

# CHAPTER ONE

## WE NEED NOT LOSE HEART DESPITE...

### IS IT POSSIBLE NOT TO LOSE HEART?

Following the Lord Jesus is not without cost and sacrifice. For some dear ones, ill-health, emotional illness or personal struggles may be their lot throughout their pilgrimage on earth even though they may sincerely cry out in prayer to God for release.

When we are in such a plight in our Christian walk and others seek to encourage us, we may feel that they do not quite understand us and perhaps they cannot identify with us as they have not gone through similar difficulties.

The famous Christian evangelist and preacher Charles Spurgeon revealed the following in a sermon: “I am the subject of depression of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to”. It seems that discouragement is no respecter of persons whatever the spiritual status. Can it be possible for believers in such situations not to lose heart and not to feel like giving up?

In 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul penned the following:

*“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed.”*

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

*“...but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distress, in beatings, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger....”*

2 Corinthians 6: 4-5

In 2 Corinthians 1: 8, Paul revealed that he himself was “burdened excessively beyond his strength and despaired even of life”.

The apostle Paul not only had to endure severe physical hardship; he also had to encounter false workers, spiritual pressure from the evil one as well as anguish and pain arising from false accusations from those whom he loved and cared for greatly. In addition, Paul was concerned for his co-workers, the various churches of God and the preservation of the purity of the gospel.

Not many of us can claim to have gone through even a fraction of what Paul went through. But perhaps what is most astounding is that in the midst of undergoing all these pain, afflictions and struggles, including despairing of life itself, Paul wrote:

*“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart...”*

2 Corinthians 4: 1

*“Therefore, we do not lose heart, for though the outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day.”*

2 Corinthians 4: 16

Paul shared that there would be distresses, struggles, afflictions and even perplexity in faithful Christian service. However, what came through very distinctly at the same time is that even in the midst of all these difficulties, the believers need not lose heart but they can be of good courage. Yes, it is definitely possible not to be discouraged despite perplexing and difficult circumstances in Christian living and ministry!

The use of the word ‘Therefore’ in 2 Corinthians 4: 1 and 2 Corinthians 4: 16 help us to realise the reasons why we need not lose heart and they were written in the preceding verses. Paul used two words to crystallize the reasons why we do not lose heart. The words are ‘hope’ and ‘glory’. We shall examine them more closely in the next chapter.

Sufferings, pain and difficulties can cause us to be bitter, discouraged and angry against God. They can lead us to wallow in self-pity and to sink into passivity, indifference, apathy and unbelief. This is exactly what the evil one desires for God’s people.

God’s message to us is that we need not lose heart; we can be bold and courageous even in the midst of very trying circumstances. It is not as if the pain is not real; the tears shed are genuine tears and the hardship and distresses are not imaginary. “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14: 22(b))

Despite the pain, the tears, the agony and even the shedding of blood, we can be of good courage because of the ‘hope’ and ‘glory’ we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WE NEED NOT LOSE HEART BECAUSE...

We have noted the apostle Paul using two words ‘HOPE’ and ‘GLORY’ to explain why we do not lose heart even in the midst of tribulations. Let us look at these words in the verses Paul wrote.

*“Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech.”*

2 Corinthians 3: 12

*“...how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?”*

2 Corinthians 3: 8

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

2 Corinthians 3: 18

*“For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”*

2 Corinthians 4: 17

Appreciating deeply the ‘HOPE’ and ‘GLORY’ we have in Christ Jesus our Lord would enable us to always be of good courage and to triumph in the face of adversity. Let us now consider the ‘HOPE’ and ‘GLORY’ we have in the Lord.

## **HOPE AND GLORY OF RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL LIFE**

Many men, including great leaders and kings of the past, sought the “elixir of life” and hoped to be immortal and to live forever. Yet, all succumbed and death comes to all, great and small.

Only one man, the God-man, Jesus Christ, died, was buried, rose again and ascended to the right hand of God the Father, never to die again. This man was given the power to grant eternal life and the resurrection to all those who would believe in Him.

