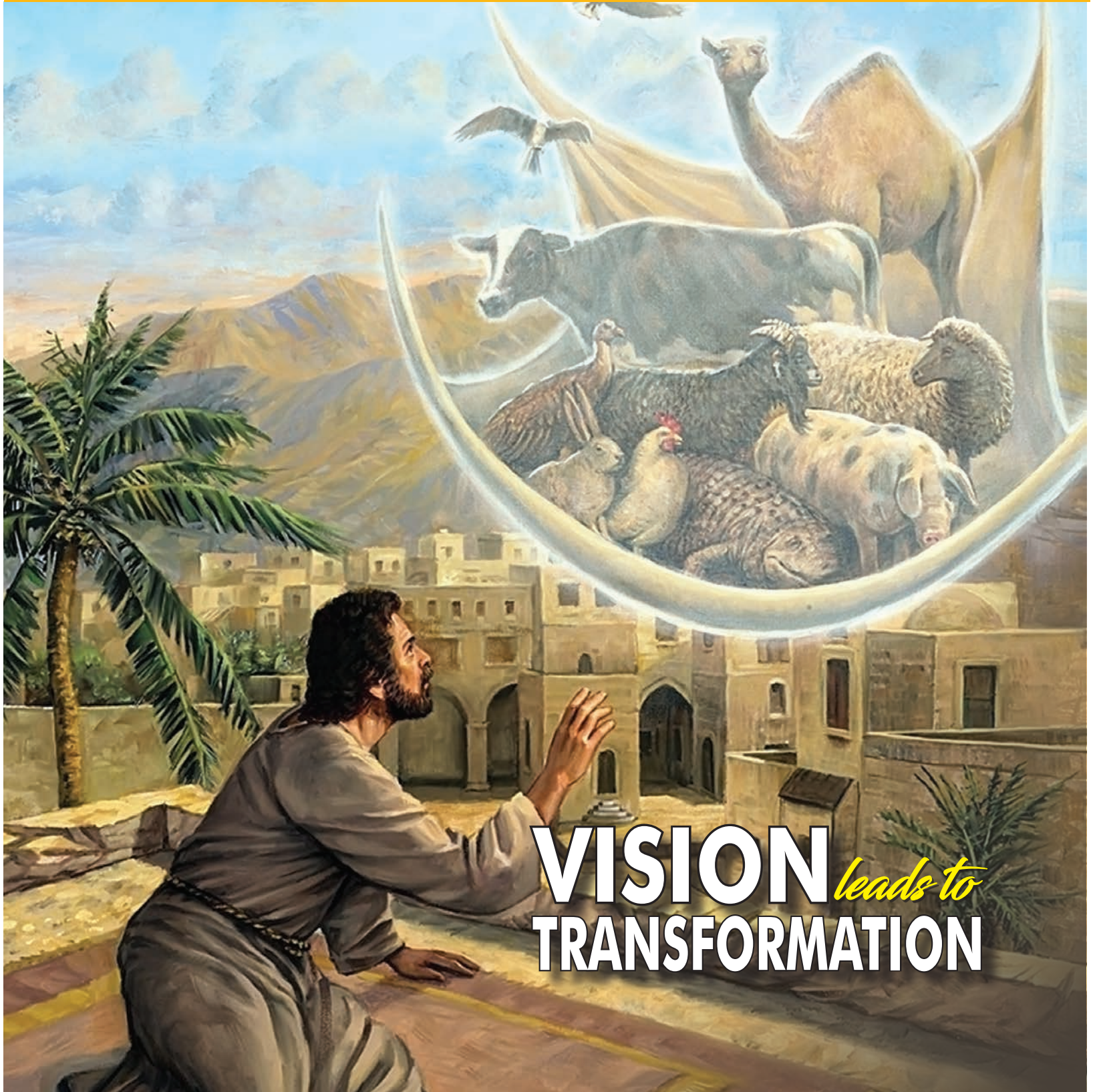


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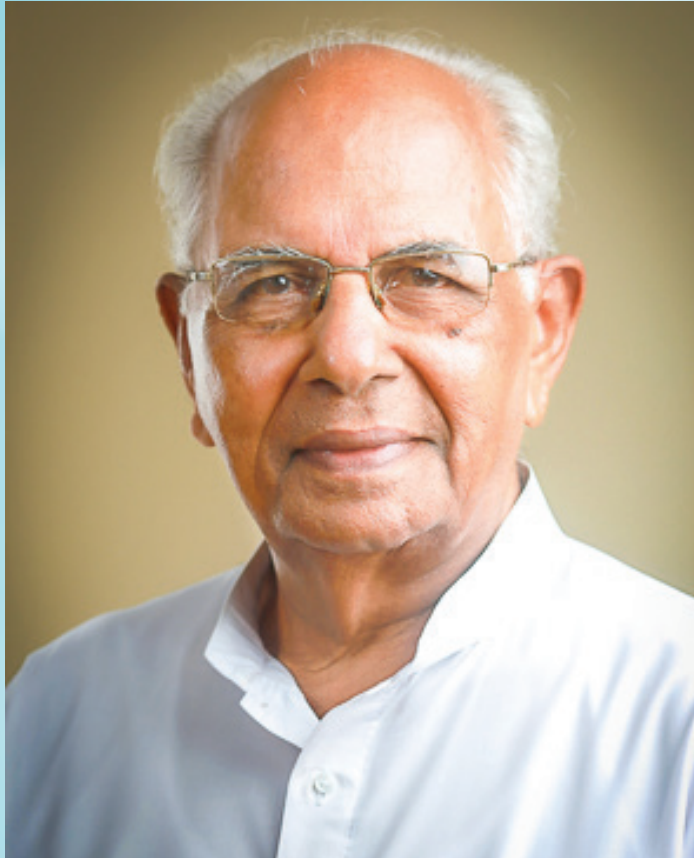
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VISION *leads to*
TRANSFORMATION

PASTOR M. V. VARGHESE (1924 – 2024)

A Remembrance by **Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham**



A Greek proverb says, “The old age of an eagle is better than the youth of a sparrow.” Pastor M. V. Varghese was an eagle who taught us sparrows many lessons on how to fly well. I want to share some highlights from his long life and ministry briefly.

Born in 1924, Pastor Varghese experienced a radical conversion to Christ and a call to ministry in 1941 at age 17. He attended Hebron Bible School in Kumbanad the following year.

In 1945, my grandfather, Pastor K. E. Abraham, sent him as the first IPC missionary to plant churches in Singapore, Borneo, and Malaysia. In these three places, he experienced a fruitful ministry for the next ten years among the Indian migrants, successfully planting churches.

In 1955, Pastor K.E. Abraham brought him back to India, saying, “I need you here to help me.” He placed him in a new area in Kerala as a pastor and to develop the work. In 1956, he also enlisted Pastor Varghese as an instructor at Hebron Bible School, beginning 68 years as an instructor at Hebron Bible School, which, in 1994, became India Bible College and Seminary.

He served as a district pastor for years in Tiruvalla, Ranny and Alleppey, developing and enlarging the districts by planting over 40 churches.

As an instructor at IBC, he and my father, Pastor T.S. Abraham, mentored IBC’s junior faculty members and served as Vice Principal of the Malayalam Medium at IBC for several years.

Continued on page 18



With Pastor M.V. Varghese and his youngest son M.V. Philip (Sunny and family)

A magazine that will enrich and renew your spiritual life and give Christian perspective on current events.

