



# INSIGHT *India*

NEWSLETTER

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## An Introspection

### A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

I was recently asked to respond to a questioner for a researcher. One of the questions was, “What are the major problems the assemblies in India are facing.” Here are some of the thoughts that came through my mind as I began to answer that question. I hope that it will help our readers to introspect. We have raised these thoughts earlier but yet there seems to be a great need to bring it before the brethren again.

#### Culture

The no.1 problem is that we the believers are still slaves to the culture of the land and its ideology. Arrogance, selfishness and egotism rule our mind. The teaching on independence of the local church and believers has been elevated or emphasized out of proportion and often misused. Unaccountability is another byproduct of this sad situation. Workers claim independence and refuse to be accountable to anyone, elders refuse to be mutually accountable, and assemblies claim independence and do harmful things to each other. While we cleverly try to cover up all this indiscipline under the flag of NT principles, we virtually abandon Phil. 2:3 where it very clearly says, “With humility of mind regard one another

as more important than yourself.” Personal and family ties are greatly influencing the decision-making in local assemblies, resulting in poor and unspiritual leadership and indiscipline. Co-operation between assemblies and individual workers is also becoming more and more difficult.

#### Leadership

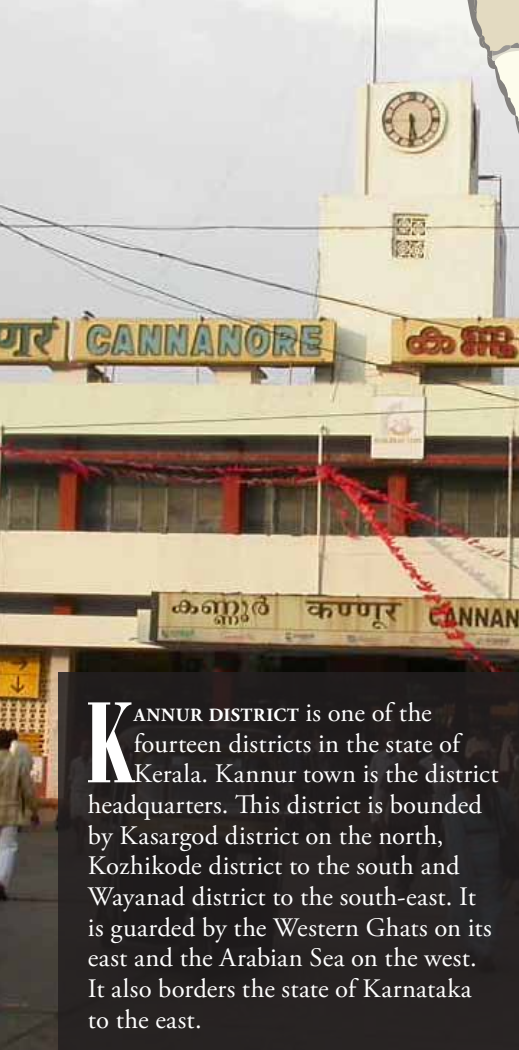
Some of my conservative brethren might disagree with me in using the word ‘leadership’. Yet I want to use it to express something practical. We have too many preachers and teachers but no leaders. A leader is one who leads and guides the flock with authority and discipline. We need such men in local assemblies as well as in common platforms—men with vision and passion, compassion and commitment, determination and dedication. A committed leader should be willing to endure hardship and even be ready to die for his people. These qualities are not seen in anyone. I am not thinking of an organizational set-up of any kind, rather of down-to-earth practical leadership in the spiritual realm. One with “deep concern for all the churches (2Cor.11:28), one who “wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren (Rom. 9:3), and “a wise man who will be able to judge between his brethren” (1Cor. 6:5). This is Paul’s example and “NT pattern”. In many assemblies it is difficult to find a new generation of elders before the older generation is taken to glory. As a result, instead of elders, a committee rules the assembly. A flock without a shepherd!

It could be that an unsubmitive attitude is keeping even concerned men away from taking up any responsibility in leadership. It is always safer to keep a distance. As long as they maintain the status quo they will have platforms and honour. Some who have placed themselves in administrative leadership are self-centered and have no vision or commitment. This is a crisis which has caused much damage to the cause of Christ and to the unity of the brethren. On the other hand, a person who had left the Brethren Assembly fellowship, long back, is recently elevated to the leadership of one of the “well approved” organizations serving the Assemblies in India by a committee of renowned Brethren. Alas! We have no wise man among us who will dare to judge between the Brethren.

“Brethren Assemblies survive where there is scholarly leadership,” said a well-known Brethren scholar. Scholarliness comes with education and civilization. That was one of the major factors that helped the “Kerala Brethren” in the early days. Since then both foreign missionaries and local evangelists concentrated their evangelistic efforts among the poor, uneducated and less civilized. This has produced a crisis in leadership and even in the spiritual growth of believers. Even today, leadership cannot be developed among such believers.

