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# revive

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# GOOD NEWS!!



**Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham**

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**E**ven when we do not think of God, we all depend constantly upon His presence in our lives. The more we see and experience His glory and grace in our daily lives, the greater our freedom.

When Isaiah met God in the temple, he heard the angels cry out,

“Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3)!

The whole earth is full of His glory! Yet tragically, most of the time, we fail to see it.

Go down the streets of any city, town or village and we may see only drab concrete and faded, peeling paint on neglected buildings. Observe the people walking about. How many of them walk about with stooped shoulders, dead eyes, and grim expressions on their faces.

Yet unnoticed, right before their eyes, may lie a glorious sunrise, a lovely child, a butterfly splashed with color and design beyond human imagination. Overhead, graceful flocks of birds may head for unknown destinations, guided by instincts still little understood.

Every day, on every side, we are surrounded by thousands of signs of a glorious God—if we can recognize them. But how many times we miss these things because we are too absorbed with worry, doubt and frantic schedules! All too often, WE may be those grim-faced people on the streets!

In Romans, Paul says, “Since creation, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen...” In other words, HIS GLORY. But...

“Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks.”

More often than we like to think, this appalling verdict claims all of us. We all become blind prisoners of myopic vision, futile thoughts and self-

# CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

defeating actions. We all fail to see the glory of God around us. Often, talk of God’s glory feels empty because it appears to contradict our daily experience of mediocrity, sorrow and failure. Too often, in guilt and shame, we slink away into dark holes and prisons, compounding our own un-glory.

And also compounding our loss of freedom. But by God’s grace, this is not the full scope of things. The Gospel of John tells us, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw HIS GLORY, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14).

That glory of God on earth came to live among us when a young teenage girl gave birth to the Son of God in a manger. It ended with his death on a cross. In Romans, Paul tells us that on the cross, we, too, were crucified with Him. Three days later, He rose again, and we were also raised with Him, so that our old life of mediocrity, sorrow and failure might become absorbed and transformed by His resurrection GLORY. He lives for all eternity, now and forever. So do we who trust in Him.

In short, through His birth in a manger, death on a cross and resurrection from a tomb, He has already given us the gift of His glory to experience now-and a new gift of freedom.

The battle is already over, and the victory is already won. The prison doors have flown open. The shades are up, and the glorious light of God is already shining upon us. Already, God tells us, “Get up! You are free! Walk out from your cell into all that I planned for you before I created the universe! You are already children in my heavenly kingdom!”

All around us, it is possible to experience signs of His presence in the sights, sounds, smells around us. The image of God is written in the faces of each person we see. We see the lessons of God in the ants and the bees. We see the power of God in the stars.

Already it is possible for us to experience what Jack Hayford calls a “Mary Miracle.” Whether or not we experience it depends only upon if we have eyes to see the glory of God, to “expect great things of God and to attempt great things for God.”

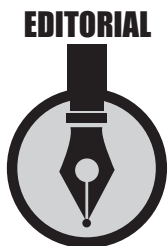
God is ready and waiting. What about us?

There is no more reason to stay in our prisons. Only if we believe the lies of the enemy will we stay where we are. Let us be done with lesser things.

The rest of the world still sees only prison cells around them. They still walk about with grim expressions on their faces, awaiting their freedom. Let us help them to see the glory and freedom of God we are just discovering!

**Father God**, forgive me for the many times I am blind to your glory all around me. Open my eyes to see and ears to hear your glorious presence in this world and in my life that I might experience your freedom. Give me a mind and heart for others who do not yet know you, that they will also experience your glory and freedom in Jesus Christ. **Amen.** ●

# CONTENTS

**05****BRETHERN,  
LET US PRAY****Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew****06****ETERNAL LIFE  
ONLY THROUGH  
JESUS CHRIST****Pastor P.T. Thomas****12****THE NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
TO CONQUER SATANIC  
FORCES IN MISSION****Dr. Shaibu Abraham****17****MISSIONARY STRATEGIES OF PAUL  
ACCORDING TO ACTS 13: A PARADIGM  
FOR EARLY CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM****Jency Joy Blesson**

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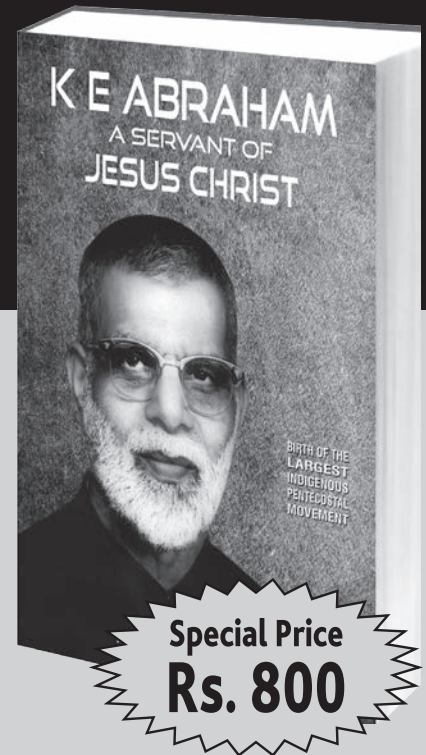
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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

# BRETHERN, LET US PRAY

**One** of the purposes of the church is to evangelize the world with the Gospel.

In the great commission, our Lord Jesus Christ said, *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matt. 28: 19, 20). The modern world we live in is the product of this very statement of Jesus Christ. All the universities including Yale and Harvard we see around the globe, hospitals, orphanages, and all other humanitarian, philanthropic institutions came into existence as a result of this commandment.