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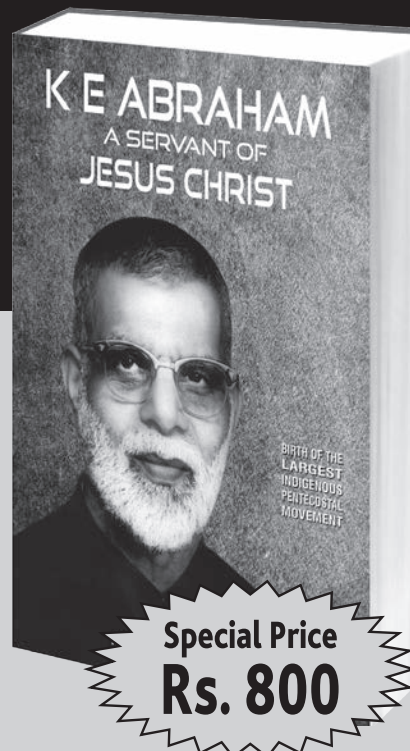
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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

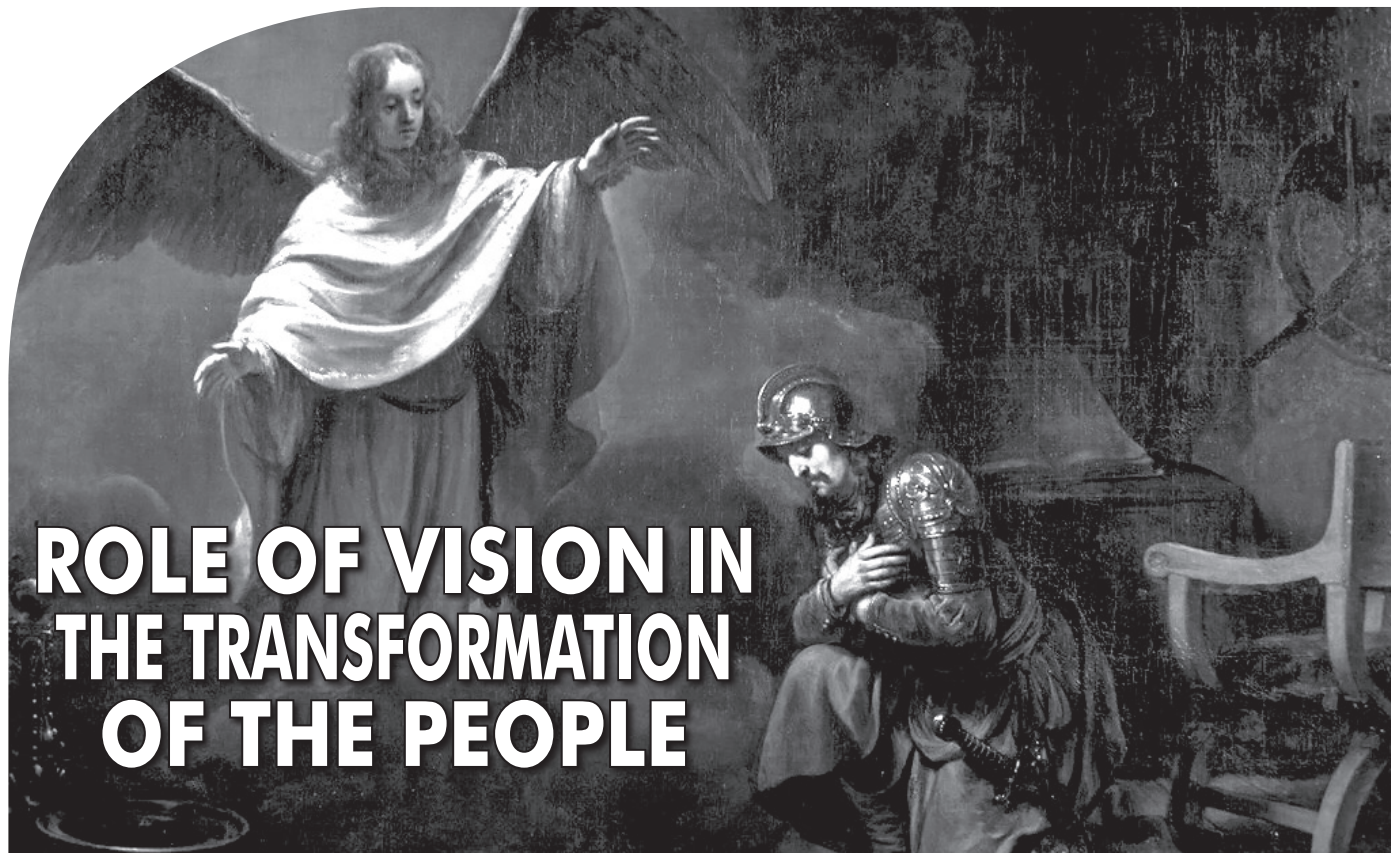
VISION

Just like many of us, Apostle Peter had a problem that he was so ethnocentric. So he was hesitant to go to the house of Cornelius a Gentile. Therefore, God gave him a vision that drastically changed his perspective and ministry. God used a vision about food to teach Peter that the Gentiles were not unclean. Peter was hungry and a vision about food would reveal the truth. Peter used to live as an orthodox Jew all his life and strictly observed Moses's regulations on food. The law of Moses was a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles and this vision brought spectacular change in the ministry of Peter and the history of Christianity. Apostle Paul also was a man of vision. It was his vision that changed the destiny of Europe and consequently the entire world. A genuine vision can bring incredible change and progress.

About 400 years ago a shipload of travelers landed on the Northeast coast of America. The first year they established a town site. The next year they elected a town government. In the third year, the town government planned to build a road five miles Westward into the wilderness.

In the fourth year, the people tried to impeach the town government because they thought building a road was a waste of public funds. Who needed to go there anyway? But all those countless miles of superhighways that connect the United States and its proud position as a nation on wheels started with that five miles of road to the wilderness produced by the vision of a few in the settlement. It is the vision of great people that pulls us forward. What is vision? It is seeing the invisible. The story of Martin Luther King Jr. is amazing.

He started with a small slogan that anyone can repeat, I have a dream. It came to pass despite all opposition. Vision is powerful. Cling to it to the end. ●



ROLE OF VISION IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PEOPLE



Dr. C.T. LUISKUTTY

Author, Bible teacher, former professor at Oral Roberts University and currently General Secretary of Inter Collegiate Prayer Fellowship.

Our focus is on the two godly visions mentioned in Acts 10: one to a God-fearing gentile, the other to a very spiritual conservative Jew. The two visions are related to each other and have one common purpose - transformation of people in order to accomplish God's redemptive plan for all nations.

The first vision is that of Cornelius, a man of authority in the Roman military and of esteemed social status. According to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the inspiration behind the Scriptures, he was a moral and generous man. Not only he was a devout person but his whole family. Though a gentile, he prayed to the living God, the God of Israel, regularly. He might be one of the gentiles, like the high government official from Ethiopia about whom we read in Acts 8, who visited the Temple in Jerusalem during Jewish festivals to show their respect to God Jehovah even though they knew they had to stay in the outer court with no access to the real temple. Their devotion to God was so sincere and deep that they ignored the humiliation of discrimination symbolized by the various walls of separation around the Temple. They were allowed to come only up to the gentile court in the outer periphery of the temple complex. This area was not considered sacred at all, as animals for sacrifice were sold and purchased there and money was exchanged for temple tax. No atmosphere of piety and worship. This was a short-cut for merchants and passengers from one end of the city to the other. The real temple where one could experience the presence of God was not accessible to them, or to women who were allowed a little nearer but not to the courts where cleansing was done and sacrifices were offered.

Cornelius was a boss who had good reputation among his military subordinates and servants. They testified of him, "He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jews" (v 22). Thus, though he could be considered a perfect man



by all religious standards, God wanted to see a transformation in him so that he will be completely surrendered to the plan of God. God used a vision to bring about this transformation.

The second vision from God came to Peter, a very religious man who was a follower of Jesus Christ. In the early period of Christianity even the disciples' views were heavily influenced by their religious roots in Judaism. Peter and other early Christians wanted to follow Jesus Christ, experience a living relationship with the Lord Jesus, and yet hold on to their Jewish traditions. It took a heavenly vision for Peter to change his attitude towards other people and consequently help other Christians and leaders to do the same. Before His resurrection Jesus told His disciples that they would become His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria even to the ends of the earth, after the Holy Spirit came on them and empowered them. The advent of the promised Holy Spirit in a powerful manner occurred on

Peter and other early Christians wanted to follow Jesus Christ, experience a living relationship with the Lord Jesus, and yet hold on to their Jewish traditions. It took a heavenly vision for Peter to change his attitude towards other people and consequently help other Christians and leaders to do the same.