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**K**ANNUR DISTRICT is one of the fourteen districts in the state of Kerala. Kannur town is the district headquarters. This district is bounded by Kasargod district on the north, Kozhikode district to the south and Wayanad district to the south-east. It is guarded by the Western Ghats on its east and the Arabian Sea on the west. It also borders the state of Karnataka to the east.

# The Evangelists of Kannur

This district was established in 1957, and is the most urbanized district in Kerala with 50% of its population living in urban areas. Its population, at 1.2 million, is second only to Ernakulam.

Kannur is known as the land of looms and lore because of the handloom industries and the temple festivals. Communism has its deep roots in the soil of Kannur, and political violence is frequent. Hundreds of people have lost their lives for their political ideology. Kannur, in recent years, has become famous for its homemade bombs, and bomb blasts have made many martyrs of their political parties.

Good news of Love came to this red fort through believers who migrated from Travancore (Central Kerala). Kannur Assembly is the earliest assembly in the district.

Late brother Poulose Thudian, brother P M Mathew and brother T S John were some of the pioneer ministers in Kannur. At present there are twenty-four Brethren assemblies in this district. Since it is a high-range area, evangelistic activities are not easy. The majority of the population are of Hindu, Muslim and Roman Catholic communities. Response to the Gospel is very poor. Yet there are many young evangelists faithfully working in Kannur. Most of the evangelists have no support from any of the funding agencies and some of them even do daily labor to support their families.



**Abraham KJ & Jessy (205)**

I came to the Lord from an RC background and was in fellowship at Kappimala Assembly. The Lord called me to His service eight years ago. Since then I have been working at Pailathara. The Lord gave us some souls and twelve believers are now gathering for worship in a rented house. Pailathara is a colony established by the Catholic Church and most of the settlers are Latin Catholics. So it is difficult for them to come out from the clutches of Catholicism even if they know the truth. Other work is going on at Cherukunnu where I regularly do outreach with two other brethren. Though people listen to the gospel they are very reluctant to come forward and express their faith publicly. Please pray that the Spirit of God may convince them and give them the strength to accept Him.  
(M: +91 97474 55626)



**Jefry John & Ajithamol**  
Gospel Hall, Thainery, Payyannur PO, Kerala 670 307

Being born in a Christian family, I had the privilege of knowing Christ at an early age. My father, TS John was also an evangelist. While working as a medical representative, the Lord called me for His ministry in 2012 and I continue to serve with the Payyannur assembly. This was an old assembly, but had stopped functioning for some time. The Lord enabled us to come together again in 2013. Now ten families are gathering for worship.

Regular outreach work is going on in this area and I also participate in teamwork with other evangelists in this district. Please pray that the Lord may add more souls to His kingdom through our ministry here.  
(M: +91 94963 57245)



**Edward Jacob & Jiji (232)**

My elder brother came to the Lord first from a Catholic background. Through him I was also led to the Lord in 1988 and was in fellowship at the Therthally assembly. The Lord gave me a great desire to serve Him and also made His calling clear to me. About the same time my wife also had a similar conviction and together we dedicated our lives to serve the Lord in 2001.

While working with Therthally assembly, a new work was initiated in a place called Mampoil. It is a hard field as it is populated by Roman Catholics. There are few contacts and we are doing follow-up work. Pray that the Lord may open their hearts to accept the truth.  
(M: +91 99474 38127)



**Sebastian Philip & Mini (298)**

I came to the Lord from an RC family and had to face much opposition from family and the church. But three years ago my mother, sister and brother also came to the Lord. I was in fellowship at Kapimala assembly since 1997. After graduating from a Bible seminary I continued to serve with the assembly. I got married in 2002. My wife also is from an RC family. Outreach work is going on at Karuvanchal and Ottathoi. Some contacts were made and follow up work is going on.  
(M: +91 98475 02751)





**Rejoy K John**  
Gospel Centre, Pappinasseri PO, Kannur,  
Kerala 670 561

Being the son of an evangelist, I had the privilege of knowing the Lord and learning the Bible at a very early stage in my life. My father, KM John worked in Thaliparampu. After completing my education I worked as a Graphic Designer in the Gulf for some time. Then in obedience to the Lord's call, I left my job and came back to my parent assembly. Having recognized my call, I was commended by Thaliparampu assembly and continue to serve with the same assembly. Twenty-five believers are gathering there now. I am involved in outreach work and in several team activities with other evangelists in this area. Pray that the Lord may give us more fruits. (M: +91 95626 95956)



**Pranesh PC & Sneha (284)**

We were members of the Orthodox Church. But our family had a spiritual awakening and contacted Meenthully assembly. Through their ministry my parents got saved and began to fellowship with them. After High School I had a desire to serve the Lord and joined a Bible college. It was in that Bible College that I accepted the Lord as my Saviour.