Gospel not only changes the individual but the society at large. It all began with the Jerusalem church. It is recorded in the Scriptures, *"Those who had been scattered preached the Word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there"* (Acts 8:4). The church in Antioch is the best example of spreading the Gospel. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, *"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. With no grain of ambiguity,*

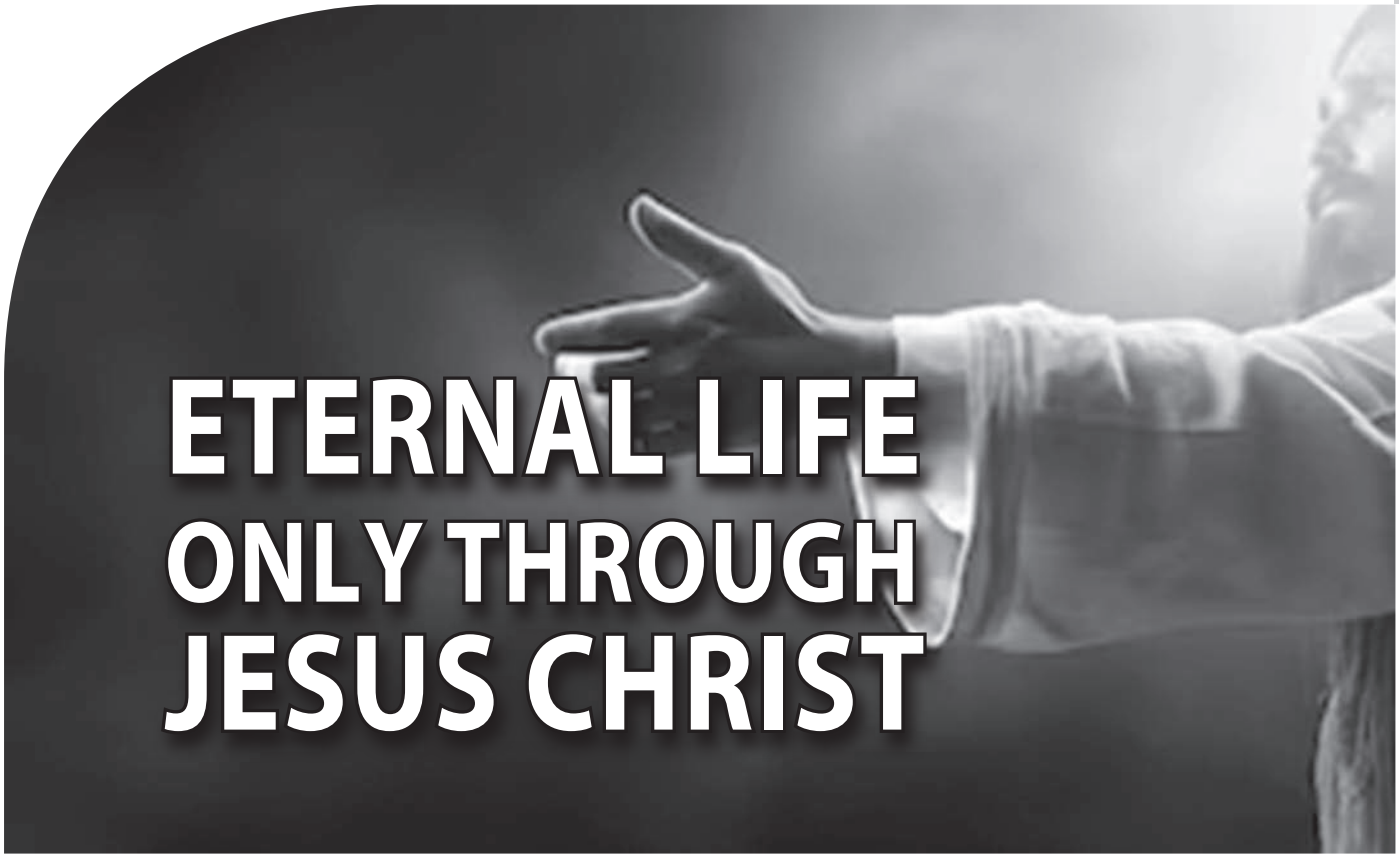
*they laid their hands on them and sent them out. It so happened after the church's prayer and fasting. It is of utmost importance to send people, but the church needs to pray before that.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ says again, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"* ( Luke 10:2).

Yes, prayer is important in all our endeavors.

Leonard Ravenhill's words make sense: The church has many organizers, but few agonizers; many who pay, but few who pray; many resters, but few wrestlers; many who are enterprising, but few who are interceding. People who are not praying are playing. The secret of praying is praying in secret. A worldly Christian will stop praying and a praying Christian will stop worldliness. Tithes may build a church, but tears will give it life. That is the difference between the modern church and the early church. In the matter of effective praying, never have so many left so much to so few.

Brethren, let us pray. ●



# ETERNAL LIFE ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

**PASTOR P T THOMAS**

Bible Teacher and Pastor  
Kerala

**Sociologists** are of opinion that peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious society demands avoidance of absolute stand by spiritual thinkers. This has influenced Christian theologians resulting in the formation of two streams of thought – inclusivism and exclusivism. Inclusivism holds that anyone from any religion who sincerely seeks after God and faithfully keeps the precepts of his faith will be exempted from condemnation and accepted into heavenly bliss. It was no fault of his that one was born into his particular religion. Every religion has its virtues and prescribed life-styles. It is no easy thing to change one's accustomed way of life and start venerating another deity. God checks the hearts and will honour the sincerity of a godly person. This reasoning seems plausible to make inclusivism acceptable to a casual observer.

## EXCLUSIVISM

Now exclusivism holds that propitiation on sin and eternal life can be attained only by faith in Jesus Christ. Any deviation from this truth is contrary to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has unambiguously stated: "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Even devout believers display only the first part of the verse as wall-texts, banners and other display items. But it is the second part that explains the first part. It explicitly states the exclusiveness of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Many religious leaders and philosophers have taught many noble ideas. Miracle workers too are there in human history.

What makes Jesus Christ unique is that He is the only one who has opened the way of salvation from sin external damnation. Jesus is the only way to the holy God and external life. This absolute truth is frowned upon as narrow minded and ungenerous. For fear of such calumny, even some well-meaning Christian theologians tend to lean towards inclusivism. It degenerates Christianity to the level of a commendable



socio-cultural philosophy laced up with spirituality. This tendency is detrimental to the eternal destiny, not only of Christians, but of the whole mankind. So everyone should be convinced of this firm foundational faith of Christianity.