Jesus said to Martha in John 11: 25-26:

*“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

Those who believe in Jesus will live even if they die and those who live and believe in Him will never die. It is interesting that Jesus asked the question “Do you believe this?” Although it was directed at Martha, it is a question directed to all of us as well. Do we truly believe this in our lives? For if we do, we need not fear death because we will live even if we die. If we believe this, we know we have eternal life in Christ, for we will never die.

It is no wonder that Christian martyrs were not afraid of death and believers who have this hope have courage and boldness to face all adversity and tribulations in life because they know they will never die.

However, in many believers' lives, there is so much fear of death and despondency in sickness that we behave as if we are a people without any God and without any hope of resurrection. We live as if all that we have to hope for is in this world and life on earth. There is little consciousness of the spiritual and eternal.

The apostle Paul knew the implications if this hope proclaimed by the Lord Jesus were not true. If there was no resurrection of the dead in Christ, Paul wrote, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." (See 1 Corinthians 15:19) In the very next verse 20, Paul asserted: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep". Because Christ was the first fruit, those who believe in Him would follow Him in being resurrected from the dead. This hope Paul referred to is not vague or nebulous – it is so certain that he could declare that "for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain".

Together with the hope of resurrection and eternal life is the assurance that there will come a time when there will be no more sorrow, no more pain, no more tears, no more illness and no more death. With such a tremendous hope, in comparison, we need not be discouraged by temporary illness, temporary pain and sorrow. Hence Paul could declare confidently that "though the outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day". The resurrected body would be a glorious body, not affected by diseases or decay; a body not limited by current earthly restraints. It would be an imperishable body, raised in power, a spiritual body, an immortal body. bearing the image of the heavenly.

## **HOPE AND GLORY OF TRANSFORMATION**

Paul revealed in 2 Corinthians 3 that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is filled with more glory than the ministry of the Law, and the Spirit's principal ministry is the ministry of transformation. Believers are being transformed into the image of God, from glory to glory by the work of the Holy Spirit. God can make use of momentary light affliction to produce for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. When we marvel at the wondrous privilege of being transformed into the image of God and sharing in His glory, what is earthly suffering and pain in comparison? It cannot even be compared at all!

We who were wretched and in sin, destined for hell and destruction, are now not only transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light; but adopted as sons and daughters into God's family with Christ as our elder brother and God intends to transform us into His very image – what a glorious calling and what a great privilege we have in Christ! If all the affliction and tribulation we encounter as faithful believers here on earth are producing for us an eternal weight of glory in our transformation into the image of God, surely we need not lose heart and we know that it is all worthwhile in God's plan for us. Having such a glorious hope, we can be bold and we can rejoice. It is no wonder that Paul, in writing to the Philippian believers, with the prospect of an unjust trial awaiting him and the probability of impending death, could encourage them to rejoice always and he repeated this call in his epistle.

## HOPE AND GLORY AT THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is coming again – this is what every faithful believer is looking forward to.

*“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*

1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17

These are truly comforting and encouraging words for those who endure persecution, those who have to contend with ill-health, misunderstanding and hurt from loved ones and even fellow believers and those who grieve over the injustice and unfairness in this world.

*“For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at, among all who have believed – for our testimony to you was believed.”*

2 Thessalonians 1: 6-10



The Lord Jesus, when He comes again, will put right what is wrong and He will judge righteously. He would give relief to His suffering children and justice would be meted out accordingly.

The apostle John also wrote about the second coming.

*“Beloved, we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

1 John 3: 2-3

When the Lord Jesus comes again, He would complete the transformation process in our lives and we will be like Him. This is God’s assurance to us as we pursue sanctification in our lives. For those who sincerely seek to work out sanctification in their Christian walk and are discouraged by constant and repeated failures, they can be encouraged to know that the process is not over. Work is in progress and God would complete it when the Lord Jesus appears. In the meantime, let us not give up purifying ourselves and pursuing holiness as God enables. Our hope in this regard will not be disappointed.