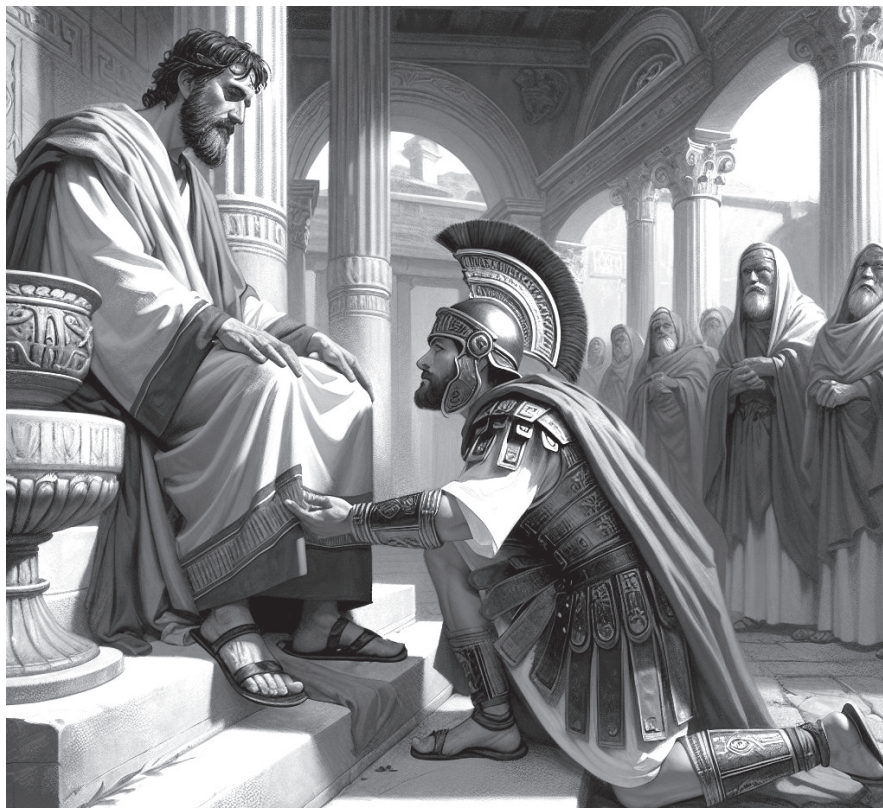
the Day of Pentecost and they were bearing witness among their own people, the Jews, except in the case of the Ethiopian officer, even that in their own confines. 'Going to the ends of the earth' required getting out of their social, religious, ethnic and geographical comfort zone. And it took two visions to bring this about.

Some Common Characteristics of the Two Visions

Both Cornelius and Peter knew that their visions had heavenly origin. The speaker in the visions addressed them by their names. To the voices they heard, they both responded addressing, "Lord," acknowledging the divine authority behind those voices. Both visions demanded a divinely ordained transformation in their personality and perspective of their religion. Though the instructions they received were revolutionary, both acted according to them. Cornelius sent his servants to fetch Peter from Joppa, and Peter traveled 60 kilometers from Joppa to Caesarea in about two days.

An important fact is that there were no ambiguities in these visions. Cornelius was told that he had to send his men to a particular person -- Simon whose surname was Peter. The Holy Spirit knew his exact address and the name and trade of the person whom he stayed with in Joppa. The clarity and exactness of the vision were compelling enough for him to send a military man under him and two servants to Joppa. He knew that the vision was an answer to his prayers of a long period.

Peter was praying in Joppa. He went to a trance and had the vision of a large sheet that contained all kinds of animals. He was asked to kill and eat them. As eating the meat of 'unclean' animals was



against his religious practice, he resisted it even though he knew that the person directing him was the Lord. The vision was repeated three times.

The Purpose of the Heavenly Visions - Transformation of People

Both Cornelius and Peter acted immediately. The following actions were against their nature or religious traditions. Let us look at their transformation and its consequences.

Cornelius was a gentile, a man of good standing in the community as a captain in the Roman army. As a God-fearing man, it would have been natural for him to approach a Jewish priest or a rabbi to answer his theological questions or quench his spiritual thirst. As a result of the vision he had, he sent for a man of low stature staying with a tanner. Did he know that this

“
Both Cornelius and Peter knew that their visions had heavenly origin. The speaker in the visions addressed them by their names. To the voices they heard, they both responded addressing, "Lord," acknowledging the divine authority behind those voices.
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man belonged to a new sect among the Jews -- a follower of Jesus whom his government had put to death in collusion with the Jewish religious leaders? We are not sure.

- The vision taught him that there was some spiritual experience beyond his devoutness. That's why he sent for Peter. And he acted immediately because he gave great importance to what was going to happen.
- As a result of the vision he became a humble man. In military, ranks are important. But this captain of 100 soldiers fell at Peter's feet in reverence though Peter was a man of low status compared to his.
- Cornelius became a man of faith. He expected something big to happen, and therefore invited his close friends and family members to be present by the time Peter arrived.
- He waited patiently till Peter arrived four days after he saw the vision.
- He had an assurance that they were in the presence of God. They knew what Peter was to tell them was commanded of God. They were ready to listen and obey.
- Even though this, probably, was the first time they heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they were very receptive. They believed what they heard and the Holy Spirit fell on them and they began to speak in tongues. We may naturally assume that they all repented of their sin and confessed their faith in Jesus Christ before this happened.
- They were not satisfied with the Spiritual experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit but obeyed the commandment of water baptism given by Jesus Christ.
- They enjoyed their new experience and wanted to continue in fellowship with Peter and the Jewish brothers who accompanied him, so they asked them to stay with them in Caesarea for a few days before returning to Joppa. This

must have been a time of fellowship, learning and growing in faith. Now let us look at the effect of Peter's vision on him.

- Once Peter heard the request of the emissaries from Cornelius he acted immediately and without hesitation because he was able to connect their request to the vision he had from God.
- Peter knew that God had a personal message for him. Though he had become a disciple of Jesus and the chief spokesperson for them, his attitude towards gentiles had not changed. Discipleship is not an event that occurs instantly, but a lifelong process. The message of the vision was that he needed a change in his attitude towards other people. Not only was he sold out to the Jewish idea of what is kosher, but also he considered some people clean and others unclean. Maybe he was afraid that his Jewish brothers would accuse him for having fellowship with gentiles. The vision helped him change these attitudes.
- Peter might have been uncertain about how God would work in a gentile context or how they would receive him. He was effective in preaching to the Jewish crowd on the Day of Pentecost and thousands responded positively. But what about those who assembled in the house of a Roman military officer? The vision and direct communication helped him overcome his apprehension of himself and fear of failure.
- He knew that this was not going to be a solo adventure trip. Therefore he involved others. Six Jewish disciples who probably had the same attitudes as he did accompanied him at his request. They became important witnesses in his future dealings with the church leaders in Jerusalem. Christian ministry is a joint effort.
- Though Peter was the 'man of the hour' and in focus, he acted very humbly. He was there to serve rather than to

be served.

- His religion taught him that God was partial to the Jews. His close association with the Jesus should have taught him that it was not true. But it took a vision to bring him to the full realization of the truth that God was not a respecter of persons. Now it was his opportunity to manifest this in his life.

Self-examination: What Personal Transformation is Needed in Us?

We should not be satisfied with a form of godliness; not even with a genuine fear of or religious devotion to a far away God. The birth of Jesus brought God to us. He was the visible image of The invisible God (Colossians 1:15). The death of Jesus Christ brought us close to God. Through Him we both (Jews and gentiles) have access to the God by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:15, 18).

Religion can give you a general awareness of God, and encourage you to be a moral and kind person. Do not stop there. There is more to spirituality. We all need a personal encounter with God which will result in personal transformation. Apostle Paul was a fanatic Jew. Out of his religious fervour, he persecuted the followers of Jesus and even participated in Stephen's murder. But a personal encounter with Jesus in a vision transformed him, made him a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ and was willing to suffer because of his new faith.

Even now God is dealing with religious people through dreams and visions. As a result, people in closed countries where there is no religious freedom or where no Christian literature is available are turning to Christ and experiencing spiritual freedom. As in the case of Cornelius and his household, a vision, if it is from God, will bring a seeker of truth to a close relationship with Jesus Christ and to a Spirit-filled and Spirit guided life. They were filled with the Holy Spirit as they patiently and carefully listened to the Gospel. Also they were humble enough to obey the commandment of Jesus and be baptized by a man of different religious background and social status.