After seven years of Bible training, I began to work with Cherupuzha assembly and they also commended me. A new work has been initiated at Kottiyoor by a team of evangelists in this area. I am also helping the ministry at a place called Mattoor. These areas are filled with migrant farmers belonging to RC background. That makes the outreach work more difficult, but your prayers will help and the Lord can move the hearts of people. (M: +91 97443 44097)



**Padmanabhan EP & Ajitha (278)**

I heard the gospel through a neighbour and accepted Christ as my Saviour at the age of 16. I was in fellowship with the brethren at Malamkadavu assembly. At a missionary challenge conference I dedicated my life for the service of the Lord in 2007. In the following year I was commended by Malakadavu assembly. Till 2002 I worked in Kasargod district and came to Kanichar in 2012. The local assembly at Kanichar invited me to come and help them and I came here in 2012. The major outreach work is visiting houses and making personal contacts. I also participate in YMEF activities. (M: +91 96560 86977)



**Jomon Thomas & Abitha (256)**

My mother came to the Lord in 1987 from an RC background. My father has not come to the Lord yet. My mother taught me the Word and I accepted the Lord as my Saviour at the age of 10. We were in fellowship at the Kudiyanmala assembly. After High School I joined a Bible College and studied for seven years. After completing the Bible training, I continued with Kudiyanmala assembly. It was a big assembly but some left and formed another gathering. Now 60 believers gather. Five men have separated themselves for the Lord's service from this assembly. I am involved in the assembly activities and also teach at a Bible College. (M: +91 94469 45146)



**Thomas Mathew & Lini (312)**

My elder brother came to the Lord first from an RC background. He had to face much opposition from our parents. But my parents and I came to the Lord in 1997, and as a family we were in fellowship with the assembly at Mukkuzhi. Later on we moved to Alakkad.

I had a business till 2003 but stopped it as it was a hindrance to my spiritual life. As I was waiting for the Lord's guidance for my next step I was clearly guided to come in to fulltime ministry. So I committed my life to serve the Lord. When I shared this with my wife she also gave a very favorable reply saying that she already had committed her life to serve the Lord.

In 2008 I moved to Mattoor to start a new work and worked there for two years and later on moved back to Cherupuzha. Follow up work is continuing at Mattoor and I also participate in the teamwork at Kottiyoor. (M: +91 99464 64667)



**Mathew VM & Aliamma (275)**

I was a Police man and got saved at the age of 45 from an RC family. I was an alcoholic but the Lord dealt with me through the death of my grandchild three days after his birth. The death of my grandchild made me very frustrated and I began to drink more. During that time some brothers came to my quarters and shared the gospel. The Lord opened my heart to understand it and accept Him as my Saviour and Lord. Soon I joined in fellowship at Peringom assembly. As I understood the Word of God more I came to realize that I cannot be a faithful Christian and work as a police man. So I resigned my job. My wife also encouraged me in that as she had already been a believer before our marriage and she had been praying for me for the past 24 years.

Later on we moved to Alakkad. During this time I had a strong desire to share the gospel with others and dedicated my life for that. In 2002 the Lord led me to start a new work at Poovam together with brother V J Thomas. In 2003 a testimony was established there. In 2004 when brother P N Thomas went to be with the Lord I moved to Alakkad to take care of the assembly there. (M: +91 94466 68047)

to be continued in the next issue

## The PYLIN Effect

Some of the families who lost their houses during the Cyclone "Pylin" were helped through Operation Barnabas. Under the supervision of brother Silas, roofing materials for six families were supplied. Another reconstruction work is going on in Odisha under the supervision of brother C P Mathew.

Thanks to all who have contributed towards this need.







# JUDGE NOT

*Adapted and edited from  
R E Denny's writings.*

## **Matthew 7**

**1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.**

**2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.**

**3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?**

**4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?**

**5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.**

**J**ESUS OPENED HIS DISCOURSE in Matt. 7:1 with a command: "Judge not." The Greek word for judge is the source of our English word 'critic', meaning to separate, to distinguish, to discriminate. When the Lord said "Judge not" it is not a prohibition on righteous judgment. We are supposed to exercise righteous judgment with careful discernment. The Lord Himself makes it clear in the following verses (v6) that it is necessary to discern dogs and swine from one's own brethren.

There are three reasons why we are inadequate to judge or criticize another. First: we never know all the facts or the total person. Second: it is almost impossible for any person to be strictly impartial in his judgment. We cannot fully understand each other from another man's point of view. Third: no person is good enough to judge any other man. Since we are fallible, have been marred by our own sins, and are always subject to bias prejudicing before the facts. Jesus in His sermon in Matthew 7:1-5 gives four important lessons on judging others or criticism.

## **Criticism is a danger signal**

"Judge not, that you be not judged." Another paraphrased version says, "Don't criticize, and then you won't be criticized." Jesus did not forbid us to judge others, for careful discrimination is essential in Christian life.