However, we need to know that the process of transformation, although dependent on grace and God’s enabling, requires our cooperation with Him. It involves hard work, vigilance, discipline and endurance. James the apostle reminds us that without endurance, there is no maturity (James 1:4).

Transformation into the image of God takes place in

perseverance in daily living with God, in denying ourselves, even in the small and mundane issues of life. It is in seeking to give, forgive, serve and listen rather than to demand understanding, insist on our ways and be self-centered and critical of others. God moulds us and shapes us into His image as we surrender to Him and seek to please Him daily, even in the midst of pain, illness, suffering and perplexity. The truth is that God is more interested in our holiness and character than in our temporary comfort and illusory happiness.

Consider the words of the Lord Jesus Himself:

*“In my Father’s house are many dwelling places, if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”*

John 14:2-3

When Jesus comes again, He will receive all His children to Himself and will bring them to the dwelling places He has prepared for them in His Father’s house. On this earth, there is no permanent dwelling place. The Lord Jesus would bring us to our eternal glorious homes in His Father’s house. Those who have given up the comfort of homes, the presence of loved ones and the legitimate needs of daily living for the sake of the Lord can rest assured that Jesus is preparing a wonderful glorious eternal dwelling place for them.

And not only that – those who are faithful and those who persevere and endure for the Lord’s sake would receive their reward from the Master when He comes again.

*“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Matthew 5: 10-12

*“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work, which he has built on it, remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”*

1 Corinthians 3: 11-15

Reward for God’s faithful ones was mentioned both by the Lord Jesus and by Apostle Paul. According to the quality of the life and work of His servants, they will receive the reward from God accordingly. The Lord Jesus even stated that those who endure persecution, insult and false accusations for His sake can rejoice and be glad and this is primarily because their reward in heaven is great.

In the face of opposition and spiritual pressure, let us not lose heart. Instead, let us endure, persevere and rejoice with

gladness, for God who sees all things would reward us and truly the approval and reward from God is surely joyous, glorious and fully satisfying, filled with blessedness.

When the Lord Jesus comes again, He will make right what is wrong; He would execute judgment, establish justice, reward His faithful ones and receive them to Himself and their eternal home. He would complete their glorious transformation and make them worthy and holy to enter the heavenly kingdom (the new heaven and earth). What a hope! What a glory! Truly, with all those who love His appearing, we can cry out together, “Come Lord Jesus.” (see Revelation 22: 20(b)).

## CHAPTER THREE

### WE NEED NOT LOSE HEART PROVIDED...

When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness, many came to him to be baptized. Among those who came were many Pharisees and Sadducees.

*“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘we have Abraham for our father’, for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

Matthew 3: 7-10

We know that the Pharisees and Sadducees were the religious teachers and leaders among the Jews and yet their lives were filled with hypocrisy and unrighteousness. Their knowledge of scriptures did not result in the bearing of good fruit in their lives. John the Baptist had to rebuke them and to warn them to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

Here is also a warning to so-called believers today. We may think that we are followers of Christ because we ‘attend’ church regularly, we ‘involve’ ourselves in Christian activities; we are familiar with the Bible and the teachings therein and we identify ourselves as believers. But are our lives bearing fruit in keeping with true repentance?

The apostle Paul made some sober and startling statements in the epistle to the Ephesians.

*“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God came upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.”*

Ephesians 5: 5-6

## **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

If we are true believers, we are children of light; we need to walk in the light and not participate in the deeds of darkness. Our continual participation in the deeds of darkness and our continual walk in impurity and immorality may indicate that we are not truly God’s children; our lives are not bearing fruit in keeping with genuine repentance.

