# VOICE OF PENTECOST

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## The Star Of Bethlehem

**"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him" (Matt 2:1,2).**

**One day, about 2000 years ago, Jesus was born in this world. He came in unannounced. Secretly and silently God entered the world of man. The Desire of all nations was born obscure and unregarded. No one knew the exact location of His birth. That was when the wise men saw the famous star of Bethlehem. Historians tell us they might have been philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They lived chiefly in Persia and Arabia. They were the learned men of the Eastern nations, devoted to astronomy, to religion and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counsellors, and followed the camps in war to give advice. These experts in the studies of the stars looked at the star of Bethlehem. They immediately sensed something extraordinary about this star and began to follow it. That was the best decision of their life. It led them to Christ.**

**Among the ancients, the appearance of a new star or comet was regarded as an omen of some remarkable event. Many such appearances are recorded by the Roman historians at the birth or death of distinguished men. It is said that at the death of Julius Caesar a comet appeared in the heavens and shone seven days. Many years prior to the birth of Christ, Balaam had prophesied about the Star of Jacob in connection with the birth of the Messiah. *"There shall come a Star out of Jacob..."* (Num 24:17).**

**Various scientific explanations and conjectures have been offered to account for the star of Bethlehem. It would be absurd to imagine it was a literal star in the sky. Stars are vast bodies fixed in the skies. They might have had their use in navigation because their position relative to other stars was always kept; but, being fixed stars, they could not be sent to guide the wise men. In Bible times, certain ``restless'' night lights were noticed in the sky. They did not keep their position but changed night after night, moving slowly. So these were not kept on standard star charts. They looked like stars, but, behaved differently. These were actually planets. The Greek word for planet is *planetes* and means ``wanderer.'' So the star of Bethlehem was surely not a wandering star as it was guiding the wise men along a definite course. Some say that the star of Bethlehem was a comet or rather a meteor as it was hovering in the lower regions of the air. Others guess it might have been a conjunction of planets. But the course of this star was highly irregular in contrast with the course of planets. It went before the wise men, leading them from Jerusalem to the actual place where Jesus was born (vs9). Then it stopped. In fact, it was so unusual that it can only be accounted for as a miracle.**

**The star that guided the wise men was obviously of divine origin. It had a specific purpose—to lead the wise men to Jesus. Years later, it would again be divine light that**

**Saul would see before being led to Jesus. Thirty years after His birth, Jesus was ready to appear to mankind. This time He would enter in announced. The time had come for many to follow the footsteps of the wise men to Jesus. They had to seek and find their Messiah. So another guiding star, a divinely ordained light, had to lead them to Him. This light was John the Baptist. He was compared to a burning and shining light (Jn 5:35). He was not that greater Light, the Messiah Himself Who was the Sun of righteousness; rather, he was the forerunner of that Light. Yet, he was a burning light—which speaks of the zeal with which he ministered and executed His message. His passion for the honour of God and His zeal against all sin and profaneness cost him his life. Herod Antipas killed this messenger of God. John was also a shining light—this speaks of his consecration. He preached repentance towards God and remission of sins and was the means of guiding the feet of many in the way of peace. We are now in the 21st century. Many are still lost in darkness without the light of Christ. They cannot find Him unless there are guiding stars that lead them to Him. Scripture refers to those who lead people to righteousness as stars. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan 12:3).**

**They have to follow this divinely appointed light. Dear friend, you are that light. Even as you read these words, understand that you are called to shine for Jesus. You are called like John the Baptist to be a burning and shining light. The word ``light'' in John 5:35 must properly be translated Lamp. John was a burning and shining lamp. This metaphor was borrowed from the ordinary custom of the Jews, who termed their eminent doctors the lamps of Israel. Their motto was "In serving others, I myself am destroyed". A lighted candle is a proper emblem of a minister of God. As it gives light, it loses its own life. Those who preach the Gospel faithfully will lose their lives by pouring it out in the service of Christ. St.Paul said, ``So then death worketh in us, but life in you'' (II Cor 4:12). Those who save their lives will never shine or burn and thereby just be an artificial Christmas light.**

**Only if we become lights like John can we become guiding stars for the people. Jesus said we are the lights of the world. "Ye are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:14,16). St.Paul said that we must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse people (Phil 2:15).**