In our present situation, most of us have the luxury of reading the Bible in a language and style we prefer. We have the freedom to attend meetings and listen to preachers. Therefore, we should not be depending too much on visions and dreams (which we had or others had) for guidance in our spiritual life or other personal matters. In the visions we are looking at, they were very specific and in detail. There was no room for various interpretations. Now visions and prophecies may be viewed as confirmation of what God has been communicating to our spirit which is in direct contact with the Holy Spirit.

Cornelius' vision had far reaching effect on him and his gentile associates. They took an effort to bring Peter to their place who preached the Gospel to them. This led to their true conversion, baptism of the Holy Spirit and then became true followers of Jesus Christ. Do we attach great importance to supernatural phenomena like visions and ignore the baptism of the Holy Spirit and discipleship?

Peter had a revolutionary change in his outlook and attitudes towards people whom he considered common and unclean. What transformation occurs in us when we have a Spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ? Do we need to wait for a vision before we wholly surrender our lives to the plan and purpose of God? ●



PASTOR P.J. DANIEL

Faculty, India Bible College
and Seminary

Vision is a very significant term used in today's Christendom. It is a word frequently used by Statesmen, Businessmen, Religious Leaders, etc. Vision is so important it has become a word people abuse and throw around in vain. The Bible says, "*without vision the people perish*, (Proverbs 29:18).

Why is vision so important? There are various reasons why vision is important in Christian Ministry.

These days certain people claim that they have seen visions on various aspects-visions of visa, visions of different mortal and immortal beings, apparitions - which are not visions but mere delusions.

What is the true meaning of vision? It is inevitable to define the term vision extensively. The following is a popular definition of Vision "The ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom." Having hope for the future with a legible imagination of creative activities to reach a target is vision.

According to Merriam-Webster, vision is defined as, "the act of power of imagination." When we apply vision to the future, we can create a mental picture that can be used to direct our actions. Vision serves as a guide and can be used to provide a sense of purpose. Having a vision ensures that our life or business goals can remain focused. Anyone can create their vision statement. People can develop a personal vision statement, to focus on ministry and achievements.

Vision can transform the dimensions of our ministry. "Moti Nagar" is a significant place in New Delhi. Initially, it was known as "Mochi Nagar" which means 'the place of cobbler', now it is transformed into 'Mothei Nagar' a place of jewels. This significant name change happened because of the vision of certain activists. It is vision that can transform our life and ministry to higher dimensions.



Proverb 29:18 verse "without vision the people perish" is a reminder of a headless rooster that runs around frantically. It is a fact that numerous ministers engage in ministry without a vision and thus fall into danger and failure. They move and act without a sense of purpose. Jesus said: that when a person begins to build a house, he should plan and ensure he has adequate funds showing he has confidence or vision about his venture.

Vision maintains order in our ministry

Without vision disorder and confusion may arise in our ministry. So, it is essential to maintain clarity of our purpose and goal. Only then, we will attain the goal.

Vision boosts growth in the ministry

When we begin with a vision the ministry grows successively. Paul moved forward with a vision. He proclaimed it often. With serenity and pleasure, he declared that from Jerusalem all the way around to

Vision boosts growth in the ministry. When we begin with a vision the ministry will grow successively. Paul moved forward with a vision. He proclaimed it often. With serenity and pleasure, he declared that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, "I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ."

Illyricum, "I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15: 19). It was always his vision to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that he would not be building on someone else's foundation, but rather on those who had not heard about Jesus Christ. His vision boosted and widened his ministry to those far and near.

One of the remarkable paradoxes of Christianity is that we nourish ourselves as we serve others. The serving Christian is a growing Christian (qualitative growth). The serving church is a growing church (quantitative growth). The vision calls people for service. Where there is no vision people become idle, selfish, self-feeding, parasitic consumers.

Vision protects Unity

Unity is the strength of anyone's ministry. Teamwork will boost and extend the ministry in a wider



frontier. Someone said “Team” means “Together Everyone Achieves More.” The Bible does not encourage single-man ministry. Even to bring a colt for the use of Jesus to ride over to Jerusalem, he sent two disciples. Apostle Paul often encouraged teamwork and always he had a company of comrades to work together. It is a hard exertion to maintain unity among the team members. Only a person with a deep vision can sustain it. Vision unites individuals toward a shared purpose. Where there is no vision, everyone believes what he or she is doing is more important than what the other person is doing. Lack of vision breeds competition, conflicts, and divisions.

Vision Boosts Productivity

Vision helps leaders allocate effectively. It is seen in the Epistles

Apostle Paul often encouraged teamwork and always he had a company of comrades to work together. It is a hard exertion to maintain unity among the team members. Only a person who has a deep vision could sustain it. Vision unites individuals toward a shared purpose.

that Paul allocates ministries to his team members. Paul left Titus at Crete that he might put in order what was unfinished and appoint leaders in every town, as he directed him (Titus 1:5). He decentralized his authority to his team members. He never intended to do it alone. He used to delegate his companions to various regions and churches to fulfill the goal. Progress tracking becomes easier when is distributed. Leaders without vision waste energy and resources. Some leaders are very busy in ministry but hardly accomplish anything at all because they do not have a vision. They keep shooting in the dark. It is a waste of energy and resources. It results in unnecessary burnout, frustration, disappointment, and anger.

Vision Creates Momentum in the ministry

Visionary leaders inspire passion and movement in the ministry. When people are engaged in various ministry aspects, the entire ministry gains momentum. The

Communist Party always engages their comrades busy in various programs like 'Human chain', 'human wall', various types of hartals, hunger strikes, etc. to maintain motivation to fulfill their goal. "An empty mind is the workshop of Satan" So it is essential to keep the team members engaged. Some leaders are very busy in ministry but hardly accomplish anything at all because they do not have a team vision.

Vision helps to keep moving forward and sail through rocky waters. Minor setbacks and hurdles tend to appear small or inconsequential if a leader has a strong vision. They would sail through them and persist to the end, learning at each step of the way. Vision helps leaders to be persistent.

If we want to lead people to a course, we need to have a clear vision of how we attain to project ourselves and the team to achieve that goal. Great leaders must have a vision and the vision of a leader



should go beyond written organizational mission statements and vision statements.

So, Vision has a great and significant role in the widening of our ministry, which was the pattern of our forefathers and

the Apostles, which strengthened the growth of the Church more rapidly and effectively. ●