The critic sees in others his own sins and failures. He is quick to detect the flaws in others because he knows the flaws so well first hand, and he is disturbed by them! He who belittles another belittles himself more. In every censure, we reveal ourselves. If we call someone lazy, we confess that we know what laziness means. We blame a neighbor in order to escape realities of self blame. Criticism attempts to divert attention away from one's own weaknesses. By putting down others it gives false illusion of putting oneself up above them. The real hypocrisy lies in the fact that when we criticize a fellow, we act like we are greatly distressed by his weakness and faults. However down deep we love it! We think it makes us look ever better. When we say, "How bad he is!" we really mean, "How good I am!"

A fisherman said, "One never needs a top for his crab basket. If one of the crabs starts to climb up the sides of the basket, the others will reach up and pull it back down." Naturally none of them escape; all are imprisoned by each other. Some people are a lot like crabs.

Criticism is a sure sign of personal spiritual failure. When a person begins to throw dirt, he is losing ground. The censorious attitude is always a sign of a dealing spiritual life. We project our spiritual shortcoming on the other man.

J.B.Chapman said, "When a man is getting religion, he is hard on himself and easy on others. But when a man is losing religion, he gets easy on himself and hard on others."

A beekeeper was going in and out of the hives without fear. A man who was watching this asked him how he could do it! The keeper answered: "A bee that is busy producing honey never stings."

## **You will reap what you sow**

Jesus explained to His followers: "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged: and with the measure you use you will be measured back to you." It not only speaks about God's judgment at the end, but people are also judging us now and we receive from people exactly what we give. We are going to be faced with the same kind of treatment we have passed on to others.

We will receive from life what we have put into it. If one sows criticism, he will reap criticism. If he sows love, he will reap love.

The critic attempts to apply two standards of judging and measuring, one for us and a different for others. For instance, firmness is an admirable quality in us, but it is stubbornness in others.

When prophet Nathan narrated the story of a rich man who had taken a poor man's lamb to King David he blazed with anger. However, when the prophet applied the same to the king himself he became broken and repentant. We are going to be judged by the same rule which we apply to others.

The best standard of measurement is Jesus Christ. When I measure myself alongside Him, He will reveal to me my shortcomings so vividly that I will not have time to measure anyone else.

The negative attitude of a critic hinders God's work in his own life. The very atmosphere of criticism desecrates the holy, sweet presence of Christ. If I deny the mercy of God to others, then I have to stand without His mercy for myself. When we are positive we get the full benefit of God's positive impact up on us.

## **Face up to your own sin**

Jesus asked His disciples, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" The Lord is using a figure of speech

to drive home the point. How can a man overlook his own glaring infirmities and nitpick the specks on another?

The "experts in incidentals" see in another just what they are looking for. If one desires to see the flaws and failures in others, he can find them. But if one wants to see their strength, rejoice in their strong character, appreciate the big heart of love that beats in their breast, then he will find all that and more!

The "experts in incidentals" get a false sense of superiority by criticizing others. A group of men may have worked many hours individually and collectively to reach a decision. Based on their experience and information gathered from different sources they have come to a decision which they thought would be better for all. Yet some who knows nothing of the facts, who has spent no time, no energy in research and labor, gets up to criticize. It makes him to feel superior and gifted. As he passes judgment, he gets a false sense of authority. However the advantage that he has is that he doesn't have to prove himself right. He can merely criticize without responsibility for the outcome.

The "experts in incidentals" find it easier to confess other people's sins. It is a lot easier than to confess or talk about one's own sin.

Christians are obligated to help each other to grow in grace. When we do not judge ourselves, we not only hurt ourselves, but we also hurt those to whom we could minister. The Pharisees judged and criticized others to make themselves look good. But Christians should judge themselves so that they can help others look good.

We must not pass judgment on other's motives. We should examine their actions and attitudes, but we cannot judge their motives because only God can see their hearts. It is possible for a person to do a good work, with a wrong motive. Paul

spoke of people preaching the Gospel to add to his afflictions. A person who is highly and sincerely motivated could fail in his attempts. It will all be examined and rewarded when we stand before Christ at the judgment seat.

## **Depart from hypocrisy**

Jesus made that point clear; "How can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

A person cannot help others to get rid of their fault until he is rid of his own. Unfortunately the spirit of criticism is one of the greatest faults and is the reason why many are unfruitful for Christ. What we need today is not criticism rather a demonstration of life lived to the fullest with Christ. Hypocrisy will have no place in such a man's life.

The spirit of criticism is an infectious disease. One cannot get rid of it by an effort of his will. The spirit of judging evaporates only one becomes conscious of his own faults. That takes a lot of humility and submission to the Holy Spirit. The key to spiritual progress is self-evaluation, not criticizing those around him.