**But as we prepare to take up the torch of truth, let us watch out for the fingerprints of Herod, the enemy of Christ. Satan who animated Herod and drove him to kill John is working mightily in these last days to extinguish the Light of Christ in us and destroy the ministry of guiding stars who lead people to Him. The world is enveloped by terrible moral and spiritual darkness. Atheism is spreading and destroying the faith of many. In the Western world many atheists are turning into antitheists. They are not simply unbelievers; they are God-haters. They are passionately evangelizing people away from God. They are influencing many young people and turning them into rebels against the truth. This is why we need to arise and shine for Jesus and lead people to the Saviour.**

**Let us hold on to the promise ``Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising'' (Isa 60:1-3). As we faithfully declare the truth and live according to it, God will bring souls to the light. Guiding stars, shine, therefore, for Jesus like the star of Bethlehem! o**

## "Call Unto Me And I Will Answer Thee"

**``Call unto Me, and I will answer thee'', says the Lord (Jer 33:3). This is one of the exceeding great and precious promises given to us, whereby we might be partakers of the divine nature. Calling unto the King of kings and the Lord of lords is a great privilege given to the children of God. The call or cry comes only from the heart of the contrite ones. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The expectation of God from His elect is that they cry or call day and night unto Him. They must keep calling without fainting. Jesus explained this with a parable in Luke Ch.18. There are many things of heaven which we do not know. But God will show great and mighty things to him who calls upon God (Jer 33:3).**

**"Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: Thou saidst, Fear not" (Lam 3:57). Our God wants to draw near to those who are calling Him. It is opined that in the Bible nearly three hundred and sixty six times we are exhorted not to fear. Every day of the year, this wonderful promise is given to the children of God. Though the whole world is full of fears, because of the increase in sins, our Lord is delivering us from all kinds of fear ``I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears'' (Psa 34:4). So we must call upon our God in order to be delivered from all our fears. Fear of death, fear of sickness, fear of the future, fear of sin, etc. are tormenting people day and night. But if you call unto Him He will come near you with the promise "Fear not".**

**When the children of Israel called unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them. A child of God always has a deliverer. Whenever we call unto the Lord for deliverance, our Deliverer who is mighty, shall come out of Zion and shall save us from our enemies. Moses who was sent to the Israelites as a deliverer to deliver them from Egypt, is a shadow of our Deliverer, Jesus Who delivers us from all our troubles. So we must call unto God for deliverance just as the Israelites called and were delivered. "In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou wilt answer me" (Psa 86:7). Dear child of God, are you ensnared or in some difficulty? Call upon God. He will answer you no matter what your circumstance; He is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:27). "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Psa 145:18).**

**``Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them" (Psa 99:6). Moses and Aaron together called upon the Lord many times and got the answer. When the children**

**of Israel were followed by the Egyptians after their deliverance from Egypt, they were afraid and they murmured against God and Moses. Moses called upon the Lord at that time and God answered him saying, "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exo 14:15). So all Israel relied on that word of God ``Go forward'' which He sent in answer to the call of Moses, and crossed the Red Sea. Dear reader, God has appointed leaders so that they might call unto God for us and help us be delivered from all our difficult situations. Once Samuel made all Israel gather together in Mizpeh. And when the Philistines heard of that, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. The children of Israel were afraid and said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." ``Samuel offered a sucking lamb for a burnt offering unto the Lord and cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him...and discomfited the Philistines, and they were smitten before Israel (I Sam 7:7-11). ``Philistines'' shows the flesh and its works; and by calling unto the Lord we can overcome it. ``For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him'' (Rom 10:12).**

**David was a servant of God who had many enemies. One day he sang about his victories over his enemies—how the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul (II Sam 22; Psa 18). He said: "I will call upon the Lord Who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." Dear reader, are you being tormented or afflicted by your enemies within and without? Are you always in fear, seeing your enemies? Here is the way of escape: Call unto Him, He will answer you. His eyes shall be open and His ears attentive to the prayer made by you. Do not be discouraged. Do not go away from the living God; He is of tender mercies—to hear and answer you. True, we have many enemies, but the God of victory will one day give us victory over all our enemies. Do not cease to call upon your God.**

**God says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me'' (Psa 50:15). Jonah was sailing to Tarshish when there blew a great wind and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken. The mariners were afraid, and each man cried unto his god. The shipmaster came to Jonah who was sleeping and said, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not" (Jonah 1:6). Then they all called upon the Lord and He answered at once. Dear brother, are you in trouble or in the midst of some danger, tossed by various winds? "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" says the Lord.**

**Samson was fighting the battle of God against the Philistines. But at one time he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, "Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?'' God split open the hollow place that was at Lehi (Amp.), and water came out, of it and when he drank, he revived (Judg 15:18,19). So if you call upon God, He will do a miracle for you as He did for Samson. With God nothing is impossible; but we have to call unto Him day and night.**