Paul did not mince his words. He made it clear that we know with certainty that those who continue to live in sin and pursue a life of unrighteousness have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Paul went on to emphasise that we should not be deceived with empty words. It does not matter if so-called spiritual leaders tell us that it is all right to have such a manner of life because God is love and God’s grace is always available. The wrath of God would surely come upon the sons of disobedience. Do not be deceived because it is not all right. God’s forgiveness and grace are available to those who are truly repentant even though they may be weak but those who persist in sin must not

take God's grace for granted. We need to know with certainty that a deliberate life of disobedience to God and a pursuit after unrighteousness continually as a way of life means that such ones have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God even though they claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. For such ones, they may think that they need not lose heart because they are acceptable to God but the scriptures warn them not to be deceived and the warning should not be taken lightly.

## **DO NOT BE DECEIVED**

The state of the spiritual health of Christians today is rather disturbing. The number of divorces among Christians is alarming, even more than that of non-Christians in many communities. Adultery, promiscuity and immoral practices, even among so-called leaders in churches and Christian organizations, are "disgraceful even to speak of...."(see Ephesians 5:12). The involvement of believers in pornography, covetousness, idolatry (including worshiping gods of materialism, addiction, worldly pleasures and the like) is rampant and taken as acceptable and as a norm by some Christians.

Paul's warning in Ephesians rings out loud and clear. Let us not be deceived by empty words and false assurances. The last book in the Bible, Revelation, in the last chapter states it unequivocally:

*"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons*

*and the murderer and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”*

Revelation 22: 14-15

Never ever take God’s grace for granted. We must not be presumptuous in our Christian life and service.

If we claim that we have found Jesus, are we still seeking Him and nurturing our relationship with Him continually, walking in the path of obedience and sanctification? When the Lord Jesus comes again, would we shrink back in shame? Would we hear the awful pronouncement from the lips of the Lord, “*I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*”? (Matthew 7: 23(b))



## CHAPTER FOUR

### WE NEED NOT LOSE HEART IF...

*“But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Mark 10: 43-45

*“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

Philippians 2: 5-8

### **CALLED TO BE SERVANTS OF GOD**

Christians lose heart in their Christian living and ministry because we forget that we are called to be servants of God, effectively bond-servants or slaves. We are exhorted to have the same attitude which was in Christ Jesus our Lord who emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant although He existed in the form of God. The Son of man came not to be

served but to serve and His followers are expected to do the same, for in God's scale of values, the way to greatness is servanthood and the leader must first learn to be a slave of all.

The apostle Paul knew what this meant and he often addressed himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ in many of his epistles.

Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus:

*“Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’? But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”*

Luke 17: 7-10

Notice that in the days of the New Testament, a slave is one without any rights. He is expected to serve and to obey and he does not expect to be thanked. He does not complain when his rights are put aside in favour of that of his master and after doing all things he is asked to do, he realizes that he has done only that which he ought to have done. He does not claim any credit or entitlement after doing his chores.

The problem is that Christians today do not mind being called servants or ministers of God; in fact, they consider it an honour but when it comes to being treated as servants, we feel

slighted, hurt and we demand our rights to be respected, appreciated and given some form of acknowledgement for our service. So we keep away from certain brethren or certain ministry because we feel we are taken for granted. When it comes to our relationship with God, who is rightfully our Master, we have a mentality and attitude of entitlement.

“I have been serving God faithfully all these years, why does God not bless me; why is it that God would not even grant me my simple prayer request?”

“Surely, I am entitled to some form of recognition; after all, I sacrificed so much for the ministry and for the people of God. It is so unfair!”

These comments may sound familiar to most of us. It is no wonder that we lose heart in Christian service and ministry. We are not truly prepared to be servants of God and we are not really willing to serve God and people with the attitude of a bondservant.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE SERVANTHOOD**

The true test of genuine Christian servanthood is when we seek not the approval of others but only the approval of one – God Himself. And in that process, we are prepared to be anonymous in our service and we no longer care for the significance of the task we are asked to fulfill as long as God is pleased. Faithfulness and obedience to God become our top priority; our sense of importance and our self-worth become secondary issues as long as God is honoured and glorified. The true servant rejoices when he hears the master proclaim, “Well done you good and faithful servant”, and he dares not claim any of the glory that rightly belongs to his Master.