### MAN AND ETERNITY

God is the only eternal being, man is an eternal creature. That means, God has been there and will be there all through eternity, having no beginning non ending. He is the absolute truth from whom and by whom and for whom has everything come into being. He is the ultimate cause and source of anything that has been and ever will be. But man is created for eternity. Man has a beginning, but no ending. Man's physical death is only a shifting from the temporary to the eternal. Eternity is sometimes taken as unending time. Some consider time as a slice cut out from eternity as an arc is from a circle. They speak of part eternity and eternity that would be on future eternity. Someone has even written a book titled: "From

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” ”

Eternity to Eternity". Such a view is a misconception of eternity. If a slice is carved out from eternity, it is no longer eternity. Once an arc is cut out from a circle it no longer is a circle.

The chief feature of eternity is not endlessness, but unchangingness – even immutability. It is the nature of God. Time has a beginning and, as of today, runs parallel to eternity and will have an ending. Man's death is the door through which he passes from time to eternity. Once he gets into eternity, there is no scope for any change in his condition.

In eternity there are two states decreed for man-one is eternal life and the other is eternal death. There is an interim stage before the consummation of these two states. Time is allotted to man to choose and prepare for his state in eternity. So the perfect consummation of the states will



usher in when time shall be no more. Now those who pass from time into eternity through the door of death are in a state of waiting. The righteous ones are in bliss awaiting the trumpet call at the second coming of the Lord. The unsaved ones are in agony awaiting the last judgement.

### ETERNAL LIFE

As a man is created for eternity, he is bound to exist through eternity, either in life or in death. Death is separation and life is fellowship. So eternal life is eternal fellowship with God. God created man for cordial loving fellowship with Him. People often speak about escaping hell and entering heaven. To many heaven is a safe refuge center with untold joys and blessings. But the Bible presents heaven as the center of cordial loving fellowship with God. Jesus spoke of saints being worthy of Him, rather than being

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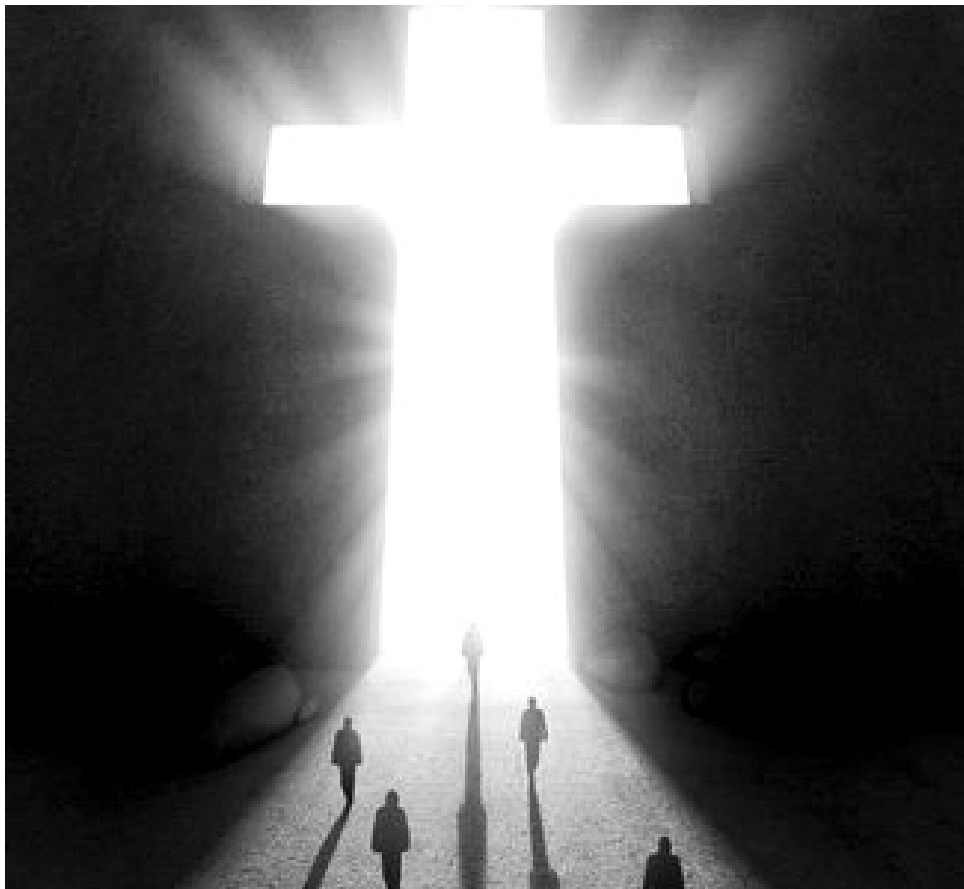
eligible to enter heaven. (Matt. 10:37, 38) The image of the bride and the groom is used to testify the relationship between the church and Jesus Christ explains this truth. To any loving bride, the groom is far more desirable and important than his mansion, wealth or position. So to enter eternal life, we have to become worthy of our beloved bridegroom, even Jesus Christ.

### THE NEED OF A MEDIATOR

If God created man for loving fellowship with Him, God would surely have endowed him with the needed goodness and merits for it. Then why does man need a mediator to inherit eternal life? Here comes the good story of man getting deceived and losing his right and ability to fellowship with the Holy God. Deceived by Satan man rebelled disobeyed and was lost from divine fellowship. Sin corrupted him internally and maimed him to such an extent that he cannot do the good he wants to do or keep away from the evil he wants to avoid. Consequently man stands condemned before the righteous God. So man needs to be saved from condemnation by propitiation of his sins. Anyone who takes God seriously is hunted by the guilty feeling of his sinfulness. His conscience keeps accusing him of his misdeeds. To calm down his disturbed inner soul, man willingly follows the rituals of his religion.

