

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

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Joy and peace be unto you all from God and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. I sincerely hope that this article would prove to be a blessing to all who read it, especially those who are not Christians. And yes, without a doubt, this study also serves as a reminder to all who claim to be Christians, to examine themselves whether or not they are truly in the faith, if Christ truly lives in them or not. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

The majority of the people living in the Khasi hills consider themselves dishonourable if they are not part of the Christian community. On the surface, it does not seem necessary to teach our people about how to become a Christian but judging from the signs of the times unfolding in the Khasi hills, we find that there has never been a better time during which this subject has to be preached once again, even unto those who identify

themselves as Christians. O that my fellow Christian believers would take time to search their hearts!

Who are Christians? Most people take it that they are Christians merely from the fact that they were born into a Christian family, or that they are members of a Christian group, or because they happen to tie the knot with a Christian. Then there are those who consider themselves as Christians for the reason that they have fulfilled all the demands of religious rites and rituals. They reason that being a Christian means to attend services in a church, speak and pray as a Christian ought to, read and preach the Bible as a Christian should, or eat and drink and dress up like a Christian.

Is all this the accurate explanation of what a Christian is? I personally believe that this is a false concept. The Bible tells us that a Christian is one who is “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:13). Just because we are in the field of God, it does not necessarily mean that we are all His wheat; the Bible tells us that there are the tares also which will be gathered together and be burnt when the harvest season comes. Furthermore, the Bible does not tell us that we should seek

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a life partner from among the Christian community in order to be a Christian, nor does it tell us that we can become Christians by our good works or by imitating Christ. (Ephesians 2:8,9). Please note that it is not wrong to perform good works or to fulfil the demands of God's law (Romans 7:12). Good works and righteous deeds are but the image of a Christian but what makes a person a Christian is a new spirit and a new heart which God has promised to freely give to all who desires it. (Ezekiel 36:26).

So, what does it mean to be a Christian? To be a Christian means to be 'the Sons of God' (John 1:12). It means that "*Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*" "*to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.*" (Ephesians 3:16,17). To be a Christian means to be holy, righteous and perfect in the sight of God. (1 Peter 1:16; Romans 5:19; Matthew 5:48). Being a Christian means to know God and to fear God. (Hosea 6:6; Ecclesiastes 12:13). Being a Christian means to be Christlike in character, that is, to have "*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*" (Galatians 5:22,23). To be a Christian means to deny self, risk one's own life and follow Jesus Christ. (Luke 9:23; Luke 14:33; John 12:26). Christians possess everlasting life, and they are no longer under the yoke of condemnation but they are 'passed from death unto life'. (John 5:24). The privilege that Christians have is beyond our imaginations. It has been declared, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) There are many things that we can talk about a Christian, but I

believe that this is sufficient to show you the value of being a Christian.

Do you really need to become a Christian? Perhaps you may be thieves, drug addicts, alcoholics, mockers, licentious, corrupt, murderers, or maybe you are short-tempered, without love, spiteful, envious, proud and selfish. In other words, perhaps you have been considered an outcast, or perhaps you may even be the most decent people in the society, yet occasionally, you tell lies or act imprudently, smoke and consume alcohol, or you become angry and lose your temper. My brothers and sisters, regardless of whether or not you are "great sinner", the truth remains that you are ungodly and without God in your life. (Jude 1:15; Ephesians 2:12). You are separated from God and 'a servant of sin'. (Isaiah 59:2; John 8:34). You are devoid of life eternal and liberty, and what remains in you is nothing but death. (1 John 5:12; 2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 John 3:14; John 3:36). Therefore, you need to be reconciled to God and free yourself from the chain of sin. Christ truly longs to save you. No matter who you are, you can never save yourself; you need Christ. God calls you today to be His sons and daughters and He patiently waits for your response.

The foundation of the faith:

So how can you become a Christian? What are the conditions or the steps that you need to take? But before reading these steps the question is - From where then can you know the right steps? Paul in his letter to Timothy writes thus- "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the*

man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Without a doubt, steps to Christ can be known only from the Bible. We must believe the Bible as the word that perpetually speaks the truth (John 17:17) - all the teachings and doctrines about God and Jesus Christ that Christians have held on to for a long time as per the Bible only. It is the foundation upon which Christians have based their faith. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is the discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12). For one to believe in Christ, one has to *“hear the word of God”*. (Romans 10:17). For this reason, listen to the Bible, read the Bible, believe in the Bible, and obey the words of the Bible, and when you have done this, you will have a close connection with the Nucleus of the Bible – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In summing up the ways and means to become a Christian, I have presented here before you the important steps that a person needs to take in giving his life to Christ:

STEP NUMBER ONE:

The first step is to accept that you are a sinner and that you are lost without Christ. Do not be alarmed that you are a sinner and that your life is not pleasing in God’s eyes, for all of us are in this same condition. All of us have grieved God, all have sinned, and we have transgressed His holy law. The Bible says, *“There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone*

out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12).