Indeed the true servant of God is not concerned with the status and size of the role assigned to him. He does not measure his faithfulness by the number of people he leads or influences, and his sense of self-worth is not determined by the approval of those who are powerful and influential in society or in the Christian circle. His main preoccupation is to listen to the Master and to obey His instructions in the way of the servant. With such a stance and such an attitude, the servant of God need not lose heart even though he is sidelined and misunderstood by many, and he is prepared to endure much and to sacrifice much for the sake of the Master.

In the current Christian scene, much emphasis and attention is given to the size of the congregation or group one is leading; the list of endorsements and publicity one receives in ministry and the influence one exercises over various issues in society and Christian circles, though there is a place for such considerations. Are we departing from the true values and characteristics of Christian servanthood and are we indeed walking in the ways of the one true servant, our Master and Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed, are we truly servants of God or just plain Christian celebrities?

## **KEEPING WATCH OVER OUR HEARTS**

Another major reason why Christians lose heart in the midst of trying circumstances is the failure to keep watch over our heart.

*“Watch over your heart with all diligence,  
for from it flow the springs of life.”*

Proverbs 4: 23

Notice that we are to watch over our heart with all diligence. It is so very important that we cannot take it lightly; it requires all diligence, not letting up or letting go because the springs of life flow from the heart. If we are careless with our heart and we let it go astray, our lives would be adversely affected.

*“...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Matthew 6: 21

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

Matthew 6: 24

From the “sermon on the mount”, the Lord Jesus taught us very important principles about ensuring that our heart is right before God and we are to keep it in the right direction with the right focus and in a good state.

If our heart’s treasure is shifted from God’s glory to self-glory or self interests, then we can get easily discouraged in our Christian service when we are not acknowledged, recognised or honoured for all our efforts and sacrifice in ministry. We lose heart and do not wish to be involved any longer because our self and ego have been badly bruised.

If our heart becomes increasingly one with God’s heart, then God’s values become increasingly our values; God’s desires become our desires. If God hates sin, we cannot rationalize away sin in our lives, using spiritual excuses, and claim that our heart is still one with His. The treasure of our heart has changed – the heart has gone astray. It is no longer

what God desires but rather what we secretly desire, although we still use spiritual cliché and even scriptural verses to explain away why we do what we do. But God is not fooled; He sees clearly our heart.

*“In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, you will keep on hearing but will not perceive, for the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear. And they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and return, and I will heal them.”*

Matthew 13: 14-15

Notice that when the heart becomes dull, the eyes no longer see and the ears can scarcely hear even though what God declares is so lucid and clear; the heart has failed to understand.

We see how important it is to watch over our heart with all diligence; it is so easy for the heart to go astray and become dull and hardened. The treasure of the heart has changed, sometimes so slowly and so imperceptibly that we do not even notice a change and we still think that our heart is still in the same direction as God's. It explains how even so-called Christian leaders can continue to live in sin and yet maintain a large ministry, unaffected and unrepentant. It helps us understand why believers can compromise God's moral standards and yet excuse themselves and brand others as old-fashioned and critical when in fact, they are the ones storing up the wrath of God in their behaviour and lives.

When our heart is one with God's, we begin to see with God's eyes and appreciate things from God's point of view.

We evaluate situations, relationships and circumstances with God's scale of values; we no longer lose heart in discouragement and despair because we see beyond the visible, by faith, the spiritual realm and the eternal. We no longer walk by sight, but we walk by faith and like Paul, we can say,

*“Therefore from now on we recognise no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.”*

2 Corinthians 5: 16

It is possible to serve God according to the flesh, in our own ways, with our own strength and with our own wisdom; but God's work has to be done in God's way and with God's power and according to God's Spirit. The heart that is kept focused on Him, in oneness with Him, is the heart that is pleasing to Him and it is a heart that would not be easily discouraged in its service to God because if God is pleased, then all is well.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **WE CAN TAKE HEART AND BE COURAGEOUS**

We need not lose heart in the last days; instead we can take heart and be courageous and confident in God. Why is this so?