### THE WAY OF WORKS

All religions teach various rites, rituals, sacrifices, pilgrimages and what not for the propitiation of man's sins. Such rituals are held year after year till the end of one's life and are continued on their behalf by their progeny. The rituals are bound to be of no effect as they do not address the real problem. Sin is the problem to be addressed and it is not limited to actions. Sin is the corrupt inner state of man and has crippled him in the inner person resulting in his inability to pursue goodness. If sin was limited to works, its atonement too could have been possible by works. As sin relates to the inner person, only a reformation within can solve it.



## THE WAY OF FAITH

All the various ways taught by religions for the propitiation of sin can be classified into two groups—the way of works and the way of faith. The way of faith is unique to true Christianity. Even some Christian churches teach diverse rituals pre- and post- demise for getting one’s sins absolved. It does not come in the purview of the Bible or true Christianity. The way of faith teaches that all that was to be done for the remission of man’s sin was finished by Jesus Christ. The sacrificial death of the Lord is as perfect as perfection could be. Hence there is no more need or room for any other sacrifice. The one and only sacrifice of Jesus Christ is so perfect and sufficient that it has brought absolute righteousness once and for all for the whole mankind for ever and ever more (Heb. 10:14) Anyone who puts his faith in Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice will be made righteous freely. Judged by any or every standard, the way of faith

**The way of faith is unique to true Christianity. Even some Christian churches teach diverse rituals pre- and post- demise for getting one’s sins absolved. It does not come in the purview of the Bible or true Christianity.**

is the perfect way of salvation.

## IT IS DIVINE

The way of faith has its source in God. It is not something designed and decided on by man. Sin basically is rebellion against God. As every sin offends God, forgiveness also should come from God. Suppose, in a fit of fury ‘A’ strikes ‘B’ and ‘B’ dies. ‘B’ is the victim of cruelty and injustice. But ‘A’s action challenges God who gave life to ‘B’. God is more offended and hurt than B himself. As A cannot give the life back to B, the problem is beyond the control of the offender or the offended. A cannot get forgiveness from B nor can A provide any restitution. Now the case is before God, the righteous judge. His verdict is final and binding to all. God’s law demands life for life. Now the judge himself takes up the guilt of the crime and suffer the death penalty decreed on the criminal. If A repents and accepts the sacrificial death of the judge as his own death, he will be saved from condemnation. The legal system will accept that the decreed punishment is duly executed on him. Thereby justice is done and the condemned one is saved. This is the gist of the way of faith. God, not of His love for man, has prepared this perfect way of salvation. This is unique and Jesus is the only saviour.

## IT IS FREELY ACCESSIBLE

However perfect a way of salvation be, if it is beyond the reach of someone or anyone in the human race, it is limited to that extent. The way of faith is so simple to comprehend and so easily accessible to anyone that it is perfect in that way too. No physical ability or mental powers or material means is needed to avail it. Anyone with common sense and will power to take decision can freely avail the way

of faith into salvation. Mentally retarded people, zombies and little children who have not attained the age of accountability do not have the twin-abilities required to access the way of faith. But the righteous, loving God has made it available to them too. The Bible teaches that God has unconditionally exempted them from judgement on the basis of the perfect righteousness wrought by the unique sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Yes, the way of faith is freely accessible to anyone and everyone. Its accessibility makes it perfect as the only way to God.

## IT IS UNIVERSAL

The way of faith is not limited to any people group or religious sect – not even to the Christian community. In the very early days of the church, thousands of Israelites believed in Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. But very shortly the gospel was preached to the gentiles of all nations and they believed in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour before long the gentile believers far out – numbered the Jewish believers. The fact that Jesus was born, lived, died and resurrected in the center region of the earth highlights this great truth that the way of faith is the good news for all nations. Even Eskimos in the polar region have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

## ITS POPULISM

By populism we mean that the way of faith is of the common people at large. In all religions including formal Christianity, there are the so-called consecrated people who have the monopoly of performing rites and rituals. They stand as mediators between God and the believers. But in the way of faith any believer can preach the gospel and anyone can accept Jesus Christ by faith any day of the week or any time of the day. There is auspicious



time or holy place set apart for one to put his faith in Jesus Christ. There is not even a prescribed statement of faith to recite for accepting Jesus Christ. The way of faith prescribes an open-hearted, spontaneous confession of one's sinfulness and sincere acceptance of Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour. There is no need of some designated person administering an oath of set terminologies. It is getting into a whole-hearted, cordial relationship with God. When and where one is convicted of his sinfulness and convinced of the way of faith, he can right away pour out his heart before the all-knowing God and get saved.

## IT IS REASONABLE

Faith is sometimes thought of as baseless assumption propped up by positive thinking. Putting one's trust in the trustworthy is the most reasonable thing. The way of faith is based on tangible facts. Sin is a reality; accusation of the conscience is a reality; death is a reality; life after death is a reality; judgement is a reality; man's helplessness before sin is a reality; the futility of meaningless rituals is a reality. Jesus is a historic person; His crucifixion

is a historic reality; His resurrection is a reality. The empty tomb in Palestine is a gaping witness to this reality. God's righteousness is a reality; God's love is a reality. There is no other plausible, practical way given among men by which man's sin can be propitiated. Only the way of faith gives a reasonable explanations of sin, judgement, propitiation and salvation to a sincere seeker. It is the only way to reform and refurbish the inner person of a sinner. There are crores of re-born persons in history who are witnesses of this irrefutable reality.

God in His care has provided for every need of man in this temporary physical life. Will He not provide the universally accessible perfect way for the propitiation of man's sin which is the imperative need for entering eternal life? Historically and legally, the way of faith is the only reasonable way of salvation.