To help each other to deal with our failures, weakness, and sin, we need to create an atmosphere of love and acceptance. By judging and criticizing a person we are forcing him to defend himself or his position or his faults, even when he knows he is wrong. But if we accept him as he is, we leave the door open for changes. We are not to be confused with proper admonition, reproof and correction which are integral part of Christian growth. □

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This should not be interpreted as being against evangelizing the underprivileged. Together with evangelism, every effort must be made to elevate the social and cultural status of the new believers for the gospel to have its full effect.

One more point I want to add while discussing leadership is that nowhere in the Bible do we see an old man coming into leadership. Always the Lord brought young men into leadership and they continued. Today we do not allow a young person to come up into leadership.

### Doctrinal differences

Since independent thinking is allowed anyone can come up with strange teachings in a local assembly. Personalized interpretation of certain doctrines and adamant enmity towards those who differ creates divisions. This is often promoted by outside agencies or individuals that come to grab a piece of the pie with some “pet doctrines”. They try to steal the sheep from the fold and use their money-power to do it. This has created much division and enmity between the brethren. Indian assemblies traditionally are conservative, yet do not subscribe to exclusive teachings. But there are some who bring in some “extra-scriptural” teachings, both of exclusive and liberal nature probably to exalt themselves. This has only helped in creating divisions and made some rich. One such was discussed in length in the previous issue.

### The use of resources

Resources that are available in India are sufficient to meet our need. But the problem is in its distribution. Of the 2000 or more full-time commended workers, only about 30% can make both ends meet without much difficulty. Among those, about 15% have in abundance to lead an affluent life. The pulpit preachers are esteemed higher (it may not be wrong) and are given more while the more hard-working evangelists in rural areas suffer. No one considers the fact that the evangelist working in a rural area in a church-planting ministry is spending more than 50% of his income on his ministerial needs even at the cost of putting his family in a difficult situation, whereas a pulpit

preacher only has to care for his family and has no ministerial need—even his traveling expenses are paid. Since most of the evangelists (excluding the pulpit preachers) are economically in a poor status they are looked down upon, and often are ridiculed. Their circumstances force them to adopt unethical means of raising funds.

One of the greatest needs today is to create awareness about the needs of evangelists and to establish a proper method of pooling and distributing the material resources. We should adapt the Pauline method as seen in 2 Cor. 8—Finding out the real need, educating the believers about the needs, urging them to give, collecting it and distributing it in a systematic way with the help of proven and faithful men (a committee) under His guidance. Unlike in the days of Paul, today we have government restrictions for such efforts and as believers we are obligated to abide by it.

I personally do not think the funds flowing into the ministry in India are insufficient. But the distribution system is more focused on the distributing agencies and the donors and not on the need. Donors give where there is some personal interest. Distributing agencies are more interested in maintaining their popular image and status quo rather than trying to meet the needs. They are regulated by the donors and their interest. There is no proper mechanism for understanding the need and making it known to believers for practical support. We always are quick to find a shelter for our incompetency in the “NT principles” and the “Apostolic pattern.”

### Lack of common worship place

It is another hindrance to the expansion of the assembly ministry. In Indian culture, it is difficult to get rid of the caste differences. So it is difficult to have people of different castes to come together in a house. But they will come together in a common place. This one particular need is often overlooked due to several reasons. One major reason might be the high cost of purchasing land and building. Other mission agencies support their workers and provide for buildings. So they often steal from our flock. A proper building is a sign of security and freedom. People go where they can feel secure. Only the worker who leads a person

to the Lord knows the struggle and pain behind it. But when that person is taken away from the flock it is very disheartening to the worker who laboured to bring him in. This has happened in many cases. Even at places where there are no other churches we have seen people coming in when a proper worship place is constructed. At present there could be a minimum of 100 assemblies which need a proper place of worship.

### Lack of proper training

Though there are several Bible schools and large-scale Bible colleges offering high degrees, the workers are not properly trained for the work in the field. Therefore Brethren assembly workers are the most unproductive in the mission field. Due to lack of training almost all the workers are afraid of dealing with the higher class and the educated in society and always concentrate on the rural and the uneducated mass. The city assemblies grow only with the migrating population of believers from the rural areas. There are no proper outreach programmes in the cities. Even the evangelists living in the cities concentrate their work among the slum-dwellers and the villages on the outskirts of the cities. (There are exceptions to this general trend.)

### Inability to self-support

The major reason for this is what is mentioned above. Most of the assemblies are among the poor and cannot raise enough funds to meet their own needs. In most cases they are maintained by the evangelist working there. Instead of the evangelist being supported by the assembly, the assembly and believers are supported by the evangelist. This problem is a by-product of not being able to win the educated and the affluent who have the means.

While discussing financial support I must bring in one of the most expensive needs today. Many evangelists and their family members are becoming victims of the culture and unhealthy, uncivilized atmosphere of the field. Medical help is not available in their vicinity. Many are struggling to meet this special need.