#### **GOD IS OUR GOD**

Surely it is because of the awesome and amazing revelation and appreciation that the triune God is our God and we are His children. The great “I am”, the almighty, unchanging everlasting triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is our God because we have been accepted in the beloved.

We have the wondrous privilege to call God ‘our Father’ and to come into the very holy presence of the Father through the blood and sacrifice of the Son. God is so majestic and holy that the average Israelite dared not even mention His name. Yet, the reality is that, if we believe in Jesus, we are the children of the great all knowing Creator and God of the universe.

In church history, believers, in different periods of time, tend to emphasise and focus on one person of the Godhead. For instance, some believers focused on the ministry and person of the Holy Spirit. Christians today become over familiar with the Son such that we forget that He is one person of the Godhead, God Himself. Over familiarity leads to the loss of reverential fear of the Son of God. Instead of praying to the Father, many believers pray to Jesus most of the time and the Father becomes so distant and almost forgotten in their



consciousness. This is also not helpful in our wholesome worship of God.

## **GOD IS THREE IN ONE**

The truth is that God is three persons in one and each person of the Godhead has a wonderful role and ministry in our lives. As we ponder over this, we can rejoice and grow in confidence and courage even though, for a short while, we may need to face tribulation, trial and suffering in this world.

## **GOD THE FATHER**

As we think of the Father, we picture Him sitting on the throne, sovereign and majestic

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

Romans 8: 28

In the “sermon on the mount”, we notice the many references to the Father by the Lord Jesus.

*“...so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*

Matthew 5: 45

*“Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Matthew 5: 48

*“So do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”*

Matthew 6: 8

*“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*

Matthew 6: 14

*“...so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who sees what is done in secret and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”*

Matthew 6: 18

We see references to the Father also in the epistles of the various apostles.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God.”*

2 Corinthians 1: 3-4

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

1 Peter 1: 3

As we look at these various passages, we see several aspects of the role and ministry of the heavenly Father.

He is the one who is our heavenly Father – to Him we make our petitions and prayers and He knows what we need even before we ask Him. He is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our afflictions. He provides for us our daily needs; He delivers us from evil; He forgives our transgressions and all power and glory belong to Him (see Matthew 6: 9-13 in the Lord’s prayer). He is the one who caused us to be born again.

He is perfect – perfect in all His ways; perfect in all His goodness, His sovereignty, His mercy, loving kindness, holiness and love. We can rest in these wonderful truths and because He is perfect, He does not make a mistake. He can overrule and undertake such that all things work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. God the Father works through the evil and negative intention of man and causes the outcome to be good for His people.

We see this wonderfully illustrated in the life of Joseph. He was sold into slavery by his brothers, wrongly accused by his master’s wife and imprisoned. Through a series of events, Joseph was elevated to be ruler of Egypt, next in power only to Pharaoh. Subsequently, when his brothers asked him for forgiveness, Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (Genesis 50: 19-20)

Joseph’s brothers’ intention was evil; the master’s wife’s motive was evil, but God worked through the evil to bring about good in Joseph’s life and in the lives of God’s people.

Being perfect, God the Father is completely faithful and reliable, unchanging and truly dependable in all His ways. Being holy, He would judge wrong doers and reward those who please

Him. Such indeed is our heavenly Father. As we encounter trials, we can rest in the sovereignty and goodness of the heavenly Father and we need not lose heart even though we do not fully understand all the issues involved.

## **JESUS THE SON**

The second person in the trinity is the Lord Jesus. He is risen and seated at the right hand of the Father, and from there, He is constantly interceding for us. He is our advocate before the Father, defending us and declaring us justified and righteous in Him.