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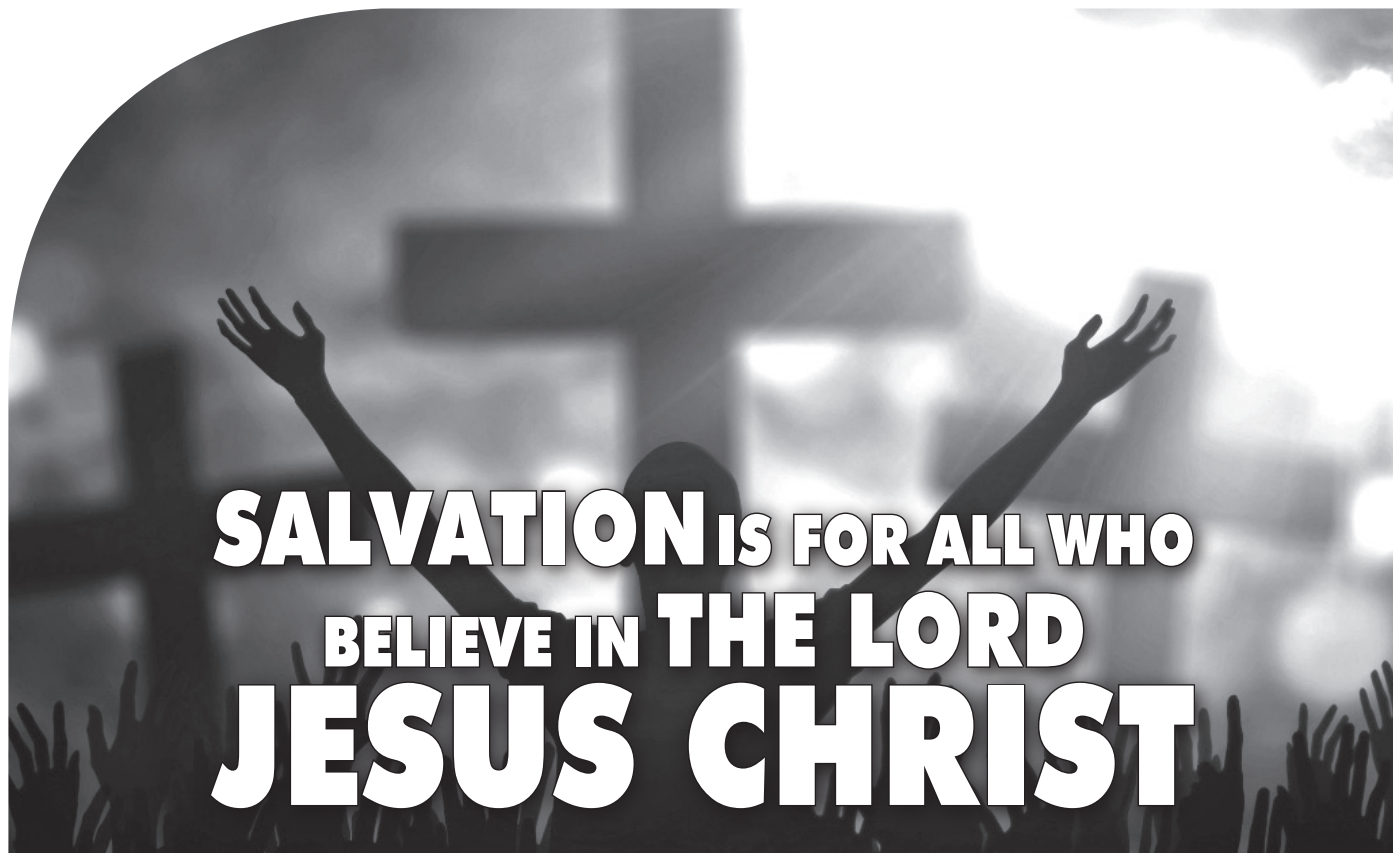
A Tribute to a Faithful Servant of God

Crumbs From The Table

Rev. Dr.T. Valson Abraham

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SALVATION IS FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST



J.N. MANOKARAN

A Civil Engineer by profession. God called him and his family to be a missional leader in Haryana as cross-cultural missionaries for eleven years.

Since 1997 they returned back to Tamil Nadu to help missionaries and pastors to build their capacities by teaching, training and writing.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is believed there are ten thousand religions in the world. The followers of religions have a goal to search and find the truth, attain salvation, attain godhood, be immersed in the ultimate soul, or become nothing (nihilism). There are numerous ideas, even contradictory to attain this. The methods also are varied, some simple, some difficult, some complicated, some adventurous, some immoral, and some even end in physical death. The Bible teaches that God has put eternity in the hearts of humans (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Hence, there are so many religions, trying to fill that vacuum by several substitutes or counterfeits.

II. WHAT IS SALVATION?

The Biblical understanding of salvation is not the same, as that sought by many religious people. Some people think that this life is a bondage, and death itself is salvation. For others, it is deliverance from the cycle of births. People believe that there are rebirths into this world as different species from seven to eighty-four lakhs (8.4 million) times. Some believe that life is like a candle, when the candle dies, it lights another candle. According to some philosophies, all will come to nothing. This is a rebellious philosophy that God created all out of nothing but expects all to become nothing with the spirit of Satan that is hell-bent on stealing, killing, and destroying.

2.1. The Fall

Satan disguised himself as a serpent in the Garden of Eden, sowed the seed of doubt, and seduced Adam and Eve to sin. First, the desire to be wise: It is not wrong. However, the goal of the desire was to become like God and know good and evil. Second, delight to the eyes is a pleasant process. She wanted an experience that



came out of all senses. Third, to be like God, not knowing what it means to be God. The aspiration for upward mobility pulled them down. (Genesis 3:1-24)

2.2. Fear, shame and guilt

They were afraid, hid themselves; were ashamed, and made garments of fig leaves stitching them together and were guilty, and experienced spiritual death. Hence, any process of salvation must bring them back to their original state before Fall.

2.3. Three dimensions

Past: It is deliverance from the penalty of sin. Those who receive Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for humanity was buried, and rose again are forgiven, declared righteous, clothed with the garment of salvation, and reconciled with God. Fear, shame, and guilt are taken care of.

Present: It is deliverance from the power of sin. God gives power to defeat temptation, and sin, and be victorious. Those who fear the Lord need not fear any man

“
Satan disguised himself as a serpent in the Garden of Eden, sowed the seed of doubt, and seduced Adam and Eve to sin. First, the desire to be wise: It is not wrong. However, the goal of the desire was to become like God and know good and evil.
 ”

or circumstances. They do not have the spirit of fear but of glory and power. Also are eternally worshipping priests.

Future: In Heaven, there would be no fear or shame or guilt, but holiness, glory, worship, joy, fellowship, and eternal peace.

III. WHAT IS SIN?

Because he murdered his brother in a property dispute he was arrested and jailed. In the jail he refused non-vegetarian food, stating he was a religious person and did not eat meat. For him, eating meat was a sin, but not his anger, rage, and violent murder. However, the Bible provides a vivid picture of sin. Essentially, sin is against God’s nature.

3.1. Lawlessness: All lawlessness is sin. (I John 3:4) When people think there is no God or their

God is inactive, they disregard the laws. Such a person behaves as if there is neither God nor His judgment. Not only individuals but even communities, societies, or nations could become lawless. When society approves Sati, the burning of a widow along with her dead husband is lawlessness. During the time of Judges, in Israel, each one did what they thought was right, disregarding the Law of Moses. (Judges 21:25)

3.2. All unrighteousness is sin: (1 John 5:17) Righteousness is doing what is always right in the sight of God. There is no situational ethics, where a person could behave according to the context. Unrighteousness is injustice. It is a desire to break out of God's authority, will, standards, and his divine purpose.

3.3. Negligence: Sin is to know, understand, and have the capacity to do good, but not do it willfully. (James 4:17) In other words, lack of stewardship of God's resources and opportunities.

3.4. Evil desire: All manner of evil desire is sin. (Romans 7:8) Like gravity that pulls everything towards the earth, human nature is prone to sin. Hence, Paul writes to put to death the evil desires. (Colossians 3:5-6) A believer has to take up the cross and embrace daily death as a living sacrifice, thus putting to death evil desires. (Matthew 16:24-26; Romans 12:1)

3.5. Trespass: Paul writes that believers are made alive, as they were dead in their trespasses (Ephesians 2:1). It is straying beyond the boundaries or limits or going astray. Taking false steps or missteps lead to the wrong direction. When an athlete discards the track and runs in the next runner's track, that is trespass.

3.6. Eternal death

The Bible declares that all have

sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) There are no exceptions. Death is separation. When a person is physically dead, he is taken away from living and placed in a graveyard. The dead could not communicate with the living, hence isolated from the living. Sin causes separation from God which is spiritual death. However, God offers a way for reconciliation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who reject will endure the Second Death, the Eternal separation from God; condemned to the Lake of Fire along with Satan and his demons.

IV. MANY WAYS FOR SALVATION?

The search for truth, salvation, eternal

The sacrifices of Judaism pointed towards the sacrifice of Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate and only sacrifice acceptable to God for the salvation of humanity.

bliss...etc., has been pursued throughout the history of humanity. Tragically, many have been life-long seekers of truth, but could not discover or discern the truth. Interestingly, these unaccomplished and unattained seekers also propagate that the path they have chosen is right and solicit followers. Trusting them, are there many followers? The Lord Jesus Christ stated this as blind leading the blind and both would fall into a pit. (Matthew 15:14)

4.1. Inadequacy of many methods

Though there are many ideas, methods, rituals, and beliefs; they are inefficient

and inadequate for universal application. That means, all humans could not know or follow any one method. That means salvation (even according to their definition) is available to a few, who could get these skills or knowledge or mystical powers. As God is One, so is His Way of Salvation.