**We are the people chosen of God to call upon Him day and night (Lk 18:7). Our loving Lord is not expecting great things from us, but that we call upon on Him always.**

**Our Jesus has finished all things for us on the cross. So we should call upon Him, and receive all blessings. Heaven is open at all times to hear our voice and to send down the answer. So call upon Him in all your circumstances. God is saying to you, "Call unto Me and I will answer thee." o**

## O! the Riches of His Grace

**Proverbs 30:22,23 portrays people placed in unusual situations. The earth is disquieted by these, it says, that is, it finds these situations unbearable. There is a servant reigning, a fool filled with food, an odious woman married, and a handmaid become heir. Unusual state of affairs indeed! But these actually depict the state of each one of us in Eternity. We are only a servant, a fool, an odious woman, a handmaid; but one day we shall reign with our Lord, we shall be abundantly satisfied with His fulness, we shall be married to Him, and we shall inherit all things. And everyone in Eternity is going to tremble at this marvellous work of God`s grace; they will not be able to quite take it!**

**A Servant Reigning**

**God's desire concerning man is that he should become one who reigns. God made the first man to subdue everything, to rule over everything, says the Word of God. But sin entered man, and man lost his dominion—he became a slave to Satan, sin, sickness.**

**The children of Israel were in bondage for 400 years. When they cried out to God the Lord chose Moses to lead them out of captivity. They believed the good news given by Moses. Because they believed, they observed the passover and the sprinkling of the blood. We must not only hear the Word of God but also believe it. When we believe, grace is imparted to us. And this grace works in us towards salvation (Eph 2:8).**

**The Israelites believed the Word of God and acted according to their faith, and were delivered from Egypt, the house of bondage. God enabled them to reach the land of promise. A large group heard the Word of God, but only those who believed entered the land of promise. Man who is being tormented by sin and sickness, must believe and acknowledge the Word of God. What happened to those who were unbelieving and disobedient to the Word of God? They perished. But those who obeyed the Word of God crossed the Jordan and reached the land of promise. Jehovah fought all their battles—against nations, kingdoms, the natives, and they subdued the land.**

**Man who was a slave is going to be a king! This is something people cannot understand. It is not enough to know the purpose of God concerning us; we must believe it too.**

**For man to reign, first he must be an overcomer. Only an overcomer can reign. Secondly, he needs an anointing. One who is anointed and is an overcomer will attain the throne. God has reserved His throne for us. Let us not think it is impossible for us to reach the throne of God. God deals with us with the faith that He can make us kings. Let us also live our lives with the same faith.**

## A Fool Filled with Meat

**Different kinds of food are eaten for the functions of the body, mind etc, and yet man is not satisfied. The world is troubled. Something is missing. Man is**

**seeking many ways to fill the void, but nothing can satisfy him.**

**The knowledge of the Holy One is understanding, says the Word of God (Prov 9:10). One who does not know God is a fool. God is revealing Himself and His ways through the gospel. The Psalmist says the Lord sent the Israelites ``meat to the full''; they ate and were ``well filled'' (Psa 78:25,29). Even today God's hands are stretched forth to satisfy man's need. The Word of God is supplying nourishment for the inner life. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And we read the love of God is *shed abroad* in our hearts by the baptism in the Holy Spirit—it is not enough to receive the Holy Spirit; we must live in the fulness of the Spirit.**

**An Odious Woman Who Is Married**

**An odious woman is an unloveable thing—a woman with no beauty. It is common for man to desire beauty. The first man was beautiful—he came straight from the hands of God, you see. But sin has made man without form. So God has sent the Gospel to work in us and make us to stand before God in His image (Rom 8:29).**

**The beauty God desires in us is the beauty of holiness. As we obey the Word of God this holiness is gradually imparted to us. Various steps of sanctification have been given for us to reach that holiness. God has ordained various officers in the church to help us attain that holiness, and we must obey their leading even as they are led by the Spirit. As we obey, the grace of God abounds towards us—that we might be conformed to His image. We who are without form because of sin can be presented glorious before God. When our Lord comes again as Bridegroom we are going to be accepted as His Bride.**

**A Handmaid that is Heir to Her Mistress**

**We who have nothing on earth, we who are mere handmaids are one day**

**going to be heirs with Him on the throne. It should not be the spirit of a slave that possesses us. God does not desire that we continue as a handmaid. By faith let us put on the divine nature, and accept the fact that we are going to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.**
**Let not the spirit of a servant, a fool, an odious woman or a handmaid rule over us, but rather the spirit of a king, the spirit of the Bride of the King of kings.**

