty status, Solomon in several occasions show signs of anxiety, fear and desperation. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, a portion thereof reads: I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a

harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:8-11)

Then followed his sigh of frustration: So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:17-20)

Wise as he was, King Solomon doesn't seem to have a full grasp of God's plan for mankind. Had he known it, he would have understood that there are more things of value than what this world can offer like wealth, power and prestige – things that almost everyone work hard to achieve.

But a truly converted person who understands the messages of the Bible knows the beginning and the end. They are fully aware about God's plan for mankind; has full knowledge of the purpose of their existence, and the reasons why they're here on planet earth. Thus, he has the advantage over the rest – a great advantage at that! This knowledge alone will enable Christians to overcome the fear of what will happen in the future. And not everyone are privileged to understand except those whom God has endowed with the Holy Spirit.

Listen: However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:9-10)

For those who do not have the faintest idea of what exactly God's great plan for humanity, request for a free copy of the booklet titled “What is Your Destiny”.

So what kind of knowledge will produce the courage to face the reality of death?

The Resurrection

It is the assurance of a resurrection from mortal to immortality that neutralizes the fear of death. And this will happen when Jesus returns (1 Thes. 4:16). Definitely, there were recorded resurrections in the past, but those resurrected were merely granted an extension of their physical existence. A case in point is the son of the widow of Zarepath which was brought back to life by

Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24). Then you have Elisha who prayed and the child of the Shunammite woman lived again in 2 Kings 4:32-36. Lazarus of Bethany, a close friend of Jesus, was physically resurrected as well (John 11:14,17,43;12:1). And many rose from the dead at the exact moment Jesus breathe out His last (Mat. 27:50-53).

After sometime though, these people died. Their resurrection was only an extension of physical life. They died when their lifespan reached its limit. It was not a resurrection from mortal to immortality. Only Christ had the experience of being resurrected from mortal to immortality (1 Cor. 15:20-23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:18).

In contrast, the resurrection that the Bible referred to as a blessed resurrection (Rev. 20:6), is reserved for those who will make it into the Kingdom of God. It is a resurrection from mortal to immortality, from human to a spirit-composed beings who will become sons and daughters of God in His family (Romans 8:23; 1 Thes. 4:14-16; John. 5:25;1 Cor. 15:50-53). This is one of the most inspiring promises of God that will put fear away from the vocabulary of Christians.

“Die in Christ”

With all these assurances from the God to give His faithful followers eternal life (Mat. 19:28-29), Christians should be the least worried people if their physical existence grinds to a halt. Paul's inspired lines reads: Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (2 Cor.5:1-4, NIV)

What Paul's poetic language is saying is “this mortal physical existence of ours is going to be changed to one that will last for eternity”.

Thus, Christians owe it to themselves to stick it out with their calling, endure unto the end and remain a Christian until the last moment. It is the only guarantee that God's promise of eternal life shall find fulfilment. Paul wrote: Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him (2Tim. 2:11-12).

He reiterated: Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still

alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thes. 4:13-16). Take note that death and sleep in the Bible connote the same meaning and are used interchangeably by Christ (John 11:11,14).

God vowed to fulfil all this in return for our faithfulness. It is a solid guarantee from the One who created us. This is one priceless knowledge some of God's people may have taken for granted.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are consistent with their plans. They have the same perspective, disposition and principles (John 10:30). Fear therefore does not augur well with Christianity because God promised never to leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:6). He assured us that on His end, our calling is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).

Spirit of Power

“What are we in power for” sometimes becomes the basis for power holders to use and abuse. It is notable among those with political agenda. Whether openly or surreptitiously, they are likely influenced by this mindset. God has also granted power to his followers through the spirit, and its usage are solely directed to uphold His principles and to perform the task given to His people.

Before the day of Pentecost, Jesus appeared to the disciples. Forthwith, they asked Him when to restore the sovereignty of Israel. Jesus told them that the prerogative is not His but with God the Father, and they just have to wait. And He promised to give them power- the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim to the world the same message that He preached during His ministry (Acts 1:6-8). That message is the gospel about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14).

The spirit therefore is the elixir that propel God's people to actively perform their commitment and fulfil the commission Christ gave to them (Mat. 28:19; Mk.16:15-19; Luke 24:45). Today, the same source of power and inspiration is what drives God's people to continue the work that Jesus and the apostles started.

The Courage that Fizzled Out

Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus narrated to His disciples the sufferings He will undergo leading to His death. Peter and the rest of the disciples swore their willingness to stand by Jesus no matter what happens. Notice: Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three

times.” But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the disciples said the same. (Mat. 26:31-35)

Yet, not many hours from the time Peter and his colleagues swore their “undying allegiance”, Peter denied Jesus three times (Mat. 26; 69-74). And no mention is made where the rest of the disciples went. This incident happened prior to the Day of Pentecost - the day when God poured the Holy Spirit upon the disciples.

Fear therefore does not augur well with Christianity because God promised never to leave nor forsake us (**Heb. 13:6**).

He assured us that on His end, our calling is irrevocable (**Rom. 11:29**).