Will we ever open our eyes and see the reality rather than to be pseudo NT Christians? □

# A B C O F G O D L I N E S S

► continued from Insight India  
Newsletter Vol 19, Issue 4

A devotional study from Psalm 119  
by Stewart McNaught  
(former missionary to India)

## The Hope of the Godly Psalms 119: 57–64

The Christian life is not an easy life. There is continual opposition and that opposition appears to come from every quarter. The Devil is the great opponent and he opposes the Christian increasingly. He is subtle, as his dealings with Eve imply, and that subtlety is evident today. Many Christians are being hoodwinked by the devil every day. He behaves as an angel of light and even sincere people can be led astray. He is the slanderer and Christians are being maligned by slanderous accusations daily. This is what he did to Job, when he suggested that that godly man was only godly because it profited him. He is also strong, a roaring lion seeking to destroy Christians and Christianity. This rapacious adversary sends fear into the heart of simple people and many a Christian would shrink back in fear, if it were not for the hope given to the children of God in the Bible. The Christian is encouraged to stand against these attacks, to resist the devil and he will flee away. In spite of his bold exterior, he is a defeated foe. This is the basic theme of this section of the Psalm. The writer says, “though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget thy law” Psalm 119:61. The opposition does seem to be very fierce, but every child of God finds hope in the promises of God that are contained in the Bible.

One commentator has offered the opinion that David is confirming his faith and encouraging his soul by these

words while he is enduring some severe affliction. He reminds himself that the Lord is his chosen portion and that he will follow God’s ways because God has also chosen him to be his servant and king over Israel. In this review of his relationship with God, he intimates to us that there are eight marks of new life to be seen in all the children of God. These eight features of new life can be listed as follows:

1. The child of God is chosen by God and has been called by the Father. That call enables the child to freely choose to follow God, v57.
2. The child of God walks in God’s ways, v59.
3. The child of God recognizes sin and seeks cleansing from it, v58.
4. All the children of God want to please God and keep his commandments, v60.
5. In spite of affliction and difficulty, the believer knows and relies on God’s faithful promise, v61.
6. No matter how dismal or dark the situation may be, the child rejoices in the goodness of God, v62.
7. The child of God loves the family of God and keeps company with all the children of God, v63.
8. The child is not content merely to know sins forgiven, but longs to grow in grace, “teach me thy statutes”, v64.

“The Lord is my portion”, v57. Martin Luther said that every Christian should say in face of temptation, “I am a Christian.” This verse suggests that in such a situation the child of God should also say, “The Lord is

my portion: Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, forgot that fact and so sought a portion from Naaman to his sorrow. Similarly, Judas sought a portion from the leaders in Jerusalem and was lost. Neither had wanted to turn away from their God, but monetary advantage is a very subtle temptation.

The word ‘portion’, can mean destiny, or allocated position and this should not be reckoned as fate, but rather the good place that God has graciously given; or lot in life. The word, ‘portion’ is found seven times in the Psalms and when collated they may be divided into three sections:

1. **The Sinners’ Portion.** Sinners are men of this world, Psalm 17:4; their lot is in this life, Psalm 63:10; so they become the enemies of all whose hope is in heaven, Psalm 11:6; and their ultimate lot is the lake of fire under the wrath of God. Sinners can turn from their sins and be saved because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done on the Cross.
2. **The Saviour’s Portion.** “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance...” Psalm 16:5. This Psalm is messianic and v8 is quoted in Acts 2:25–28. In Acts it refers to the Lord’s resurrection. His portion was the cross with its shame and suffering and death. It also embraces the victory of the cross, the resurrection and redemption accomplished by his death. It also looks forward to His glorious coming again.
3. **The Saints’ Portion.** “The Lord is my portion”, Psalm 119:57, and that is the real hope of the Christian. It sums up everything that the Lord can be to



his people; their Saviour, Shepherd, Shelter and Satisfaction. Asaph learned this wonderful truth in a period of depression and doubt, Psalm 73:26 and it made him happy. David also found out the marvel of this fact, Psalm 142:5; he was in the cave hiding from his enemies and cried out to God and realized that God was his portion. May every true Christian know and understand this remarkable truth and rely on it in face of danger, defeat and depression.

“The bands of the wicked have robbed me”, v61. This statement reminds one of the parable of the Good Samaritan, who found a man robbed and wounded by a band of robbers, The band is a company or group of people united in a common cause. In 1Samuel 10:5 there is a band or company of prophets; they were united by the Spirit of God. The word ‘band’ means a cord or a rope, generally used for binding or tying up bundles. There are cords of vanity, Isaiah 5:18; cords of love, Hosea 11:7; cords of sorrow, Job 36:8. This points to emotions or purposes that unite people together. In our section it is a group of bad people linked together for evil. Proverbs 1:10–14, “throw in your lots with us... let us have one purse.” Such bands oppose the Word of God and so endeavour to destroy the people of God as Saul of Tarsus tried in Acts 9:1. They are inspired by Satan and do his work in the present world. The Christian is always a target for their enmity and is always subject to their harassment. For the child of God in face of such problems there is always the Scriptures to encourage him and the Spirit of God to enable him; the child should not fear for the Father’s love shelters always, Psalm 121:5.