**We are not great, but God sees us as great in Him. Let us believe in the faith that God has in us. God has foreordained before the foundation of the world that we should be conformed to His image. If we believe the work of God's grace and submit to it surely He will fulfil it in us. o**

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# Pastor Don Spiers—A Shining Life

*(Serial No.47)*

**"I praise you, jesus"**

***Pastor Don His life was one long round of joy and praise. He carried many burdens in the work of the Lord, and yet he was always full of praise to God and gratitude to Him for all things. He was not ashamed to praise God at any place and at any time. His life was totally dedicated to His Saviour and his only desire was to enjoy the presence of God eternally.***

***In services, Pastor Don was always fervent in singing. People loved to see him sing and play the piano; he did it with great delight and with all his strength. "Even when he was no longer playing the piano, I was so blessed by his singing," recalls one child of God. The neighbours loved to wake up in the morning to the sound of Pastor Don's accordion and praises. During his last days servants of God and believers would often gather around his bed and sing. Once they were singing and singing and singing, and finally they asked, "Brother Don, do you want another one?" "A thousand more would be OK," he replied.***

***He taught that we must gain strength in the inner man by offering praises to God. No matter how afflicted he was, no matter how tired he was, he was always praising God and rejoicing in Him. Whatever he was doing—eating, driving, anything, there was no complaining, no grumbling. That constant communion, that constant love for God, which is Zion, which is what Zion's all about—he was able to live that.***

***Of his last year—when he was getting weaker and weaker, he said, "This has been the most wonderful year of my life. I did so many things for the Lord for so many years, but this year I've learnt more of the Lord than five university degrees!" Even when he had to take the chair to go up and down the stairs he would lift his hands and praise God. His memory was***

***getting poor in his last years. Sometimes he was not able to remember certain details. But things like praising God and the Coming of the Lord he always remembered till the moment of his departure. Towards the end of his life he was very weak and ailing, but whenever he was asked, "Brother Don, is there anything we can do for you?" he would always respond, "Just praise Jesus!" If asked, "Pastor Don, how are you doing?" "Praising Jesus," was his immediate response. That never missed his lips. He had such a cheerful life in the Lord.***

*The sister who was choosing songs for his funeral, was trying to pick his favourite songs. As she was going through the song book she found there were so many. Then suddenly she realized that it wasn't that he had favourite songs, but rather that his favourite pastime was to praise and worship the Lord and to sing to the Lord.*
*His mouth was filled with praise even while he was leaving this world. The servants of God were standing around singing "This is my story, this is my song; praising my Saviour all the day long..." when he peacefully, sweetly slipped into the presence of the One he loved. And oh, the joy and gratitude on his face then!*

**The following message on praising God shows us that God wants our lives to be one long round of worship _ praising Him and adoring Him.**

Worship of God has been existing from the earliest of times. Even the heathen worshipped God. This is built into the human nature because we cannot live without God. So we need to breathe in God, and breathe out praises to God. For in Him we live, and have our being. So praise and worship is a part of our relationship with God.

What happens when we don't want to retain God in our mind? "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom 1:28). And why don't we want to keep Him in our mind—when the whole universe is declaring the glory of God? Because, as the Bible says, what is in our mind is, "We won't have this man to rule over us." So God gives us over to do what we want to do. "Being filled with all unrighteousness,

fornication, wickedness, covetousness...full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters..." This is why we must acknowledge God, praise God, be grateful to God.

Now, God does not need our praise or our sacrifice. God is totally complete within Himself. He did not make us because He was lonely and needed fellowship. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are perfectly complete in every sense from Eternity to Eternity. But God is love, and He created us to bestow His love upon us. Every thought, every intent in God's mind, is for our benefit. We were made to live in God, and God wants to live in us. God said to the prophets, "I don't want your sacrifice. I did not command sacrifice in the beginning. But this is what I commanded—that you listen to My voice, and obey My voice, that we might walk together in holiness and righteousness." It is only after man rebelled that God accepted sacrifices as an atonement for sin.

David had made many vows to God. When he was out in the field, and being hunted like a wild animal, he and God had sweet fellowship. It was then that he wrote many of his psalms. Years later he built his own house and he had food and song and dance and everything. He was forgetting his God. It was then that David committed the worst possible crime.
*I used to make mistakes and go to God again and again and say sorry. One day I told God, "Lord, I'm so tired of making mistakes again and saying sorry again and again." Then God told me, "And I'm tired of hearing it, son. Why don't you just praise Me*?" I was glad to know that God really wants to hear our praises. Truly, there's a secret in just praising God and telling him how much we love Him.