The earth has only one sun to light it up and energize the life on it. One sun is enough and more mankind has only one saviour and only one perfect way of salvation. It is Jesus Christ and the way of faith. ●



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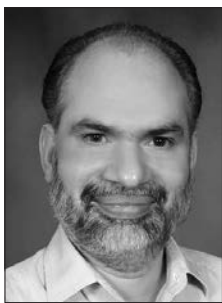
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# THE NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CONQUER SATANIC FORCES IN MISSION



**Dr. SHAIBU ABRAHAM**

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and Seminary, Kumbanad

**The** scripture presents the Holy Spirit as the missionary Spirit; the Spirit leads God's people into mission endeavours. The disciples of Jesus made no attempt to carry out the great commission until after the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, Spirit descended upon the disciples and other followers of Jesus, as a result, the Christian community became the instrument of mission. The last words of Jesus, before his ascension in Acts 1:8, asserts the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and mission, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Here, Luke categorically states that witnessing Christ, is entirely depended on the coming of the Holy Spirit and the power provided by the Spirit.

At Pentecost, the apostles spoke in other tongues, the languages of the nations. The crowd that gathered there symbolically represented "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) and the apostles were "speaking about God's deeds of Power" which represented the missionary message (Acts 2:11). The worldwide missionary spread of the gospel began from Pentecost. Thus, the history of mission expansion was the direct result of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Holy Spirit in the First Century Evangelism and Mission**

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit was the reason behind the success of the first century Christian mission. Luke makes special mention of the Holy Spirit in several instances of mission activities of the Apostles: in the proclamation of Peter in the Jerusalem Temple (4:4), in the preaching of Stephen before his death (7:55), the conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:29, 40); the conversion and mission of Saul (9:15-20); the persuasion of Peter by the



Spirit for his evangelistic visit to the household of Cornelius (ch.10); the ministry of Barnabas at Antioch (11:24); the sending of Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey (13:2, 4); Spirit's guidance at Jerusalem (15:28), Macedonia (16:6), and finally Rome (28:25ff.) justifying the mission to the Gentiles. Other references in Acts also show the action of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the gospel (e.g., 11:28; 13:52; 19:6; 19:21; 20:28; 21:4, 11). It is obvious that the Holy Spirit is the missionary Spirit.

### Power Encounter in Evangelism

The role of the Holy Spirit in mission is more than merely providing his presence. In the Book of Acts, the Spirit empowers missionaries to discern, fight, and conquer the devil's strategies in the mission field. He is the true "executive director" of the Church's evangelism department. In the ministry of Peter and other apostles, we find tremendous examples of power encounter evangelism (Acts 5). It is

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**Also, a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed (5:16). The evangelistic success as a result of these supernatural manifestations is also great and astounding.**  
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mentioned that through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people (5:12-14), so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them (5:15). Also, a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed (5:16). The evangelistic success as a result of these supernatural manifestations is also great and astounding. "And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (5:14). These manifestations of the power of God against the power of evil are not isolated incidents. The Book of Acts abounds with the miraculous. The ministry



of Philip was characterized by supernatural manifestations. While Luke summarising the ministry of Philip in Samaria says that, "Philip proclaimed the Messiah and the crowds with one accord listened eagerly. Many unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured" (Acts 8:5-8).

In chapters 13 and 14, a model agenda for world evangelization can be seen. The Holy Spirit counselled the church at Antioch to "Set apart for me [Holy Spirit] Barnabas and Saul for the work [cross-cultural mission] to which I have called them" (13:2). In their mission journey, they had power encounter evangelism ministries every place they travelled (13:5,7,26,14-43, 14:1). They encountered demonic opposition and manifested the supernatural power of the

**In the city of Ephesus, Paul had a powerful mission, healing and driving out evil spirits (Acts 19:11-12). The chief deity (the evil power) over Ephesus and Asia Minor was the renowned Diana of the Ephesians (also known by her Greek name, Artemis).**

Spirit against demonic powers (13:6, 8-11). They carried out the ministry of divine healing (14:8-10,20). They encountered jealous Jewish opponents and their blaspheming of the evangelistic endeavours and persecution (13:45; 14:19). Such endeavours make it clear that evangelism and mission are spiritual warfare in their essence. What Jesus said became true here, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it" (Matt. 11:12). Any time in history, and any place in the universe that God's plan is for human redemption, but Satan deploys his agents to try to counteract this divine purpose.

However, the result of such activities was amazing; the gospel was gladly received by many (13:7,42,44,49). Many Jews and Gentiles were converted (13:12,43,48,14:21) and filled with the Holy Spirit (13:52). We also witness Paul's exorcism of the girl possessed by a spirit of divination in the city of Philippi (Acts 16:16-18). Due to this

incident and the miraculous salvation of the Philippian jailor, a beautiful church was established there.

In the city of Ephesus, Paul had a powerful mission, healing and driving out evil spirits (Acts 19:11-12). The chief deity (the evil power) over Ephesus and Asia Minor was the renowned Diana of the Ephesians (also known by her Greek name, Artemis). Some historians believe that she might have been the most worshiped deity of the whole Roman Empire at the time. Her temple in Ephesus was listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the most outstanding and opulent example of architecture in the whole city. Offerings and sacrifices were made to this demonic power year around. Her followers called her "magnificent" and "great goddess" and "saviour" and "Queen of Heaven." Paul's stay of two years, he was basically engaged in spiritual warfare, what some missiologists call, "power evangelism." There was great supernatural power being released through Paul (Acts 19:11). In an interesting incident, the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, attempt to cast out demons in the name of Jesus but were overpowered by the possessed man. (Acts 19:13-16).

According to missiologists like Peter Wagner, in the city Ephesus, Paul carried out three important levels of spiritual warfare. The first level is ground-level spiritual warfare, casting demons out of individuals. This is what Jesus commanded His disciples to do when He sent them out saying, "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cast out demons" (Mt. 10:7-8). However, through Paul extraordinary miracles happened that "even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from [Paul's] body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:12).

The second level of spiritual warfare is occult-level spiritual warfare. This means dealing with powers of darkness that are more organized than mere casting demons from people. We read that,

"Many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totalled fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19). It could be worth millions of dollars in our times!! It is clear that the city was a centre of demonic stronghold, resisting any efforts of gospel preaching and church planting. It was the power of the Spirit that enabled Paul and the early believers to overcome such strongholds.