Later, as recorded in the book of Acts, Peter and company became bold, fearless and confrontational. Note the tone of their speeches before the crowd which undoubtedly some were part of those who demanded the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Christ (Luke 23:16-23). Notice: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” (Acts 2:36)

Likewise, the fearless manner with which they faced the religious leaders who tried to forbade them from preaching clearly proved that the power of the Holy Spirit was what inspired and moved them to openly declare their mission (Acts 4:13, 19, 23). The complete turn-around - from fearful to courageous, from being evasive to becoming outspoken - happened after being imbued with the Holy Spirit of God.

The Sound Mind

How does a sound mind work? It should be logical, coherent, practical, reasonable, and filled with common sense. Sound-mindedness has to be founded in the word of God. For example, how can we prove God's existence? Creation proves there is a Creator (Rom. 1:20). Why do we believe in creation? Obviously a superior power exist because there are things humans are incapable of creating. Some of them are extremely complicated for the human mind to fathom and digest. The human mind alone is an intricately designed human part. It requires a far more superior mind to design it. The law of biogenesis confirms that life can only come from life. Sound-mindedness is a basic tool to understand the unwritten portions of the scriptures. A mind influenced by the God's spirit will definitely result in true sound-mindedness. With the guidance of God's spirit, the

converted person will be able to weave relative scriptures and come up with a sound doctrine. We call it discernment- *judicial estimation* - (Heb. 5:14) - a discernment based on the word of God and influenced by God's spirit.

A sound-minded Christian who reads the Bible contextually will hardly find scriptural discrepancies. If he understands the main message of the Bible and not get side-tracked by peripheral issues, then the rest of the messages in this book will fall into its rightful place. It is unlikely a result of sound-mindedness to espouse ideas and propose concepts where the Bible does not have definite answers. There are things we cannot know yet at this time as Paul explained saying, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.” (1 Cor. 13:9-10)

One thing is certain. Like any other book, the Bible has a theme, one single theme from God to mankind. And that theme has everything to do with man's existence.

Christian Duties

With all the attributes of the spirit that are available to Christians, what are God's expectations from us?

We should no longer be cowered into submission before anything that endanger our connection with God. Paul wrote: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Rom. 8:35-37)

We should not hesitate to proclaim what we know about Him, what our stand is regarding Him, His laws, His statutes, His main message; and confess and not be ashamed of Him and the mission He gave us. (Mk. 8:38; Mat. 10:28; Luke 12:8)

Here are test questions: Are you bold with the truth? Or are your convictions unknown even among your close friends? Do you feel awkward, evasive or hesitant to talk about the things you observe - Sabbath, God's festivals, unclean food, etc.? Are you praying for the work if that's all you can contribute? Are you determined to endure until Jesus comes, or until the day you die? The answers are personally known to us; and we do not become a Christian and be secretive about what we are and what we stand for.

The Holy Spirit is our aide, our comforter, a power that can be relied upon to overcome fear, worries and anxieties, and to keep us sound-minded to always stay on the right track on our way towards the kingdom of God.

AG

Courage

By Ferdie S. Padilla

We admire people who are courageous. Many of us are all too familiar with the word “courage”. More often than not, we find them in mottos of military institutions. The PMA, for example includes courage besides integrity and loyalty as virtues it seeks to instill in would be officers of the armed services. What comes to mind when courage is mentioned is that this relates to one's conduct in face of danger or a fearful or unexpected situation. Soldiers are said to be courageous, when despite heavy enemy fire they would continue with whatever mission they were ordered to undertake. To others, courage is seen in how one deal with everyday life.

The Bible teaches about courage. And as such, it is also replete with courageous personalities. We have David who opposed a bigger foe; Gideon who lead 300 men to defeat an army bigger than they had; the friends of Daniel who refused the king's command to bow down to an idol despite the fact that they knew they would die if they failed to do so. Go to Hebrews 11, the so called faith chapter and you will also find that many of those mentioned here had also courage in their hearts. Many of them faced a threat to personal safety yet they did not waver in what they believed and stood for. They were not afraid of the possibility of dying.

For us Christians, today, we may not have to go through the difficulties experienced by the first century Christians to display this trait. We may not have to face governors or the powers that be and testify to them about our faith, to say that we are courageous. We may not be thrown into an arena together with wild beasts for courage to surface in our lives. Courage is no doubt displayed in these instances, and for this we admire the courage of the first century Christians. But theirs is an unenviable situation. Such difficulties would surely be very stressful and frightful. But it does bring out to the fore, this trait we call courage.

Having said that, we would now take a deeper look into how courage would surface in our daily Christian walk. How do you think courage is displayed in our daily lives? The answer is all of us do to some extent already display it in our daily conduct. It might not be as dramatic or eventful as the Bible record of its greatest personalities, but it is, nonetheless, still courage. Courage, whether “big” or “small”, is still courage. We read in 1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV) “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.”