God forgave David. In Psalm 51 he thanks God for the forgiveness and then says, "Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise. For Thou desirest not sacrifice; Thou delightest not in burnt offering." David had the marvellous revelation that God does not really want the animals to be sacrificed to Him. What does God want then? "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou will not despise" (vs. 17). What the Lord wants is that we love Him with all our heart. God loves praise—when it comes from our heart. And God loves us with all of His heart.

If we love God, praise becomes natural because we can see the goodness of God everywhere. We're going to spend all Eternity praising God, rejoicing in Him, revelling in

His presence, beholding His beauty. *I praise God inside all the time. And then sometimes it comes out. I didn't know it, but whenever I yawned I used to say, "Thank You, Father." The fact is, inside there's a continual fountain of gratefulness to God.* The joy of the Lord —that is life. In Him we live and move and have our being. How can we live in God? God is peace. God is holiness. God is joy. We just live in that atmosphere, continually praising God.

"Though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Pet 1:8). This is not the joy of this world. This is the joy of God. It is unspeakable—we can't express it. At one time the believers were making a great noise during a prayer meeting. Somebody came to Pastor Paul and said, "Why do your people make so much noise?" He answered, "It's because it's very quiet inside." When we have peace inside, we have great joy.

*One little girl lay dying. She was with two other little girls who were praying. Suddenly she was taken up to heaven in the spirit. As she was going up, she said, "Jesus, can I call my friends also." The Lord said, "Yes." So she came back in the spirit and called them but they didn't hear her. She said, "Lord, they won't come. They're too busy praying!" Many are so busy making sacrifices to God and have no time to worship God.*

*I once had a little vision in which I saw crowds as far as the eye could see. The skies were filled with angels. And everybody was worshipping the Lord. The trees had their branches lifted up and they were clapping before the Lord. I saw magnificent mountains swaying to and fro to sweet music. The hills were skipping before the Lord like lambs. These things describe the kingdom of God during the Millennium. Heaven will be full of dancing, singing, praising and worshipping God. If you are afraid of Pentecost you won't last long in heaven.*

*Once I had a vision of New Jerusalem. Sometimes people draw pictures of Jerusalem. And being an architect, I tried to imagine how it would be. But the vision I got nobody can draw. It was a whole city of people, vibrating with dance and song. Like a diamond or a star twinkling, it was moving all over; it was a living city. Tremendous rolls of praise and song were coming from there.* There's great joy in heaven. "In Thy presence, there is fulness of joy and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." I don't know how people can live without rejoicing in God—grumbling and complaining all day long!

A group of sailors were once shipwrecked and landed on an island. The only thing they managed to save was a box of biscuits. So they rationed one biscuit per day amongst themselves. Each day they would curse, "Oh, this is not enough to keep our hearts beating!" But one brother would take the biscuit and say, "Oh, thank God for this biscuit. Lord, it tastes like a thanksgiving turkey dinner. It tastes like pumpkin pie with cream." When they were finally discovered everybody was emaciated and sickly. But this one brother was fat and strong.

When Goliath came, big, tall Saul was in a cave trembling. His whole army was surrounding him, and their knees were knocking. They were probably praying, praying, praying—but they had no faith in their hearts; they had fear. But David had faith in his heart. From where did he get that faith? Well, he was a man of praise. Instead of complaining about being put out with the sheep in the field, he was praising God. His older brothers were at home taking life easy. David was out in the field being frozen by the cold and

attacked by lions but that's where he learnt to sing and play the harp. *When I was a little boy, they gave me piano lessons. But I was always looking out of the window, waiting to go out and play baseball. Years later in the ministry, I went through a difficult time. That's when I learnt to play the piano and the guitar. I learnt not to complain, but just praise God*. That's how David became a conqueror—not by education, not by money, not by having a great army, but by praising and worshipping the Lord.

There was one Christian brother. Everybody at work was against him. But whatever they did, he just praised God. One day they stole his lunch. When he came and opened his lunchbox, there was no food there. He started to cry. Then they heard him say, ``The one day I didn't fix a good sandwich, it's stolen. The poor fellow, he won't have a good lunch." Then they realized that they could not defeat that man because he had abundance of grace.