**Another significant element used in mission field for "power encounter" is exorcism and it is widely employed in Indian situation. When gospel is preached in new mission fields, there is a possibility of mission is being opposed by evil forces and their agents.**

The third, and highest level of spiritual warfare is strategic-level spiritual warfare. This involves confrontation with the high-ranking territorial spirits which have been assigned by Satan to coordinate the activities of the kingdom of darkness over a certain area in order to keep the people's minds blinded to the "gospel of the glory of Christ" as we read in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Paul refers to this level of warfare against satanic forces in the epistle to Ephesians,

"For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

By the preaching of the gospel by Paul and his companions, Diana's power was being neutralized so much that the common people began to stop worshiping her and purchasing her idols. By the time Paul's two years of ministry were coming to a close, the silversmiths, who were manufacturing these idols, were going out of business, so they staged a public riot. Such events happen in many mission fields in north India; when vested interests realise that the power of certain deities become ineffective, they carry out violent attacks against missionaries. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to appropriate "the exceeding greatness of [God's] power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:19). He also says that Jesus is on the right hand of God and "far above all principality and power and might and dominion" (Eph. 1:21).

Having seen the significance of the presence and power of the Spirit in missional endeavours in the book of Acts, it is imperative to explore some of the methods with which we can carry out mission in our times. The New Testament unequivocally states the fact that the presence and power of the Spirit is still available to people of God and the gifts of the Spirit empower them to be victorious in missionary activities.

### Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts or charismata are abilities that provided by the

Holy Spirit to equip the church to carry out its ministry. According to Pentecostal understanding, the gifts are provided with the baptism of the Spirit. The apostle Paul describes various gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. Spiritual gifts are the attestation of the empowering of the Holy Spirit and are vital for an effective mission. Furthermore, gifts such as healing, exorcisms, prophecy, discerning of the Spirit, visions, word of wisdom and knowledge are significant because through them God reveals the state of the world and details of mission to carry out. Today among Pentecostal missionaries, the spiritual gifts are highly valid because they can be effective in overcoming any sense of inadequacy and powerlessness of missionaries, and reveal presence of demonic and abilities to cast them out. In the following paragraphs, we shall look at some of the significant spiritual gifts that can effectively counter the satanic forces and bring people to the kingdom of God.

## Healing

Grant McClung, Pentecostal missiologist describes healing as an evangelistic door-opener, especially where medical aid is limited. The gift of healing is more popular and a significant element used in the church growth by the Pentecostal missionaries for its proliferation and consolidation all over the world. Experiencing divine healing and resultant transformation, thousands join the churches all over the world, especially in third world countries. The Pew survey singles out divine healing as distinguishing Pentecostals and Charismatics from other Christians. In every country surveyed, large majorities (more than 70% in 8 of 10 countries) of

Pentecostals reported having personally experienced or witnessed the divine healing of an illness or injury. In the Latin American, Asian, and African countries where Pentecostal growth is occurring most rapidly, as many as 80–90% of first-generation Christians attribute their conversions primarily to having received divine healing for themselves or a family member.

## Exorcisms

Another significant element used in mission field for “power encounter” is exorcism and it is widely employed in Indian situation. When gospel is preached in new mission fields, there is a possibility of mission is being opposed by evil forces and their agents. However, Pentecostal missionaries through casting out demons, break the strongholds of satanic forces. This is true in all mission fields especially in rural areas where people are uneducated and poor and in animistic societies or whose history has a marked tradition of spirit forces. Pentecostal missionaries tackle “dark spiritual forces” and challenge the growing phenomenon of occultism, Satan worship, and demon possession. This head-on tackling of the enemy’s power has brought relief to the suffering masses and lead them into spiritual liberation and all-round transformation. When an exorcism or miracle is performed, people readily accept the gospel message and surrender their lives. Accordingly, mission efforts normally are well received and result in church growth.

## Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is one of the most important spiritual gifts that has been used as a powerful tool in the mission endeavours and instrumental in bringing many people into the church. Along with the gift of prophecy, the gifts of word of wisdom and word of knowledge and vision can be categorised as gifts that declare God’s counsel to the people. The gift of prophecy convicts unbelievers of sin so that they turn to God. Paul says, “If all prophesy and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called

to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you” (vv. 24-25). This extraordinary change occurs not through the proclamation but when empowered believers speak directly to unbelievers that bring overwhelming conviction of sin, awareness about judgment, and heart searching. The result would be the unbeliever or outsider fall on his/her face and worship God. Moreover, the person will know for a certainty that God is truly present among his people.

## Discernment

The revelatory gifts of a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits contribute largely to the effectiveness of the evangelistic endeavour. One of Satan’s primary activities is deception (2 Corinthians 4:3,4). These three gifts are often manifested by the Spirit to expose the deceit of the devil and demons, as well as to edify believers. The gift of discerning of spirits is extremely important when there is an intense level of demonic activity such as is being encountered in many places in these closing days of the age (1 John 4:1).

As we conclude or discussion, it is significant to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with presence and power of demonic in mission endeavours. The Spirit provides us needed power and strength to carry out ministry in situation where demonic powers oppose the missionary activities. The book of Acts provides us methods and ways to tackle such powers. Power encounter enables missionaries to deal with the satanic forces that prevent people coming to Christ. The spiritual gifts enable missionaries to carry out their ministry through healing, casting out evil spirits, discerning the situations and evil powers present in a mission field. Exercising of the gifts of Spirit liberate people from satanic forces and lead them to spiritual and temporal liberation and transformation.



# MISSIONARY STRATEGIES OF PAUL ACCORDING TO ACTS 13: A PARADIGM FOR EARLY CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

## Abstract

The missionary journey of Paul, as recorded in Acts 13, offers profound insights into early Christian evangelism. His methods combined theological depth, cultural adaptability, and strategic planning, providing a timeless model for contemporary mission work. This article explores Paul's missionary strategies and examines their relevance to modern evangelism, particularly in today's complex cultural and religious landscapes. By applying these strategies, missionaries can navigate the challenges of diverse global contexts while maintaining the integrity of the Christian message.