The Bible tells us that this evil condition was brought about by one man. It is written, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.”* (Rom 5:12). Adam has separated himself from God because of his unbelief and disobedience, and the decision he made has affected us all who are his children for he is our representative and the father of the entire human race; and this life that is separated from God, Adam has handed it down from one generation to another through the natural law of inheritance, and this life is without the Spirit of God in the heart. Without a doubt, there is something lacking in our first birth. It is written, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”* (John 3:6). We cannot be otherwise apart from the flesh which possesses a *“carnal mind”* or *“sin that dwelleth”* in us to control us. (Romans 7:14,17; 8:7). It is because of this state that we are counted as sinners and unworthy in the kingdom of God.

But not only that, one day you and I will have to stand before the judgement seat of God to be judged. On that day, there will be but two groups, one that will be justified unto eternal life, and the other will be condemned to eternal death. Which side do you choose to cast your lot with? To the one group, Christ would say, *“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* But to the other group, He would say, *“Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”* (Matthew 24:34,41).

So, the question to you is – Do you know Jesus Christ? Without a relationship with Him, you will be without hope and wretched. Do not think that death will make you free and it will give you peace if you have rejected life that is being offered to you by God. Remember that you will be resurrected in the “*resurrection of damnation*” and you will not be able to escape from the judgement that awaits you. (John 5:29). Hence, look to the Lamb of God and be ye saved. (John 1:29)

STEP NUMBER TWO:

The next step is to know that God loves you with an everlasting love and He wants to save you even if it demands that He should give “*His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16). Know that God wants you to know Him, and that you can have a relationship with Him. He is your true Father and He desires to give you all His love and to give you the very best.

From the time you were in your mother’s womb till today, there has never been a day nor an hour when He has forgotten and forsaken you. He is the one who created you and sustains your life today. He is the one who has taken care of you and provided for your needs. It is He who admonishes you through your parents, your friends and through other people whom He has chosen. But the most wonderful thing of all is that God loves a sinner like you and I. He loves us who do not deserve to be loved; he has searched for us who deserve to be left unattended in sin; He has put His arms around us who are not worthy to be held by His loving arms; He is our hope when we are not deserving to receive hope and He has

saved us who are dead in sin. What a privilege it is that a sinner can receive eternal life and to once again have a living connection with the heavenly Father in whom is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever! (Matthew 6:13)

Know that it is the God of the Christians who have called you from a degenerate state and has brought you from sin to a place where you are now a child clothed in honour and glory. It is He who has worked in your heart from time to time to draw and lead you to the way of life and happiness. He has sustained your life even though you are not worthy to live, just so that you may come to the knowledge of the truth and choose Jesus Christ and therefore be able to partake of the joy of eternal life. (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:3-5). He has given you the precious Bible. And at the right time, He has handed you the message of salvation.

STEP NUMBER THREE:

The third step entails that you should repent from your sins. The Bible says, “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*”. (Acts 3:19). To repent means to grieve because of your sin and turn your back against it. Repentance should be made to God for we have sinned against Him and we have done that which is evil in His sight. (Acts 20:21; Psalms 51:4). All of us are under God’s government and once we transgress His laws, we commit sin. Have you spent time to ponder on the sins that have wounded God? If you have not done this, it is time that you do so.

Ask yourself, “Is my life well-pleasing in God’s eyes?” Think about your life and at the same time behold the great and marvellous love of God that is manifested

in the life of Christ, especially, on mount Calvary, where His beloved Son was hanged on the cross for your sins. Ask yourself, “Is not my sin so great that it demands the blood of the Son of God to reconcile me to God?” The death and suffering of Christ on the cross did not make God to love us but God gave His Son because He loves us. If God does not love you, do you think that He would risk sending Jesus to this world? You may feel that He does not love you but the truth is that He loves you and He wants to save you. Do you not feel any remorse for hurting the One who has loved you with an everlasting love?