You look around you — "Oh, look at my boss, look at my wife. I've got an ache here, and a pain here...How can I go on like this?" Oh, you can go on in life just acknowledging the goodness of God. Your soul will be fat and flourishing as you live in the worship of God. It makes a difference in the body also. We were created to live in the worship of God. We were made to praise God. God doesn't need our praises or offerings, but we need Him. We need to worship Him. We need to praise Him. We need to love Him. We need to walk with Him.
May God empty every one of us of all our self pity, our grouching and grumbling, and our comparing ourself with others and judging this one and that one—this is no life, it's the path to eternal death. The path to eternal life is altogether different. Beloved, you and I have been called to dwell in the city of God and it's called the city of praise. God is teaching us now through the scripture and through the Holy Spirit and through the fellowship of the saints to enter into praise, worship, honour and glory.

*I've been serving God for fifty years. I tell you, life is wonderful. I've enjoyed every minute of it—I've enjoyed God*. Isn't God good? Oh, praise God because He is good. His goodness endureth forever. All that He is, He gives, gives, gives and gives. And we should praise Him, praise Him, praise Him and praise Him.

"Lord, we were created for Your pleasure, for Your glory. In worshipping You and praising You, in doing Your will and pleasing You—that's where we find life eternal, joy and peace and every good blessing. So God, help us to come into line with Your purpose in our creation, in our redemption; that we might be the people of Thy praise, the people of Thy delight."

# Anchored Safely Into The Haven Of Heaven

***Hope is like a firm and steady anchor for our souls.***

***In fact, hope reaches behind the curtain and into***

***the most holy place.***

**Yet another year has come to its end. For some it has been a quick year, a year of interesting events, a year of fulfilment, a year of answered prayers and a year of immense relief. For others the year has drifted by slowly and painfully; it has been a year of heartache and grief, a year of disappointments, failures and unanswered prayers. All of us, nonetheless, have come to the final stop—the end of the year. Some having enjoyed a blessed 2009 will naturally look forward to the New Year. Others, who have been struggling through severe hardship this year, might have even lost the will to expect anything new. Fear and anxiety seize them as they approach the end of the year. This article is written especially for them.**
**"This hope is like a firm and steady anchor for our souls. In fact, hope reaches behind the curtain and into the most holy place" (Heb 6:19, Contemporary English**

**Version). In this verse the apostle metaphorically represents the state of the followers of God in this world as resembling that of a ship striving to perform her voyage through a troublesome, tempestuous and turbulent sea. This is a most meaningful comparison and has parallels throughout Scripture. The story of Noah's Ark, a type of our spiritual journey, teaches us many precious truths about our personal life and our corporate life in church. The story of Prophet Jonah and the ship he took to Tarshish highlights the consequence of rejecting the will of God and the mercy of God on those who repent. The many sea travels of Jesus with His disciples inspire trust and confidence in us. St.Paul's epic voyages by sea, especially his last one to Rome, have much to offer us by way of revelation.**

**When we begin a year, it is like embarking on a voyage by sea. The sea is calm when the ship sets sail, but the future is laden with uncertainty and unknown peril. We would not know what to expect—fair weather or terrifying typhoons. During the year's many months, our ship of faith is caught up in storms of life; strong tides and powerful winds buffet our vessel. But through this odyssey, we experience the**
**grace of God and the protection of God. Beloved one, you have had a very hard year; but is it not truly His mercy that you have not been consumed?**
**An important period in a ship's quest by sea is its end. If the end of this year can be compared to the end of our life, we would want the New Year to be heaven for us!**

**As the ship gets near the port and the tempest continues, she faces further peril because the water is shallow, broken, and dangerous, and she cannot get in. It is at this point that the anchor plays an important role.**
**The anchor is an iron instrument for holding a ship or other vessels at rest in water. In order to prevent the ship being driven to sea again the principal anchor, namely the sheet anchor, is heaved out and taken within the pier head by means of the ship's boat; then,**

**swinging at the length of the cable, the vessel magnificently rides out the storm in confidence, knowing that the anchor is sound and the ground in which it is fastened is good. By and by the storm ceases, the tide flows in, and she gets safely into port.**

**Our text at the beginning of this article tells us that the anchor is the emblem of our hope. This comparison is frequent among the ancient heathen writers, who supposed ``hope'' to be as necessary to the support of a man in adversity, as the anchor is to the safety of the ship when about to be driven leeward by a storm. Socrates said, *"To ground hope on a false supposition is like trusting to a weak anchor."***