4.2. Myriad of methods

Here are some methods or ideas that are proposed for eternity, that are not universal, hence should be rejected.

Gnana marga: This is the path of knowledge, against ignorance. It is not about sin or shame, the problem according to this belief is ignorance. For them, true knowledge, not intellectual is to know the unity of Brahman (God) and at man (human) by rejecting the illusion (Maya), of the world. It is possible, only for those who have access to that knowledge and scriptures. As even scriptures are forbidden for most humanity, a majority will be deprived of reaching salvation through this method.

Bhakti marga: It is choosing to express extreme devotion to a personal god/goddess. Sometimes, it is extreme forms of devotion including piercing the tongue, reaching the temple by rolling on the road etc. This also is not for all people to practice.

Karma marga: This is to faithfully do the work or duty of the caste one is born. If he is born into a cobbler family, he should fulfill the duty of a cobbler. Also, he should renounce the fruit of all works. Duty to be done without the expectation of fruit. Reward or remuneration, eschewing any other aspiration, which only very few people are willing to try.

Tapasya: Some people wish to attain unity with God by hard penance. They practice for years together with high concentration. They control their bodies with their minds. Some sit in the snow mountains unaffected by cold or sit or stand in difficult postures, and some are unmindful of their surroundings which could be filthy. Again, this is possible by very few people.

Pilgrimage: In some religions, undertaking

a pilgrimage to one or a few holy sites to be believed to earn their salvation. The pilgrimage is expensive, and most people cannot afford it.

Sacrifice: Like Judaism, many religions and cults practice ritual sacrifice. The priests may suck and drink the blood of the animal or could be slaughtered with blood. The sacrifices of Judaism pointed towards the sacrifice of Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate and only sacrifice acceptable to God for the salvation of humanity.

Good works: Others believe in good works. That could be feeding cows, crows, doves and sheltering stray animals. Few others may help people in need like providing food or helping poor children to get an education.

4.3. Salvation: Grace, Faith, and Gift

Paul writes: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

Grace: Justice is receiving the punishment all sinners deserve; Mercy is not receiving the punishment all sinners deserve; Grace is God taking initiative to show mercy and grant forgiveness to sinners. Someone said that grace is God's mercy towards Ill-deserving, Nil-deserving, and Hell-deserving sinners.

Gift: The grace cannot be earned, it cannot be borrowed, and it cannot be stolen. It can only be received in faith as a gift of God.

Faith: Christian faith is not a blind faith. It is not faith on faith itself. Some think that their faith is so strong to altar destiny and eternity. They are tragically mistaken. The Faith is not based on philosophy or speculations. It is not a theory or formula. But it is based on the Person Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of God is the second person of the Trinity. He incarnated and was born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem. On the Cross of Calvary, he died shedding His blood as the Lamb of God, the substitute for humanity. In the Garden tomb he was buried but rose again on the Third day. He appeared for forty days to over five hundred people. As people watched, He

ascended to heaven in the clouds. Angels declared that he will come again in the same manner he was taken up to heaven.

V. FEASIBILITY AND POSSIBILITY

The Gospel embraces the whole world, all humans irrespective of their age, background, race, caste, clan, nationality, gender, education, or economic status.

5.1. Invitation

God invites all people to come and taste His goodness, love, and power. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" (Psalms 34:8 ESV) This is not only an invitation but a challenge for those who do not even believe in Him. Those who take refuge in Him are blessed. Lord Jesus Christ invited all those who were burdened to come and experience his Shalom, peace, and rest. (Matthew 11:26) Those who do not have money could come to Him and have Bread and Water for free. (John 6:35-38)

5.2. Free

All good things God gives to humans are free. Oxygen is provided for all humanity. When a person is sick, if there is a need to administer oxygen, is expensive. Water is an abundantly available resource. God sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous without partiality and provides it for free. (Matthew 5:45) As in the natural realm, so it is in the supernatural realm or spiritual realm. God's gift of salvation includes forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, eternal citizenship in His Kingdom, and eternal dwelling in Heaven. This is a Free Gift, as God has paid for the same. Father God sent His Son to die for the atonement of humanity. Son of God paid the price, accepting the wages of sin, the death by shedding his last drop of blood. He was buried, rose again, and ascended to Heaven. Seated at the right hand of the Father, he intercedes for His people. The Holy Spirit has been poured on the Church to indwell in believers and also work in the world to prepare the hearts to receive the seeds of the gospel.

5.3. Basis of faith alone

What is required of a person to receive this

great salvation? God requires faith. "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) First, a person should believe, that God exists. Second, he should draw near to Him, or approach Him as God demands. That is to repent from sin, forsake sinful ways, accept that s/he is a sinner, and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross as a substitute for her/him. Third, expect rewards or gifts of salvation, shalom, and all His divine blessings.

5.4. Possible for all

To trust in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is possible for all humans. Just as they are, they ought to come. There are no fees, penance, sacrifice, offerings, pilgrimage, alms, fasting, lamenting...only faith is required, and anyone can exercise this. Hence, the Only Living God has Only One Way of Salvation and can be accessed by anyone who approaches in faith. Whosoever believes in Him will not perish. (John 3:16) Those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:13)

VI. CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGE

The Bible attests that God is the Creator, Redeemer, and Judge. The Holy God cannot compromise with sin by letting go of sin unpunished. In His mercy, He sent His Son to substitute and bear the judgment on the Cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated His love for humanity and Resurrection attested His divinity and power to save. The only way and the only Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. The principle of faith to receive salvation applies to all humanity and those who call upon His name, have faith, and take refuge in Him will be saved. ●

From front cover inside



***With Pastor M.V. Varghese and
Dr. & Mrs. Thomson K. Mathew***

He also served as Vice President of the Kerala State Council for many years.

As pastor, instructor, and administrator, he was a master storyteller, illustrator, and Bible teacher. He conducted himself and his ministry with dignity and excellence, whether the occasion was a wedding, funeral, ordination, or communion service. He was always well-dressed and well-groomed. He always had a fit word for the occasion.

He has written poems and devotional songs, eloquently presenting biblical truths, writing and presenting them according to his audience's needs.

Throughout the years, he was an invaluable source to me in my various roles. He shared many stories and illustrations of how my grandfather, father, or

other senior pastors solved multiple problems that arose at different times. His insights immensely helped me as I led the ministry in north India and as General Secretary and General President of IPC.

After his life partner, Mrs. Kunjamma Varghese, passed away in 1995, he lived Mondays through Fridays at the faculty residence of India Bible College and Seminary. Each Friday evening, he went to stay with his youngest son, M. V. Philip (Sunny) and his family, who took excellent care of him.

For many years, he ministered in various churches in his district and other places every weekend.

For years after his wife's passing, he ate his meals with my parents at the bungalow. My father's daily routine was to have tea with him every day after 4 PM, along with a couple of other senior faculty members in the living room. Together, they had many delightful conversations.

I invited him to speak for our 100th IPC Convention on Sunday, January 21, 2024. God anointed his message, and it touched the hearts of all. After a few days, he attained his own century year.

His son, Sunny, brought him that Sunday, saying they left the house at 6.30 AM, and Pastor Varghese drank only a cup of coffee to arrive in time for the communion service at 8 AM. He attended both communion service and the regular Sunday service from 8 AM to 1 PM, then greeted various people, only eating lunch at 2.45 PM. What a great fellowship we had around the dining table, taking pictures. He prayed for us and left around 4 PM.

He was alert and filled with good humor until the end. When my sister, Mercy, and her husband, Georgie, visited him in the hospital the day before he passed away, he conversed and attended prayer very carefully and assured his prayers for the new academic year at IBC.

He was precious and loyal to Christ, his Lord and Savior, treasured and beloved to his family, precious and faithful to his church, precious and loyal to my grandfather, father, and our family for over 84 years, serving his family and God's people with integrity and dignity. He was a man without greed for money or fame and had a great sense of humor.