These were part of Paul's final instructions in his first letter to the Corinthians. Be men of courage. Sounds a tall order doesn't it? But perhaps we can agree that the Bible certainly would not instruct us on something that is not doable in the first place. What we are saying is, it is possible to be courageous on a day-to-day basis.

Courage and Other Christian Values

Interestingly, courage can be partners with a lot of other Christian values. Courage is in itself already a great Christian value but it enhances other Christian values as well. Or sometimes, it transforms itself to another Christian value. And those are also instances when courage surfaces in our daily Christian walk. Here are some of them.

1. It takes courage to stand up for what we firmly believe in.

Case in point, we are very careful on observing the food laws and the Sabbath. We turn down, politely, of course, any offer to eat pork or shrimp or anything with unclean food mixed with it. At first, people who are not acquainted with this may be offended or worse, laugh at us. Or during job interviews, we already tell prospective employers about our observance of the Sabbaths. In both these instances, we already display courage. We don't mind people ridiculing us on what we eat or our observances of the Sabbaths. At this point, courage is not just courage. It becomes conviction. No matter what others say, we are not deterred at all. We have that courage to stand up for what we believe. If you come across people who are doing that, it will become a great source of encouragement for us. It will inspire us and strengthen us. Our own stories of courage, for all we know may also be a source of encouragement for others. This is good because we strengthen each other this way.

2. It takes courage not to get even with those who despise us and actually still be concerned with their well-being.

It takes courage to care for those who hate you, persecute you or insult you. When this happens, it becomes love. The Lord's command when we have people like this in our lives is found in Luke 6:27-28 (NIV)

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who

curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Do you think this is easy to do? Of course not. It would take a lot of willpower and courage to obey this command from the Lord. People might actually laugh at you if you even so much as try practicing it. The sad norm today is, if someone hates you, hate him back. It is alright. That's what they are saying: Why care for someone who doesn't care about you and why would you bless those who curse you and pray for those who insult you? To the human mind, it is logical. But Christ commands us to go against this norm. When you practice love in your daily lives, you're very courageous to go against the norm of human society and against your own emotions.

3. It takes courage to trust in someone you don't see but just the same believe He exists and believe what He has promised.

This is often very hard to do when everything else around you is not going right. Would you still believe God on His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us but what our eyes see seems contrary to this promise? What if your world as you know it comes crashing down? Would you maintain your belief in God? If you courageously still have this belief in Him, then, dear reader your courage becomes faith. As it is written in Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” You don't see God but deep in your heart you believe, not just in His existence, but more so Himself. You are certain He lives. He made a lot of astounding promises in His Word, the Bible, and we Christians who take His Word for it courageously live our lives according to His laws so that we may be able to obtain all His wonderful promises. It takes courage to obey someone you don't see. But that, dear reader is faith in action.

4. It takes courage to admit one is wrong.

The natural tendency of humans is never to admit one's mistakes. Pride is certainly attached to human nature. But the man who is courageous enough to face the reality that he has been wrong is more than courageous. He becomes humble. His courage becomes humility. Not so many are courageous in this regard. David is a good example of both a courageous and humble man. After he was rebuked when he sinned against God by committing adultery with Bathsheba, he was deeply remorseful of what he did. Study Psalm 51 and you will see one of the reasons why he was called a man after God's own heart. So when we do repent of our sins, we are actually not just being courageous to own up our mistakes, we are also humbling ourselves before God. And we can be sure of this, God will not despise us, as written in Psalms 51:17 (NIV) “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”

So, if we just practice some of these things daily (conviction in our beliefs, love, faith, humility), we are actually displaying courage. Courage need not be loud. More often than not, true courage is silent. It does not brag or boast just like one of the Christian values it seeks to enhance which is love.

Conclusion

Near the end of the last book of the Bible there is an interesting passage: Revelation 21:8 (NIV) “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” The cowardly, along with a host of others who are disobedient to the laws of God (for basically, that is what all the others mentioned here are) will not make it to the Kingdom of God! So just think of the implication if we do not have courage as we have discussed in this article. In the end, if we do not develop or display courage, along with other Christian values, we would be left out. And we do not want it to happen to us! That is why Paul exhorted us to be men and women of courage as we have read earlier.

It is hoped this exposition would make us think more about courage and its place in our Christian lives. A final verse for this article would make us look at courage in a new light. This could be found in John 16:33 (NIV) “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” In the KJV, this is translated as John 16:33 (KJV) “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The phrase “be of good cheer” is translated from the Greek word *tharseo* which means “to have courage” or “be of good cheer” as in the KJV translation. This is Christ Himself revealing not just the source of our courage but what courage is to us should be. In face of the many dangers this world throws at us, not just physical dangers but more so spiritual dangers, we should take heart, be courageous, be of good cheer, meaning, we can always smile at them and still be happy, serene and peaceful. We are confident we can overcome them. Why? Because our Lord and Master who supports and loves us, has overcome the world and He leads the way.

His courage is waiting to be emulated in our lives. Those who have the courage to try and do so will not be failed. They will surely be in the glorious Kingdom of God! So dear readers, let us all be courageous for our Father in heaven. **AG**

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