**One person said, *"If you are afraid, put all your trust in God: that anchor holds."* The test of Abraham's faith highlights the function of the anchor of hope. His trial had well passed the limit of human endurance. Everything around him mocked his faith in God. Sarah and he were both beyond any medical miracle. God's promises remained unfulfilled and Abraham, naturally, should have been crushed with the sense of betrayal and breach of trust. He should have become angry that his years of believing had been pointless. Instead, we read that (the ship of) his faith was strong and that in the midst of his trial he was glorifying God (Rom 4:20). We find an explanation in verse 18; we read that he ``hoped against hope'', which means that he hoped when there remained no natural reason for him to hope. *When all hope was lost, Abraham went on hoping.* His anchor would not fail him as it was fastened in good ground—in the unfailing goodness of God.**

**Hope in God is the anchor of our life in any situation. When we feel guilty, why do we repent of our sins and confess them to the Lord? It is because of our *hope* in His mercy. *"Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy"* (Psa 33:18). *"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy"* (Psa 147:11). Beloved one, perhaps you have sinned like Achan, and feel that you are being led to the ``valley of Achor'' to be stoned like Achan; then again *hope* in the Lord for He has given to you "... the valley of Achor for a door of hope" (Hos 2:15). If you are worried about your children, *hope* in God's promise, *``And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border"* (Jer 31:17).**

**The trials of life can become very severe and, consequently, our soul greatly discouraged. We lose our strength to fight and the will to press on. We become defeatist and demoralized, and as our ship of faith bobs about with no sense of direction, we feel lost somewhere at sea.**

**Does this describe your life? Has life been unfair to you? Do you feel lost and despondent? Do you feel forsaken and cheated? Do you feel you have suffered more than you can bear? Do you feel like giving up? Maybe others tried to encourage you and you rejected their well-meant efforts. You did not mean to hurt them, and it has only caused you more pain that your actions have been misconstrued. But, oh, who would take time to know why you did it? Who could weigh your sadness? Who would make an effort to understand how optimistic words of kindness are like pin-pricks of mockery to your wounded soul?**

**This is where you need your anchor. The writer to the Hebrews represents the hope of entering into heaven as the soul`s anchor. "[*Now*] we have this [*hope*] as a sure and stead**

**fast anchor of the soul [*it cannot slip and it cannot break down under whoever steps out upon it—a hope*] that reaches farther and enters [*into the very certainty of the Presence*] within the veil" (Heb 6:19, Amp).**

**Our hope of heaven can take us victoriously through any situation. Our spiritual anchor must be fastened on the other shore which is heaven. This is why we read, "*For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven...*" (Col 1:5). In The Message, it is rendered thus, "The lines of purpose in your lives never grow slack, tightly tied as they are to your future in heaven, kept taut by hope..." Christian history teaches us that it was the hope of seeing the face of Jesus that strengthened many saints in the face of death. Many of them died singing.**

**The hope of Christ's coming or the hope of resurrection gives us comfort in severe trials (I Thess 4:13,15,17), strength in persecution (Heb 11:35), perseverance in sickness (Job 19:25-27), and purity in a sinful world (I Jn 3:2,3). When you become disheartened and unwilling to continue your journey, then it is your hope that will anchor your soul towards heaven. "And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope..." (Job 11:18).**

**The writer to the Hebrews explains how we must ``lay hold'' on this anchor. "...we...have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul..." (6:18,19). You may be lying crushed under the weight of your trial; despite your sincere efforts, your adversaries have triumphed again. At the outset of this year, your ship of faith began its earnest quest; but having been torpedoed by the enemy of your Christian life, it is now nothing more than wreckage. You are kneeling beside the driftwood of your aching, broken heart. You fear you will not rise from the ashes this time.**

**Beloved one, remember that you have been promised a heavenly city of refuge. Renew your hope in the goodness of God. Let your anchor be fastened to the Rock which cannot move. Seize and hold fast the anchor just as one does an altar when he is pursued by the avenger of blood. Whether it is danger of death or the fear of rejection, flee to the anchor of your soul and seize it. If your trial does not end, keep hoping in God. When you are confused and wonder if God is still with you, still keep hoping in Him. When all hope is lost, keep hoping in Him. It is not over, until God says it is over.**

**``Such hope never disappoints or deludes or shames us..." (Rom 5:5, Amp). Do you feel forlorn at the end of your journey? Are you judging your future by what your five senses tell you? You *see* angry waves near the breakwater; you *hear* the roar of thunder, you feel wet and cold, you *smell* rotting wood and dead fish and *taste* salt. Though reason tells you to give up, obey the voice of your conscience. Do not be afraid; keep pressing on. Still trust God's faithfulness. Do not look at the situation around you; look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. Renew your hope which is the anchor of your soul. You will surely see light at the end of this tunnel. And your faithful God will see you safely into the haven of heaven.**