May the Lord raise many more eagles like Pastor M.V. Varghese to train many young sparrows. ●

LESSONS FROM A CENTENARIAN: A LIFE OF FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

Lt. Col. V I Luke & Starla
India Bible College and Seminary

... **because** we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself (II Corinthians 4:14).

That old age is a blessing from the Lord and that one should never be afraid of aging, is one of the primary lessons we have learnt from dear Appachen, Pastor M. V. Varghese. He had the firm confidence that when life on this earth ended, he would be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was one of the most vibrant and sharp-

minded 100 year old's we have known!

Even at 100, Pastor M. V. Varghese was being renewed daily from within – a reality evidenced in his conversations. We enjoyed catching up on the phone these past few years when Appachen could not come to Kumbanad regularly. It was a pleasure to listen to his lively voice, brimming with joy and every tele-conversation ended with a prayer for us, Valsonchayan, the Bible College and the IPC at large.

Appachen practiced gratitude. His life

brimmed with thankfulness, a quiet and gentle spirit – toward God and towards those who served or looked after him. He was immensely grateful to be part of IBC and loved the faculty, staff and students alike.

He expressed certitude: He was a teacher who taught with absolute conviction and surety. His doctrinal stand was unshakeable. His sound expositions from the Word of God were crystal clear to the learners, which he has faithfully passed on to thousands, both at Hebron Bible College and India Bible College. Heaven and eternity will reveal the multiplied fruit from his labors.

His Pastoral Theology classes were filled with lively and humorous examples of how not to perform certain ministries! His contribution to the church and world is the enormous treasure of equipped men and women in the mission field today. Though he would make one laugh through his wit, he always had a deep truth to be conveyed through that.

He developed fortitude: He had power to endure. He has withstood challenging times and underwent hardships aplenty. But he did not yield to pressure. Appachen did not go looking for greener pastures nor did he seek higher heights. He bloomed right where he was planted.

He displayed decorum, dignity and discipline: in all aspects of personal and social life. He was a careful and balanced, healthy eater. Dressed well and was always



carefully turned out. There was great discipline in his preaching. Every time he was on the pulpit, he was careful to exalt none but Christ. We have never heard him grumble or show dissatisfaction about anything - be it in the long durations of his stay on Hebron Campus, his room or the food. He was a very satisfied man of God.

Many of us and even Appachen's son, Sunny desired that at least part of the Homegoing service be held at Hebron, Kumbanad - since Appachen, in his healthy years, lived more in Kumaband, than in his own home. However, we understand the vagaries of the weather are what deprived us the privilege. Appachen studied at Hebron Bible School in the early 1940's and lived on that campus for 55 to 60 years.

During the Kumbanad convention week, especially on the last Sunday, Appachen came to Hebron Bungalow very early in the morning to attend the Holy Communion and Worship Services. He would be fasting and no amount of coercing him would make him eat anything until the end of the service, irrespective of when the service ended.

For Pastor M. V. Varghese, everyday was a celebration. He enjoyed the company of those who celebrated life and Jesus. The senior teachers at India Bible College during 2000 - 2012 or so, were - Pastors M. V. Varghese, George Oommen, T. C. Easow, C. I. Cherian and K. M. John along with our beloved father, Pastor T. S. Abraham, All of them were excellent teachers of the Word and were respected as the patriarchs of the Bible College. Almost every evening at 4:00 PM, they met at the Bungalow along with Pastor K. J. James over a cup of tea and vada or snack and exchanged notes of the day and



shared their laughter and joy over the incidents from their classrooms. It was a joy to simply be part of these lighter moments, watching them laugh and enjoy life together. Those were precious moments when we had the privilege of serving Appachen.

Appachen was faculty at Hebron Bible College since 1955-1956 and continued that ministry at India Bible College and Seminary where he served as Vice Principal. Even in this year's IBC Faculty list, Appachen's name figured as FACULTY EMERITUS and it was with much pain that we dropped the name from the list yesterday afternoon.

The weddings that Appachen solemnized were truly solemn occasions. The semi-classical songs he sang in his deep rich voice, far outweighed any professional singer. He really did not need a microphone. When he solemnized a wedding at the Hebron Church less than 3 years ago, we could hear him sing, crystal clear, while seated in the Hebron Bungalow!! In his classes, he took time to explain to the students the context of each song / writer.

All of us siblings are grateful to God for granting Pastor M. V. Varghese the health to officiate at the graveside services of the funeral of both our parents - Pastor and Mrs. T. S. Abraham. We salute this minister

of the Gospel who spoke and taught the Living Word of God for 77 years!!

Both of us deeply loved Appachen and it was reciprocated in great measure. We admired his spontaneity in wit and ability to hold captive the audience during his messages or teachings. He never hesitated to share how God worked in his life and the lessons he learnt from those experiences. Each instance has proven to help us in our own walk of faith.

We commend Sunny and Shobha and their children - Feba, Febin, Alen and Ashley for the excellent care they ensured Appachen received. They have fulfilled their responsibilities faithfully and great will be their reward.

Pastor M. V. Varghese lived a life of honor and integrity. He is resting from his earthly labors. We look forward with great Hope to the day when we will see dear Appachen in eternity with Christ, awaiting his great and eternal reward.

The IPC Alapuzha District and the IPC have indeed lost a great spiritual leader. May the void created by the passing of dear Appachen be filled with men of vision and spiritual valor.

"At most you will live a hundred years on earth, but you will spend forever in eternity." Rick Warren ●

BIBLE TEACHER AND GENTLEMAN

Yes, surely we will miss our dear Appachan. It is a great loss for IBC and IPC community. Treasure the sweet fellowship when we all could spend time with him in January 2024....Appachan lived a full and fruitful life.

He was a great Bible teacher and preacher, gentle person who always had a smiling face. It was interesting times listening to the conversation between my Dad, Pastor George Oommen and Pastor M V Varghese. In late 1980's while he was visiting Kuwait, Appachan visited us along with his daughter and family and we had a great and friendly conversation.

His dear wife, Mrs Kunjamma Varghese (Ponvelimannil

family) was a member of our local church, IPC Poovathoor.

Sweet memories of his presence and his message at the 100th General Convention will always remain in our hearts.

Praying for all dear family members and loved ones during this difficult time. Praising God for the blessed hope that we will see dear Appachan on that beautiful shore...

**Mr. Jacob Thomas & Annie Jacob
(Shaji & Molly)**

M.V. APPACHEN

Mrs. Shirley Chacko

Treasured memories of dear Pastor M.V. Varghese Appachen

His sense of humor, laughter and his sound teaching will be missed.

Daddy (late Pastor T.S.Abraham) and Late Pastor George Oommen enjoyed having breakfast and other meals together around the dining table in Hebron bungalow. I remember serving them breakfast especially during 1990-1991 when I was staying at Hebron Bungalow.

Appachen never criticized anyone nor was he judgemental. His love was always unconditional and consistent.

Appachen fought the fight, finished the race and kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

Praising God for the wonderful long life that Appachen lived.

We will see him soon in eternity with Christ Jesus.

Our love, prayers and condolences to the grieving families, IBC and Seminary and India Pentecostal Church at large.

**Pastor M. V. Varghese
has always been a
shining star in
IBC&S as well as IPC**

His Noble and Royal Stature, Bold stance for Truth, Friendly approach, Dedication to Ministry, Scholarly Classes, Profound teaching of God's Word, Practical Wisdom, and Beautiful Sense of Humour have always been an inspiration for us.