We may feel sorry that we have somehow committed a wrong act but it is only ‘godly sorrow’ that leads to true repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10). Without the desire to change, the sorrow for sin is only an excuse and it is utterly empty. The Lord isn’t interested in hearing how sorry you are! But the Lord loves to know what you will do with that sorrow. This is what the Lord wants to know and hear from you. This is what the Lord is waiting from you. Yes! We ought to feel sorry when we hurt others, especially, when we hurt the Lord our God. But sorrow alone is not enough. We need to get to the point where we will stop hurting and injuring our God and those around us. Request God to help you forsake the sins forever. Choose now to turn away from them and He will give you the power that you need. Do not regret to take this step. The life that God promises you is filled with the peace and happiness that is beyond our imagination.

STEP NUMBER FOUR:

The fourth step that you need to take is to come to Christ just as you are, sinful and helpless. Many individuals reason that they should first become better people before they can come to Jesus Christ. It is in this point that many make the mistake, and because of this, they miss out on the help that Christ is willing to give them. They think that they can never come to Christ without first repenting. This is how they make repentance as an obstacle that gets in the way between them and Christ.

The question is, do you look forward to forsake your sins and to become better by your own efforts? “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil?*” (Jeremiah 13:23). If you try to do good by your own efforts, you will eventually end up in defeat and hopelessness. You cannot do anything on your own. There is but one hope for you and that is, that you come to Christ just as you are and to receive Him into your heart.

It does not matter how great a sinner you are, Jesus loves you and He invites you. He says, “*Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” “*Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*” (Matthew 11:28; John 6:37). It is only in Christ that we can receive the power to repent. (Acts 5:31) He goes on to say, “*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*” (Luke 5:32). Paul also states, “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Jesus emphatically states that you do not need to be counted worthy to come to

Him. So then, if you see yourself as the greatest sinner, do not lose hope, but rejoice and be glad for it is for your sake that Christ came to this world. And at the same time, go to Him with a broken and a contrite spirit and He will heal you. Those who need the Saviour are the ones who cannot save themselves. You who are poor and empty in the spirit, do not delay to go to Christ as long as the doors of heaven are still opened for you.

STEP NUMBER FIVE:

Another important step involves receiving Christ in your heart. The Bible says, "*But as many as receive Him (Jesus Christ), to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name.*" (John 1:12). To receive Christ means to believe in His name or in His authority. It is written, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:7-12).

To receive Christ means to accept that He is the true Son of God and who possesses divinity. (2 John 3; Colossians 2:9). And when you come to Him, you also have to accept Him as your Saviour, Redeemer, Comforter, Mediator and divine Shepherd. You have to receive Him as the 'last Adam' or as your Father and your new Representative, and that He is your life and your righteousness. (1 Corinthians 15:45). Apart from these, you also need to receive Him in your heart so that He can live within you and He will work in you both to will and to do God's good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13). But you may ask, how can I receive Jesus? It is by faith. The Bible says, "*Christ may dwell in your hearts*

by faith." (Ephesians 3:17) By the hands you receive the gifts bestowed unto you by your parents, even so by faith you must receive the grace of God. (Mark 11:24)

If you are not willing to completely surrender yourself to Christ, your life, though it may be acceptable in the eyes of men, is not acceptable in the eyes of God. May you, therefore, humble yourself in the sight of God, and implore Him to forgive you of your sins and to create a new heart within you, and He will give you the Spirit of His Son. (1 Peter 5:6; Psalms 51:2,10; Galatians 4:6). Surrender yourself unto Him with all your heart, thoughts and your body and trust that He will take good care of that which you have surrendered unto Him. Turn away from your "idols" and live to fulfil the only purpose which is to be a servant of the living God. (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Tell Him that you are willing to accept Jesus Christ and become His follower. Once you take this step, you will no longer be in Adam but in Christ. In Christ, you will be a new creature or a born again of the Spirit, for the "*old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" (Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ, there will no longer be anymore condemnation instead you will find righteousness, and sanctification and redemption and eternal life. (1 Corinthians 1:30). In Christ you will be blessed.

STEP NUMBER SIX:

Last but not the least, you have to remain steadfast in Christ. Jesus says, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.*" (John 15:5). Even

as the branch extracts water from the vine so that it can stay alive, even so, in order to remain in Christ, it means to keep on receiving His Spirit without ceasing; it means to be connected and joined to Him on a daily basis through the complete surrender of self and self-denial that comes from the heart. Without abiding in Him, you can never expect to grow as a true Christian.