## Introduction

The book of Acts records the early expansion of Christianity, with Paul playing a central role in this process. Acts 13, in particular, marks the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey, where he extends the Gospel message beyond the Jewish community to Gentile audiences. This journey illustrates key missionary strategies, including theological engagement, audience targeting, cultural adaptation, and resilience in the face of opposition. These strategies remain relevant today, providing lessons for contemporary missions that face similar complexities in global evangelism.

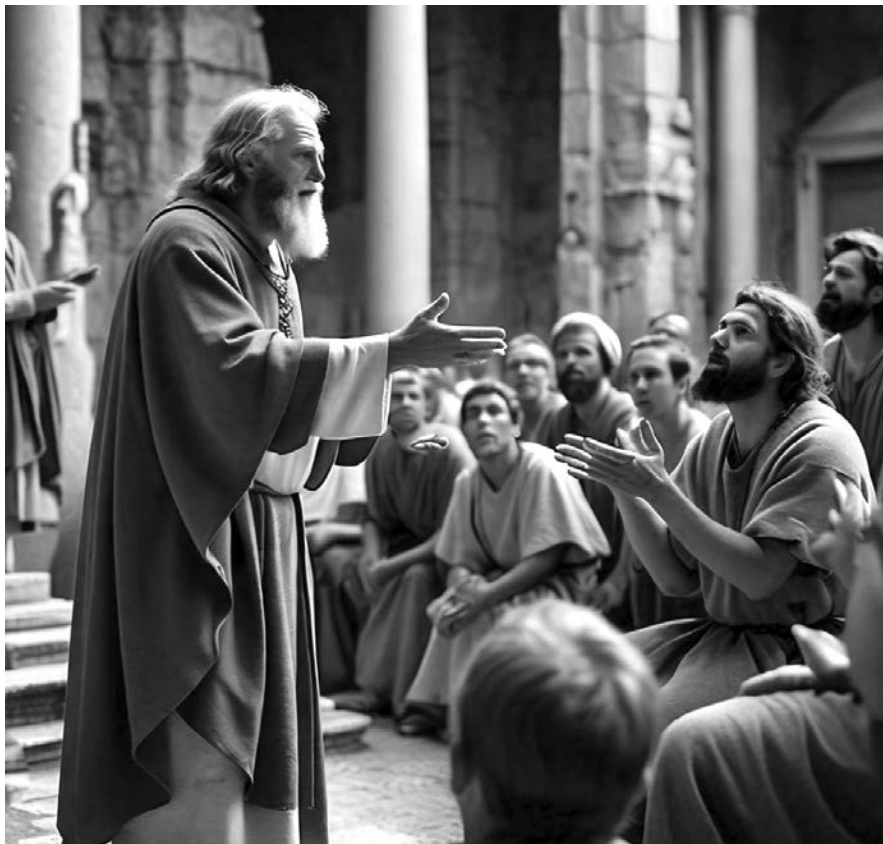
## Missionary Strategies of St. Paul

Paul's missionary work was grounded in a deliberate strategy to spread the Christian faith across the Roman Empire, with a focus on key metropolitan centres. He targeted these influential cities, believing that they would serve as hubs from which the Gospel could spread to surrounding areas. Paul's approach was methodical and planned, ensuring that his efforts had a lasting impact on both urban and rural populations.



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Paul engaged in a systematic method of evangelization. He began by addressing Jewish communities in synagogues, where he could build on the foundation of the Hebrew Scriptures to introduce the message of Christ. After encountering resistance from some Jewish leaders, he decided to focus on Gentile audiences, demonstrating his adaptability and strategic foresight. By shifting his efforts when necessary, Paul ensured that his message reached as many people as possible, regardless of ethnic, social, or cultural boundaries.

Paul's travels were not random; he moved from city to city, region to region, in a deliberate manner. His missionary work focused on areas where people were likely to be receptive, and he used opportunities where audiences were willing to listen. This method of moving through key locations allowed him to maximize the spread of the

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Gospel. Additionally, Paul's openness to different social and cultural groups was integral to his success. He did not let ethnicity, class, or gender dictate who could hear the message. His approach was inclusive, focusing on the universality of the Gospel.

In each city, Paul engaged with people who were accustomed to listening and skilfully used the cultural expectations of these encounters, using familiar settings like synagogues or public squares to deliver his message. This approach not only allowed him to connect with his audience but also ensured that he could engage with them on a deeper level, addressing their spiritual and intellectual needs.

### **The Church at Antioch: A Launchpad for Missions**

Antioch was a diverse and vibrant Christian community that played a pivotal role in Paul's missionary work. The church at Antioch, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, was deeply committed to prayer and spiritual discernment. This community's commissioning of Paul and Barnabas for missionary work demonstrated the importance of a supportive and mission-oriented church environment.

This commissioning was not a one-time decision but a reflection of the church's collective sense of divine calling. The community at Antioch searched for the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and fasting, ensuring that Paul and Barnabas were spiritually equipped for the journey ahead. This emphasis on spiritual readiness and community support remains a crucial aspect of missionary work today.

### **Divine Guidance and Strategic Planning**

Paul's mission was guided by a balance of divine guidance and strategic planning. The Holy Spirit played a central role in directing Paul's work, beginning with the instruction to the church in Antioch to set Paul and Barnabas apart for their mission. This reliance on divine guidance shaped Paul's approach, ensuring that his work aligned with God's will and purpose.

While divine guidance was foundational, Paul's missionary work also required careful planning. His journeys were strategically organized, targeting key cities and regions where the Gospel could take root and spread. Paul understood the importance of strategic locations, ensuring that the message of Christ would extend beyond the immediate audience. This combination of spiritual discernment and practical planning is a key principle for modern missionaries, who must balance faith-led initiatives with careful, context-aware strategies.