*“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”*

Hebrews 4: 15

Jesus understands us and our struggles and He sympathises with us in our weaknesses. He knows what it means to be tempted and to be assailed by sin and the pull of the world. He identifies with us in all our struggles and pain. He is our mediator and He brings us back to God the Father.

Truly, we are blessed to have the Lord Jesus as our high priest who understands us in all our sufferings and tribulations. He prays for us from the throne of grace and comes to our aid in all our troubles. As we face adversity and distress, we can consider Him who has suffered so much on our behalf and we need not lose heart, for our sufferings cannot even be compared to what the Lord Jesus had endured for us on the cross. He knew what it meant to be wrongly accused; He experienced abandonment by those closest to Him; He bore the

misunderstanding and tauntings of His earthly brothers and fellow Jews; He was scourged; He was unjustly condemned and He bore our sins and the sins of the world on His shoulders at Calvary as He agonizingly cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me”? He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (see 2 Corinthians 5: 21).

Jesus knew we would have tribulations in this world. Yet He assures us, saying, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world, you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world”. Because He overcomes, we too can overcome in Him.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Lord Jesus requested the Father to send us the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is given to us as a pledge (see 2 Corinthians 5: 5), like a down payment or deposit – we were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance (see Ephesians 1: 13-14).

The seal and pledge assure us that our full inheritance in Christ Jesus is guaranteed personally by God Himself.

The third person of the Godhead is our helper, our teacher, our comforter and our guide. He brings to our remembrance all that Jesus had taught and He magnifies the Lord Jesus in His ministry (see John 14: 16-18, 26). He helps us in our weaknesses and He teaches us how to pray, interceding for us (see Romans 8: 26-27).

He strengthens us and gives life to our mortal bodies and

if we learn to walk by the Spirit consistently (in dependence on Him and in continual fellowship with Him), we would experience the victory in our Christian walk. We are not fighting against flesh and blood and our enemy is a formidable foe. However, by the Spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the flesh and by the Spirit's enabling, we can be more than conquerors through Him who loves us. We certainly need not lose heart in such a context.

The Holy Spirit is principally the one who does the work of transformation in our lives. As we depend on Him, cooperate with Him, even in the midst of pain and tribulation, we can grow in the Lord and experience the deep work of transformation in greater measure. In fact, God can and does use sufferings to help mould us in our Christian lives. All the help we need to overcome and to live godly lives comes from the Holy Spirit and all that we need to know and understand in our Christian walk is taught by the Spirit of God. As we look to Him, scriptures become alive and relevant to us and we begin to understand more the desires of God for us. He lives in us and He prompts us, enables us and strengthens us as we learn to listen to His voice and obey Him continually.

## **BLESSINGS OF BEING GOD'S CHILDREN**

The triune God is our God and we are His children!

*“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died,*

*yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ?..."*

Romans 8: 31-35(a)

Yes, indeed, we need not lose heart in the last days even though trials and tribulation may increase in intensity. Instead, we can take heart and be courageous and bold, growing in confidence in the Lord as we face eternity with hope and with deep assurance and conviction in the triune God.

Increasingly, perhaps, we can begin to identify more with the psalmist in Psalm 73, when he complained about the prosperity of the wicked and the apparent uselessness of keeping oneself pure, as he concluded,

*"Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth, My flesh and my heart may fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*

Psalm 73: 25-26

And, wonderfully, we can concur with the psalmist in Psalm 16 when he declared:

*"...In your presence is fullness of joy; In your right hand there are pleasures forever."*

Psalm 16:11(b)

The Lord, the triune God, is no killjoy. He, in His lovingkindness and goodness, desires the best for His people. The world and the evil one can only offer fake, unsatisfying

and destructive joy and pleasure that lead to death, physical and spiritual; but God, the triune and Holy one can and will offer to all those who cling to Him true, lasting and eternal fullness of joy and pleasures in Him.

To Him, the only wise God, belong all honour, glory and praise now and forevermore!