Choosing to be a Christian is not a choice and a decision that should last only for a day, but it is meant to last a lifetime. If you are willing to accept Christ, you also have to be willing to accept Him all the days of your life. You ought to be willing to surrender all to Him and to follow Him for all eternity. Do you wish to choose Him forever? Christ is willing to dwell in you through all eternity. He says, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* *“Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20) On that day *“I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* (John 14:3) O where can we find such a Saviour as Christ! My dear friends, take this step as well and do not cease to believe in this, *“that He which have begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6)

DO NOT DELAY:

My brothers and sisters the word of God says, *“Choose you THIS DAY whom ye will serve”, “TODAY if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts”, “behold,*

NOW is the day of salvation”. (Joshua 24:15; Hebrews 3:15; 2 Corinthians 6:2). Do you see that Jesus wants to save you at this very moment and He is only waiting for you? Therefore, do not delay to accept Him. Why should you die because of your negligence? There is a great danger if we delay to come to Christ. Let it be NOW and not tomorrow. Come to Him now, and do not wait till you repent or till you have become perfect; come just as you are. Seek and look for salvation on this very day, hour, and second! Certainly, you can look for it right now if you believe that it is by faith. It is by these signs that you can be sure whether you seek it by faith or by works. If it is by works, you would wish to do something first before you can be justified and sanctified. If you think that you have to be a certain way or do certain things before salvation can be attained, then you are seeking salvation through works even to this day. But if you look at it by faith, you can behold it just as you are, even at this very moment. Therefore, it is important that you know that there is an inseparable connection between these three things – expecting salvation by faith; expecting it as you are; and expecting it right now. To deny one of them, is to deny them all; to accept one, is to accept them all. So, if you seek for it just as you are, then go to Christ now as a poor sinner who does not have anything to offer. Christ is ready, and He is all you want. He is waiting for you: He stands at the door of your heart!

A PARALLEL OF GETHSEMANE

Reuben Warjri



The Coronavirus outbreak, the latest in the series of global pandemics in the history of mankind, has struck fear in the hearts of the people around the world. Untold millions are frantically devising and adopting ways and means to “protect” themselves and their loved ones from the disease. Simultaneously, while a team of medical experts are racing to discover a solution to this global crisis that has not only claimed many lives but has also sent global markets plunging to historical lows, governments around the world are grappling to contain a more contagious disease that is spreading faster than the virus itself - fear. But in the midst of all this frenzy and pandemonium-like situation that has gripped the nations of the earth, many, including Christians, around the world do not realise that the solution to this problem already exists. I am not referring to the tall claims made by certain individuals who say that they have come up with a proven remedy for the flu

(perhaps there may never even be a conceivable solution to this problem). However, I am referring to the ultimate solution of all our problems, physical as well as spiritual, the great Physician, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The reason I want to direct our attention to this man is because He has proven, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that no infectious disease can or will be able to overpower Him. We are told in the Bible how people of all ages live under the shadow of a disease. No one wishes to be infected by it and if there is anyone who contracts the disease, family, friend and foe alike can do nothing to help. By now you would have guessed that I am talking about leprosy. If this is what you are guessing, you are wrong because the disease in question is not physical but spiritual; it is one of FEAR and ANXIETY. I am not saying that there was never a time that Jesus was never struck by fear or anxiety. I would be a fool to even think this because all His life He was filled with concern for His loved ones. He was anxious that His disciples were too slow to learn. The most trying moments of His life were the hours leading up to His arrest and as He hung on the cross, bereft of the very presence of God. Those were the

times when we witnessed just how much He was tortured by fear and anxiety. His very own words and action clearly reveal the true state of mind that He was in.

“And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be very sorrowful and heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass over Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:37-39)

No one can associate this kind of a behaviour with someone who is not subjected by fear. Notwithstanding this, Jesus was never overcome by these things. What was the secret to His victory? What is the difference between Christ and the rest of humanity? Well some may say that even as a man He was divine and this was what aided Him in His struggle against the difficulties He encountered. But if it were possible for Him to rely solely on His divinity to sail Him through the storms of life, what need was there for Him to wait on the Father to send the gift of the Spirit on His baptism which enabled Him to bring relief to those who were in pain and sickness? The mistake that most Christians make concerning Christ is that they

misattribute the reason for the miracles He performed and the battles He won. It is most commonly believed that Christ had in Him the all-powerful nature of divinity. However, Christ did not possess the attributes of divinity, namely, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. He was a divine being devoid of divine powers. Hence, the secret to his victory does not lie solely on His divinity but rather His faith in God.