The midnight hour of the night watches are times of trouble, Job 34:20. The Christian can face that frightening hour without fear and he will do so if he learns the songs of praise. It was at midnight that the people of Israel went out of Egypt and entered into their liberty as the people of God. It was at midnight, too, when Boaz gave Ruth the pledge of redemption. The midnight should then remind the Christian of the dark night the Lord

passed through to deliver him from Satan and sin. Paul and Silas prayed with their bruised and bleeding bodies at midnight and found the Lord’s great deliverance. It was also at midnight, that the Lord gave Paul the assurance that he would go to Rome and would not die in the angry sea. It will be at midnight when the triumphant shout will be heard, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go you out to meet him.”

What a glorious midnight that will be! When the strain is at its greatest pitch, the Christian should rise up and sing songs of praise to the Lord. Those songs of praise bring peace to the troubled mind and joy and comfort to the breaking heart. The Christian must never forget that God is a righteous God and will not forget the Christian in the hour of trial. He will abundantly reward all who have suffered loss and shame for His name’s sake. The three young men in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar found that the Lord was there with them and they emerged in triumph.

The Christian needs companions in the pilgrimage of life, v63. The Lord has promised to be with all of his people all of the time. The Lord’s presence can be best known in the fellowship of the saints. When each believer is united in a common Lord and Saviour, there is real pleasure among the saints. They help each other and so enable them to stand in face of trial and difficulty. They share in the trials and so find mutual support. It is the fellowship of the saints that is the best witness to the power of the gospel. “These Christians, how they love one another.”

*“So amid the conflict,  
Whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged  
God is over all.  
Count your many blessings,  
Name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you  
What the Lord has done.”*

The hope of the godly shines brightest in the storm for at that time the Christian finds that the promises of God are true and the person of the Lord Jesus is real and present when the need is the greatest. □

# Godly Leaders

**A**POSTLE PAUL gave very profound instructions to his disciples Timothy and Titus as they were both faced with the same challenge—of appointing leaders in the church at Ephesus and at Crete respectively. One of the responsibilities Paul gave to Timothy and Titus was that they should set things right in the church. For this they needed the help of other godly leaders. Godly leaders were not to be easily found. So Paul gave them some guidelines. Those instructions we find in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and in Titus 1:5–9.

Let us peruse some of them.



1. **Above reproach** (1Tim. 3:2): Leaders are to be blameless, irreproachable. This means that no charges of serious wrong can be sustained against him. It does not mean that he is sinless, but be willing to make right with both God and men when he commits a mistake.

2. **Devoted to their wives** (1Tim. 3:2): “The husband of one wife” has many interpretations. But a simple interpretation would be that they are to be one-women men. A man who is not guilty of any unfaithfulness or irregularity in his marriage including a divorce. His moral life must be above question.

3. **Temperate** (1Tim. 3:2): It not only refers to matters of food and drink, but also to the avoidance of any extremes in spiritual matters. They are to be spiritually stable, having a clear, biblical perspective on life.

4. **Prudent** (1Tim.3:2): It is also translated as ‘sober-minded’ and means a person who knows his priorities. He is serious, earnest, discerning, and discreet, one respected for wisdom and honor.

5. **Respectable** (1Tim.3:2): Well ordered in his habits. People should honour them for their lifestyles.

6. **Hospitable** (1Tim.3:2): His house must be open to strangers, both saved and unsaved as well as for those in need. He should seek to be a blessing to all who comes under his roof.

7. **Able to teach** (1Tim. 3:2): The original Greek word used here is never used to speak of the gift of teaching or the office of a teacher. It is saying he must be teachable as well as being able to communicate biblical truth to others. He must be able to set forth the doctrine of the faith and rightly divide the Word of Truth, and is ready and keen to do it with a meek and gentle spirit.

8. **Not given to wine** (1Tim. 3:3): It means not addicted to alcoholic drinks. Overindulgence in wine can cause quarrels and misjudgment.

9. **Self-controlled** (Titus 1:8): This is what Paul referred to in Galatians 5:22 as the fruit of the Spirit. This means that a person has every passion and appetite under control to obey Christ.

10. **Not self-willed** (Titus 1:7): A church cannot have people in leadership who are concerned only about themselves. A person who cannot accommodate anyone who differs with him, unyielding and impatient of contradiction cannot be a spiritual leader. An elder should not be a dogmatic autocrat.

11. **Not quick-tempered** (Titus 1:7): Those in leadership must be patient. If he has a volatile temperament, he better learn to bridle it; if he has a hot temper, he should never let it show.

12. **Not violent** (1Tim. 3:3): This means “not a fighter.” Elders must react to difficult situations calmly and gently. He must not resort to the use of physical force by striking others, not only to those in his congregation but also to others.