## Cultural Contextualization: Engaging Diverse Audiences

A key feature of Paul's missionary strategy was his ability to engage diverse cultural groups. In Acts 13, Paul begins by addressing Jewish communities in synagogues, utilizing the shared foundation of the Hebrew Scriptures to present the message of Jesus as the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy. This method allowed Paul to connect with his Jewish audience by building on their existing knowledge and theological framework.

However, Paul's strategy was not limited to Jewish audiences. When faced with opposition, he adapted his approach to reach Gentiles, presenting the Gospel as a message of salvation for all people, regardless of ethnic or religious background. This flexibility was a hallmark of Paul's ministry. He recognized the importance of cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the Gospel was accessible to all without compromising its core message.

This adaptability is critical for modern missionaries, who must navigate diverse cultural contexts. Paul's ability to communicate the same message in ways that resonated with different audiences offers valuable lessons for contemporary evangelism. Engaging with people on their terms, using language, symbols, and cultural references familiar to them, remains an essential strategy for effective mission work.

## Testing the Soil

Paul also employed a pragmatic approach to evangelism, often "testing the soil" to

determine where his message would be most effective. He sought out communities that were open and receptive to the Gospel, tailoring his efforts to the needs of each group. This strategy involved discerning where the Gospel was likely to flourish and focusing on those areas, ensuring that his efforts were not wasted in hostile or resistant environments.

In modern terms, this approach can be seen in how missionaries assess cultural and social dynamics before entering new fields of ministry. By identifying communities that are most open to the Gospel, missionaries can focus their resources and efforts where they are likely to have the greatest impact. This pragmatic approach does not imply giving up on difficult areas, but rather prioritizing outreach in regions where the message is most likely to take root and spread.

## The Synagogue as a Strategic Venue

Paul's use of synagogues as a starting point for his outreach was a strategic move that leveraged existing religious and social structures. Synagogues were central to Jewish community life, serving as places for worship, learning, and social gatherings. By beginning his outreach in synagogues, Paul was able to engage with Jewish audiences who were already familiar with the Scriptures, creating a natural bridge to introduce the message of Jesus.

This strategy allowed Paul to establish credibility with Jewish audiences before expanding his focus to Gentiles. The synagogue provided a familiar setting where theological discussions were common, making it an ideal venue for Paul to present his case for Jesus as the Messiah. In modern missions, the principle of using existing social or religious structures to engage communities remains important. Missionaries can work within established systems to build connections and facilitate dialogue.

## Pragmatism in Paul's Mission

Paul's missionary strategies were also marked by a degree of pragmatism. He

adapted his methods to suit the context, recognizing that different situations required different approaches. For example, when preaching to Jewish audiences, he adhered to Jewish customs, but he did not impose these laws on Gentile converts. This flexible approach allowed him to build bridges between diverse groups without compromising the core message of the Gospel.

Paul's pragmatism extended to his interactions with people of different social and cultural backgrounds. He became "all things to all people" to ensure that as many as possible could be reached with the Gospel. This adaptability, while pragmatic, was always underpinned by a deep theological commitment to the universality of the Christian message.

## Conclusion and Implications for Modern Missions

Paul's missionary strategies, as outlined in Acts 13, provide a valuable model for modern missions. His emphasis on cultural sensitivity, strategic planning, and resilience in the face of opposition continues to inspire missionaries today. By adapting his methods to different audiences while maintaining the integrity of the Gospel, Paul was able to spread Christianity effectively across diverse regions.

For contemporary missionaries, Paul's approach offers important lessons. The balance of divine guidance and strategic planning, the emphasis on cultural contextualization, and the pragmatic approach to evangelism are all principles that can be applied in today's mission work. As the global church continues to grow in an increasingly multicultural world, Paul's missionary strategies offer timeless insights into how the Gospel can be shared in a way that is both faithful and effective.

# INDEPENDENCE DAY-STREET PLAYS, SINGING, PREACHING, SKITS

## 15 AUGUST 2024



IBCS sisters, Blessy Anu Koshy, Ananya, Jeffy, Feba, Jency drew the attention of shopkeepers and people on the street through their singing



Ajeesh George, faculty, gives the narration of the skit



John Paul, sings a solo



### SCENES FROM THE SKIT



Lt.Col. V. I. Luke,  
Vice-President (Dev.)



Evang. Anu Koshy  
Staff



Rev. Eldho K. Mohan,  
Faculty



Open Air meeting at Alleppey Beach, Brothers Praveen Kumar, Oliver Kevin, Joel J. S., Bebish, John Solomon, Kirubakaran and other students



Jesse Jacob and Jency from Kuwait joined in singing

### SHARED JESUS LOVE AT ALLEPPEY



Children's programmes held at Uthimood

# INDEPENDENCE DAY OUTREACH & COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES



▲ Faculty, Staff and Students together went out in teams to serve at MIZPAH PARISHEELANA KENDRA, Kayamkulam and GILGAL ASHWASA BHAVAN Eraviperor ▼



▲ Student, staff and faculty members enjoyed cleaning the streets at some locations, the KSRRTC bus depot and buses ▼



# COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Cleaning the local Police Station and roads, clearing of shrubs etc.



# IBC CELEBRATES INDIA'S 78th INDEPENDENCE DAY



Students



Flag Hoisting



Taking the Pledge



Dr. Shaibu Abraham  
Introductory Address



Chief Guest  
Mr. K. B. Sasidharan Pillai  
Eraviperor Panchayat President



Rev. Wilson Varghese Thomas  
Giving Independence Day Message



Lt. Col. V. I. Luke  
Vice-President



March Past

## STUDENTS READ THE SCRIPTURE



Br. Jibin Johnson



Br. Arun A.



Sis. Lilly Marguerite



Mrs. Starla Luke, Mr. Jesse Jacob & Family



Choreography by IBCS Lady Students



Evang. Anu Koshy  
Chaired of the Program



Mrs. Jency Joy Blesson  
Words of Thanks



Dr. Jose L.  
Concluding Prayer