The faith of Christ is witnessed in His total submission to the will of God. One such example is His custom to spend long hours in communion with God through prayer and supplication. In fact, He would often go out of the way to seek God's face. The following verse testifies to this truth.

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

Realising just how vital prayer is in His walk with God and as an essential factor in strengthening His faith, Christ shrank not from this practice. It is also worthy to note that, the more He was weighed down by trials and difficulties, the more earnestly He spent time in prayer. This was exactly the case in

the scene that transpired in the garden of Gethsemane.

“And being in agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:44)

The life of Christ, as can be seen in the above passage, is self-evidently clear that He relied fully on the One who sent Him to sustain Him and be of comfort in times of distress and agony. While God did not grant the request that His Son made to be shielded from the coming ordeal, He gave His Son what He needed the most - comfort and strength - to prepare Him for what was to come. The Saviour of the world stood up from the hour of prayer a man ready to face whatever the enemy of souls had to throw at Him. The change of perception on the coming crisis could be seen in the way He responded to Peter's act of cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant.

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? (John 18:10,11)

The total change in Christ's attitude towards the impending trial speaks volumes of His trust in God. Nevertheless, the agonising hours spent in the garden of Gethsemane were but “the beginning of sorrows” for Jesus. Not long after He had concluded His prayer that He found Himself being betrayed by one of the twelve, disserted by those whom He called His own, (except for John who followed Him till the scene on Calvary concluded). He was then delivered in the hands of His enemies who made sure that He was thoroughly persecuted and be subjected to the most ignominious and humiliating death known to man at the time. He endured the scorns and jibes of men He came to redeem. The anger of the world was wholly directed at Him. If that was not enough trial to bear, during the most trying episode of His life, He was forsaken by His own God and Father! One can only imagine what it was like for Jesus to go through that terrible ordeal. Yet, in spite of all this, Christ had a strong faith in God and rather than choosing to fall prey to the temptations of the Devil to end the struggle and come down from the cross or find ways and means of escape, He chose to stay in the course and committed His life to God by openly declaring with a loud voice, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23:46). A confirmation of His victory came on the day of His resurrection.

The thing that sets Christ apart from the rest of humanity is the close connection He had with the Father. This connection was so special and so close that it did not depend on the situation He was in. In good and in bad times, Jesus never failed to seek His Father's face. As a consequence, Christ came out victorious and even fear, anxiety and death could not overcome Him.

What about us today? Do we not find ourselves in a similar situation that Christ found Himself in? A careful examination of the closing scenes of Christ's ministry here on earth resembles the situation that humanity faces at this point in time. Take a look at the following statement made by Christ concerning the scenes in the last days and compare it with the current situation.

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” (Matthew 24:6-8)

Is it not true that because of this pandemic, the world is staring down the barrel of another more severe

crisis of famine and food shortage that has the potential of leaving many people dying of hunger? Do we not hear of tensions between the major world powers heating up? And amid the pandemic, do we not witness major natural calamities making their presence felt across the globe? Also, I cannot help but see it all too vividly that the present crisis brings us directly to the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the mark of the beast as told in Revelation 13. Hence, I have every reason to believe that the words in the above passage point particularly to this time of earth's history. What is more alarming to see is that most, if not all, of the events listed by Christ are occurring simultaneously. And yet, according to this passage, these are but the “beginning of sorrows.” In other words, the worse is yet to come. The world is now preparing for what is going to be final battle between Satan and his agents on one side and Christ and his people on the other. Things will continue to get worse for everyone, especially for God's people. This is evinced by the words that we find in the very next verse, verse 9.

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake.” (Matthew 24:9)

This period of earth's history dubbed as the "beginning of sorrows" will be followed by the period of the "great tribulation" which is the worldwide persecution of God's church. Concerning this period, Jesus once again took the liberty to warn us of just how bad the situation will be for God's people when it finally arrives.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there would no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:21,22)

It is during this time that Christians will have to endure a humiliating and an ignominious death. Interestingly, Jesus also made mention of the fact that what accompanies this period of "great tribulation" is the betrayal of God's true people. As per the words of Christ in Matthew 24:10, He has explicitly mentioned that the betrayal is the result that many will "be offended".