- **What do you think?**

*It`s good to know that Christmas is being celebrated by people of all religions these days. But it is sad to know that it is a Christmas without Christ. The spirit of Christmas needs to be replaced by the spirit of Christ. The former is carnal, the latter is spiritual. The former is temporal, the latter is eternal. The former ushers in celebration, the latter sobriety. The former is Christless, the latter priceless.*

# Making Friends

**"Relationships" is what life is all about. Some people devote their lifetime to amassing goods. But Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesseth." There are others to whom what matters most is achievements. But the laurels we get on earth all fade with the passage of time. Some others are obsessed with the acquisition of knowledge. But knowledge shall vanish away, says St.Paul. What lasts even in Eternity is the relationships we have made—with the Lord and with other people. That's why Jesus once said, "Make to yourselves friends...that...they may receive you into** everlasting habitations" (Lk 16:9).

**Friendships form an important part of relationships. ``Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,'' said Jesus (Jn 15:13). St. Paul says we are to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...exhorting one another" (Heb 10:24,25). He also speaks of our hearts being "knit together in love" (Col 2:2). And St. John says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may also have fellowship with us" (I Jn 1:3). So we need to know with whom to make friends, and how. The Bible has a lot to say about this.**

**We read of David who made many good friends. It says that *all* the king's servants loved him. Jonathan, the king's son, was also his friend. When David was hiding in the woods, he went in search of him and encouraged him and "strengthened his hand in God" (I Sam 23:16). Hushai was another good friend whom the Lord used, to defeat the counsel David's enemy gave against him (II Sam 17:14). Yet another good friend of David was Hiram, a man of Tyre, who, even after David's death, went out of the way to help fulfil David's desire to build a temple for God (II Chron 2:11-16).**

**The Bible also warns of wrong friendships. ``Make no friendship with an angry man'' (Prov 22:24). "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..." (II Cor 6:14-18). ``Whoever chooses to be friends with the world makes himself an enemy of God'' (Jms 4:14). King Jehoshaphat was a good man, but he made friends with the wrong sort of people. A prophet once scolded him saying, ``Shouldest thou...love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord'' (see II Chron 19:2). Another time another prophet prophesied saying, ``Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah (who did very wickedly), the Lord hath broken thy works'' (see II Chron 20:35-37).**

**We also read of many people who were led to do the wrong thing by their friends. Amnon committed a very grave sin because he listened to his friend`s advice (see II Samuel Ch13). King Rehoboam's friends made him make a very foolish decision that cost him the allegiance of most of his subjects (I Kgs 12:1-16). And Haman's friends devised for him a very cruel plan which was the cause of his downfall (Est 5: 9-14). We must be very careful indeed when we make friends.**

Ben was a little boy of eleven. His family had moved to a new district and he was feeling lonely. He was standing at his gate one day when some boys came up the lane. Ben waved to them. They came over, and soon they were chatting like old friends. "Come with us to play tomorrow," they invited. As Ben set out the next day his mother said to him, "Son, I know you are anxious to make friends, but remember, Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." After a few games the boys flopped on the grass. "Let's send Ben to get the snacks today," one of them suggested. Ben readily got up. "It's some of those apples you've got to get," the boy explained, pointing to a tree in a garden, "Just take care the gardener doesn't see you." Ben knew it was wrong to steal, but he also knew he would lose his new friends if he didn't comply. "I'll do it just this once," he was thinking, when he remembered what his mom had said. It dawned on him that if he compromised with sin and made friends with these boys, he would lose the special Friend Who sticks closer than a brother. "Sorry boys, I'm not going to steal," he said and quickly walked away.

Young reader, do you have this special Friend as your friend? If you do, be careful to make friends only with those who have Him as their friend too. Otherwise you'll soon have to choose between Him and the other friends. And, if you haven't made friends with this special Friend, it's time you did.

**Look at how the saints of old made friends with the Lord. Enoch made friends with Him by walking with Him, by agreeing with His ways—even when everyone else was disagreeing with His ways. Abraham made friends with Him by taking Him at His word no matter what He said, and obeying Him—even when it seemed a most foolish thing to do. Moses made friends with Him by listening to all He had to say—even when it meant spending many long nights and days alone with Him. Daniel made friends with Him by taking great care to please Him in everything, in every little thing—even amidst the cheers and jeers of the young crowd around him. And the Lord, stuck very close to them, revealing special things to them, and keeping them safe from every kind of evil.**

**So dear youth, be sure to make friends with this special Friend, and with His friends.o**

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