13. **Gentle** (1Tim. 3:3): In his work in the church, he will need forbearance, patience and a spirit of yieldedness.

14. **Not greedy of money** (1Tim. 3:3): The love of money will bear evil fruit in the church as well as in the world. They should refrain from amassing wealth even though it may be through legitimate means, and be an example to others in the church. He is to be concerned about the spiritual life of God’s people in his church and refuses to be distracted by a strong desire for material things. Covetousness characterizes false teachers, whose hearts are set on the things of this world and not on the things of God.

15. **Managing their household well** (1Tim.3:4): Church leaders are required to keep their children under control with dignity. The word ‘submission’ here is a military term referring to soldiers ranked under one in authority. An elder’s children must be believers, well-behaved and respectful. “To take care of the church

of God” an elder must first prove his ability to lead within the boundary of his own house and family. This qualification would apply as long as a man’s children are living in his house under his care.

**16. Not a novice or a new convert** (1Tim. 3:6): A new convert to Christianity or a person who is so young in faith is not qualified to be a leader or an elder in the church. The work requires men of experience and understanding in the faith.

**17. Having a good reputation among unbelievers** (1Tim. 3:7): The testimony and integrity of a church leader among the unsaved community should be above reproach. Without this good testimony he becomes a subject of the accusation of men and the snares of the devil.

**18. Loving what is good** (Titus 1:8): His speech, his activities, and his associations should reveal that he is separated from all that is shady, questionable, or wrong.

**19. Just** (Titus 1:8): In his dealings with others, an elder should be just and should lead the church with equity.

**20. Holy or devout** (Titus 1:8): In relation to God, a leader must be holy in his daily life.

**21. Holding fast the sound doctrine** (Titus 1:9): An elder must hold tenaciously to the spiritually-held doctrines taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles which have been preserved for us in the NT. □

# The Example of Nehemiah

(Ch1: v5–11)

The prayer life of Nehemiah is very clearly seen in the first chapter of the book of Nehemiah itself (1:4, 2:4, 4:4, 4:9, 5:19, 6:9&14, 13:14, 22, 29, 31). This book starts and ends with prayer. Verse 6 tells us he prayed day and night. He was so burdened for the city. Although he was neither a prophet nor a priest, he had a deep sense of Jerusalem’s significance to God and was greatly distressed that affairs there had not advanced the cause and glory of God. This prayer represents one of the most moving confessions and intercession before God in the scripture.

Though he had not experienced their hardships, he identified with them, denying himself the luxuries of the palace, fasted mourned and prayed. He confessed their sins as his own. He also reminded the Lord of His gracious promise (v8–9).

“Keep your covenant and mercy with those who love you” (v5). After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, God kept His promise to restore His people to the Promised Land. The promise appeared to be falling, and Nehemiah appealed to God’s character and covenant as the basis by which He must interfere and accomplish His pledge to His people. He then offers himself to be God’s servant to do something about Jerusalem’s plight. “Here I am, Lord send me!” In v11 we see that he has faith to ask God for servants, other Jews who would help him in the task.

Do we have such leaders today? Nehemiah is often used as an example of effective leadership. First he had a vision of a goal to be achieved. Then he went around and identified the problem and analyzed it. Then he decided on a proper course of action. Then he motivated others to share his vision and to become actively involved. Next we see him delegating

and assigning tasks. He supervised the work and checked on performance until the project was satisfactorily completed.

It has been said that prayer is not getting man’s will done in heaven but getting God’s will done on earth. However for God’s will to be done on earth, He needs people to be available for Him to use. If God is going to answer prayer, He must start by working in the one doing the praying. He works in us and through us to help us see our prayers answered.

Nehemiah volunteered to go to Jerusalem to supervise the rebuilding of the walls. He didn’t pray for God to send somebody else, nor did he argue that he was ill-equipped for such a difficult task. He simply said, “Here I am, send me”. The king’s cupbearer would have to sacrifice the comfort and security of the palace for the rigors and dangers of life in a ruined city. Luxury would be replaced by ruins and prestige by ridicule and slander. Instead of sharing the king’s bounties, Nehemiah would personally pay for the upkeep of scores of people who would eat at his table. He would leave behind the ease of the palace and take up the toils of encouraging a beaten people and finishing an almost impossible task.

Abraham cared and rescued Lot from Sodom (Gen.18:19). Moses cared and delivered the Israelites from Egypt. David cared and brought the nation and the kingdom back to the land. Esther cared and risked her life to save her nation from genocide. Paul cared and took the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus cared and died on the cross for a lost world.

God is still looking for people who care; people like Nehemiah, who cared enough to ask for the facts, weep over the needs, pray for God’s help and volunteer to get the job done.

*An extract from a recently-published book on Nehemiah by Roy T Daniel. An E-version of this book is available in English and printed copies of the Malayalam version are also available.*

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