*"And then shall many **be offended**, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." (Matthew 24:10)*

The meaning of the word, "offended" can be better understood

from the warning that Jesus gave to His disciples before He made His way with them to the garden of Gethsemane where He spent time earnestly praying for deliverance.

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered." (Matthew 26:31)

The New American Standard Bible renders the word "offended" in the above verse as "fall away."

*"Then Jesus said unto them, "You will **fall way** because of Me this night, for it is written, I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED." (Matthew 26:31, NASV)*

In other words, when the King James Version (KJV) uses the word "offended", it goes to show that this is actually an old way of saying that there will be a departing from the faith. The words in block letters in the NASV, reveal that the "falling away" was immediately followed by the scattering of "THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK". Both the KJV and the NASV are in agreement with this. There is no disputing the fact that the ones who were offended were the disciples themselves – the people who claimed to be followers

of THE TRUTH, which is JESUS CHRIST. Therefore, it stands to reason that when Jesus said in Matthew 24:10 that many shall “be offended and betray one another”, He actually meant to say that there will be a falling away from the faith from within the family of God’s church on account of the persecution that is raging all around them. Speaking of the last days, Paul also makes mention of men departing from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1) and in his letter to the Thessalonians, he also reveals that the second coming will be preceded by the falling away from the truth.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

In the interest of preserving their own lives, those who abandon God’s people will eventually betray those who remain true and loyal to the truth and they will, like Peter, deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Concerning such individuals, the Bible

emphatically states that they are the ones who have only a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. What is more interesting is that, Paul made this statement in connection with the “*perilous times*” of the last days.

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but **denying the power thereof;** from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

In light of these eye-opening statements made by the Saviour concerning the last day events and how these bear a close resemblance to the trial faced by Christ in the closing hours of His ministry here on earth, I take this opportunity to warn our readers that the real danger is actually in the future. Let us not be misled or fooled by the rhetoric made by “false Christs” and “false prophets” who paint a very deceptive picture of the future, one that is bright and promising. The aim of the arch enemy of souls is to

keep you and me from staying awake and be vigilant soldiers of Christ. Let us not make the same mistakes that the disciples in general, and Peter in particular, made in not heeding the words of Jesus to watch and pray lest they fell into temptation. In fact, after Christ warned them that they would “be offended” because of Him, Peter and all the disciples vehemently and confidently boasted of how they would remain loyal to His Saviour even to the point of death. However, when the real test came, they all found themselves unable to meet the trial and denied the Lord because of their unbelief. This was the result of the disciples placing so much of confidence on themselves. They did not realise that the real danger was actually lying ahead. What developed from the disciples’ actions or inactions was that they were quick to flee from the scene of the battle. Hence, let us not place our confidence on ourselves or on any scheme or proposal of man, but let us steadfastly take hold on the promises of God’s word that He will see us through the trying circumstances in life.

It is an undeniable fact that when we are seeing the current situation for what it really is, we, being humans, tend to shrink from facing the coming crises that are brewing in the horizon. But we are not alone in this. Take comfort in knowing

that we have a Saviour who had once gone through a similar experience we are now going through. It is all the more encouraging to know that we have a Saviour who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

“For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18)

As the danger was not in the garden of Gethsemane but what came after the scene in that peaceful garden, even so, for as long as we are in this peaceful period, our “garden of Gethsemane”, let us, like Christ, get down on our knees and pray to the Lord for strength and comfort to be able to meet the challenges ahead. Rather than wasting our time in vain pursuits and looking for ways and means to pacify the storm that is raging within and without by fooling ourselves that the end is still far away or by having a false assurance that a solution will soon be found, instead let us fix our eyes on Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The battle against fear has been overcome by the Saviour two thousand years ago in Gethsemane. Our part is to have faith and claim that victory as ours. But this is possible only if Christ lives in us. Because of the indwelling of Christ in the soul, a believer is spared from the fear that now grips many people

of the world today. There is in this relationship a stronger and closer connection that binds humanity to God than the relationship that binds brothers and sisters by blood. I therefore admonish you to receive this life and experience the peace that surpasses all understanding.

The Heralds of Truth is one of Christ In You Ministries' endeavours to restore the truths that have been lost and trampled to the ground. We hope that by this avenue, we can motivate our readers to search for truth as for hidden treasures. This newsletter is published on a monthly basis and it is free of cost for anyone who desires to acquire it.

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