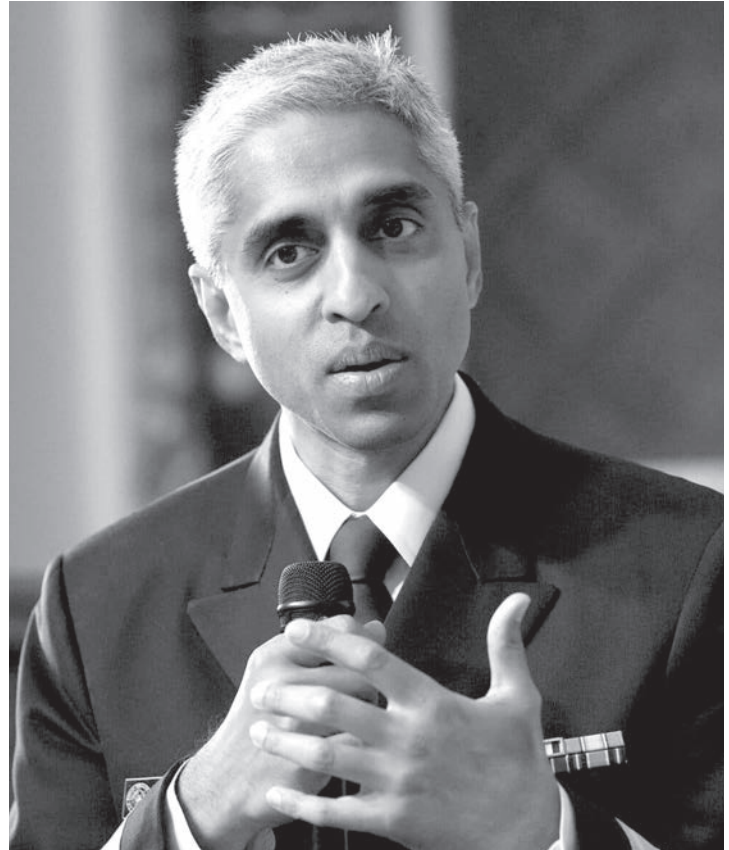
Pastor Emmanuel P. G.

A CONTENT MAN!

As I remember Pastor M.V. Varghese Appachen I have a lot to say. He was a man of integrity. He used to talk and share his ministerial experiences with juniors like me. We enjoyed his humorous talk. I have observed, many times his personal reading the Bible and underlining important verses. He was a Bible student even in his 90's. He was not money-minded. He was content with what he had. May the Lord give us people like him.

Pastor Varghese Chacko

The U.S. Surgeon General Calls for Warning Label on Social Media Platforms



Dr. Vivek Murthy, the nation's top health official, cannot unilaterally require warning labels. Congress would have to approve such an action, and no such legislation has yet been introduced in either chamber.

The U.S. surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, announced on Monday that he would push for a warning label on social media platforms advising parents that using the platforms might damage adolescents' mental health.

Warning labels — like those that appear on tobacco and alcohol products — are one of the most powerful tools available to the nation's top health official, but Dr. Murthy cannot unilaterally require them; the action requires approval by Congress.

The proposal builds on several years of escalating warnings from the surgeon general. In a May 2023 advisory, he recommended that parents immediately set limits on phone use, and urged Congress to swiftly develop health and safety standards for technology platforms.

He also called on tech companies to make changes: to share internal data on the health impact of their products; to allow independent safety audits; and restrict features like push notifications, autoplay and infinite scroll, which he says "prey on developing brains and contribute to excessive use."

In an interview, Dr. Murthy said he had been deeply frustrated by the platforms' reluctance to do so. "I don't think we can solely rely on the hope that the platforms can fix this problem on their own," he said. "They've had 20 years."

He said that he was "quite optimistic" that legislators will put forward a bill requiring a warning label, which he envisioned would appear regularly on screens when people use social media sites.

The push for a warning label sets up a battle between the Biden administration and the tech industry, which has sued several states for laws on social media.

Technology companies are likely to argue that the science on the harmful effects of social media is not settled. They will also invoke free speech law, arguing that the government cannot force companies to carry a product warning, which is sometimes described as “compelled speech.”

“Legally speaking, it’s no different from a Trump administration surgeon general declaring there needs to be a warning label on mainstream media because he deems it to be fake news,” said Adam Kovacevich, Chief Executive of Chamber of Progress, a tech lobbying firm. “It’s all the same abuse of government’s power to infringe on speech.”

That challenge may find a sympathetic ear in U.S. courtrooms, with a cohort of judges who show less deference to public health regulations than their predecessors did, said Claudia E. Haupt, a professor of law and political science at Northeastern University School of Law.

For more than a decade, cigarette companies have successfully used a First Amendment argument to fend off a requirement that they print a graphic photograph of diseased lungs on tobacco products, she said.

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the surgeon general’s proposal. Spokespeople for YouTube and X declined to comment.

The surgeon general’s call to action received support from two senators, Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, and Marsha Blackburn, Republican of Tennessee, the authors of the Kids Online Safety Act, which would require platforms to take a range of steps to protect minors on social media but does not include warning labels.

“We are pleased that the Surgeon General — America’s top doctor — continues to bring attention to the harmful impact that social media has on our children,” a joint

statement from the two senators said.

Past warning labels have had significant effects on behavior. In 1965, after a landmark report from the surgeon general, Congress voted to require all cigarette packages distributed in the United States to carry a warning that using the product “may be hazardous to your health.”

Thus began a 50-year decline in smoking. When the warning labels first appeared, around 42 percent of U.S. adults were daily cigarette smokers; by 2021, that portion had dropped to 11.5 percent.

There is fierce debate among researchers about whether social media is behind the crisis in child and adolescent mental health. In his new book, “The Anxious Generation,” the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt points to the rise of smartphones in the late aughts as an inflection point that led to a sharp increase in suicidal behavior and reports of despair.

Other experts say that, while the rise of social media has coincided with declines in well-being, there is no evidence that one caused the other, and point instead to factors like economic hardship, social isolation, racism, school shootings and the opioid crisis.

In an essay published in The New York Times opinion section on Monday, Dr. Murthy pointed to research showing that teens who spent more than three hours a day on social media faced a significantly higher risk of mental health problems, and that 46 percent of adolescents said that social media made them feel worse about their bodies.

U.S. teens are spending an average of 4.8 hours per day on social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, according to a Gallup survey of more than 1,500 adolescents released last fall.

In an interview last month, Dr. Murthy said he had repeatedly heard from young people who “can’t get off the platforms,” often finding that hours had passed despite their intention to just check their feeds.

“The platforms are designed to maximize how much time we all spend on them,”

he said. “It’s one thing to do that to an adult, and another thing to do it to a child, whose impulse control is still developing, whose brain is at a sensitive phase of development.”

Dr. Murthy has long indicated that he views social media as a health risk. In his May 2023 advisory on the subject, he warned that “there are ample indicators that social media can also have a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.”

He cautioned at the time, though, that the effects of social media were not fully understood. Research suggests that the platforms offer both risks and benefits, providing community for young people who might otherwise feel marginalized.

On Monday, he said he had concluded that “the balance of risk versus harm does not justify the use of social media for adolescents.”

“We have put young people in a position where, in order to get some benefits,” like connection with friends, “we’re telling them they have to endure significant harms,” he said. He added, “we have enough information now to act to make the platforms safer.”

Dr. Murthy has steadily dialed up his tone of urgency on the dangers of social media, comparing the current moment with landmark battles in the history of public health.

“One of the most important lessons I learned in medical school was that in an emergency, you don’t have the luxury to wait for perfect information,” he wrote in his essay on Monday. “You assess the available facts, you use your best judgment, and you act quickly.” ●



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Opening Prayer: Pastor P. A. Mathew
Vice-Principal



Worship lead by Rev. Abraham Chacko
and Ms. Akza K. Samuel, Faculty



Worship Time



Introductory Words: Pastor Dr. Saju Joseph
Principal



Lunch Time



Dr. Jacob Cherian, One of the Resource Persons,
Translation: Rev. Jestin Jacob, Faculty



Mrs. Sheela Isaac
One of the Resource
Persons



Dr. Jacob Cherian, Resource Person, Translation:
Rev. Eldho K. Mohan, Faculty



Mrs. Jency Joy Blesson,
Faculty leads singing



Rev. Arputharaj, Newly Appointed Faculty



Interactive Sessions: Faculty and Staff in Small Groups Sharing Life Experiences

INDIA BIBLE COLLEGE AND SEMINARY FACULTY & STAFF RETREAT 2024



Rev. Jacob Isaac, One of the Resource Persons,
Translation: Rev Phinni Kuruville, Faculty



Worship Time - Lead by Rev. Shalin Lal, Mrs. Rachel Karan Raju, Faculties
and Mrs. Blessy Anu Koshy



Mrs. Starla Luke, Vice Presidetn (Admin.) announces staff policies etc.
Translation: Ajeesh George, Dean of Academics

