

Part II
Theological Perspective.

Preface

In the previous chapter, the subject of our thought was Satan and also the Messenger of God/Angel whom God appoints to test and thereby strengthen His beloved children so that they are not lost. The eagle breaks up its nest and forces the eaglets to leap out and down from its shelter so that they grow and mature and acquire the skills necessary to perform their role as eagles. Even if any eaglet plummets downwards, before it can come to any danger, the eagle comes below it and supports the young eaglet on its own strong wings. There is a saying that children must be nurtured with food as well as wise words. When God nurtures us in this manner, the consequence is that we may face unpleasant situations that tax us. The following chapters, 8 & 9 are to consider these aspects.

Chapter 7

The Creator and the Righteousness of Creation.

In this Chapter entitled 'The Creator and the Righteousness of Creation', fourteen topics are considered. The purpose is so that we would be able to live good lives that are according to the Will of God. Often we face difficulties because we do not examine situations facing us and evaluate them in the Holy Spirit. At other times we have problems because we turn a blind eye to what the Creator is pointing at and a deaf ear to His voice. In Genesis 12:1, the Lord tells Abraham, '*Go—to the land I will show you*'. Abraham sets out on his journey abandoning everything. Our journeys should be similar.

a) Uniqueness in each man.

God has created each of us with unique characteristics; that is, there is a different blue print for each person. You might have seen fingerprints and iris scanners copying your finger and iris prints when you travel to a new country. Doesn't that indicate that there are no two persons who are identical among the 7.8 billion people in this world? It reveals the magnificence of God's creation. For this very reason, each person in himself is unmatched. One person cannot become another. Therefore trying to imitate another personality or insisting that others should become like ourselves depict, to a great extent, a kind of copycat behaviour that is mostly from erroneous perceptions. However this does not mean that the fundamental truths of our faith which are the basic tenets and the values taught are changeable. It is dangerous to think that the basic canons can be changed in any manner. But blind imitation arouses another's wrath.

b) Different textbooks to learn.

Each life is a textbook. We must grow in wisdom and discernment in life. This life has many chapters. After completing one, the effort should be to make the next more superior. Isn't a baby that has learned to crawl, different from a new-born? A child in the nursery is different from one in Primary class and Primary student is not a High School student. A married man along with his spouse and those who have completed formal education, learn lessons that are different from their previous states. Each stage of growth must be completed with attention. The Lord

commands us or warns us , *“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”*

c) Alertness and Vigilance. (Wakefulness and watchfulness).

Snakes do not have an external ear with which to hear. Therefore they hear in a different manner. It's inner ear is connected to the jawbone which can receive sound waves that travel through the air. The sound waves cause vibrations in the jaw bone and it reaches the brain through the inner ear. In this manner it is able to hear. For this reason,(the unique way of hearing), the entire body of the snake remains alert and alive and vigilant at all times. It is this kind of vigilance that the Lord desires from us. That is, to guard the inner five sense organs with alertness and vigilance. It is only in this way that we can nourish wisdom and discernment. We should not try to enclose whatever we have achieved. We must be able to share this in constructive and creative ways. It is the water from River Jordan that feeds both the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee pours out its contents but the Dead Sea holds on to it. More important that what is achieved is how it is achieved and how much has been shared.

d) The working of the mind must be virtuous/ righteous.

Each language has its own alphabet. The value that the letters acquire depends on the mental attitudes and the methods employed by the user in using these letters. For example by changing the position of a single letter in the Malayalam Alphabet, 'Insult' becomes 'Gratitude.'(നന്ദിനി). Pairs of anagrams with opposite meanings in English and 'fluster' for 'restful' or 'live' and 'evil'. The letters are the same but the meanings are entirely different.

With iron we can make the sacred cross, a dagger to stab others, or a needle to suture wounds. Some words differ by just one letter or syllable. But the meanings differ widely. For example, skill and kill differ only by one letter but the meanings are entirely different.

e) We must learn discernment.

Following instincts that are based on the assumption that ‘ **the grass is always greener on the other shore**’, does not give good results in life. We must see the beauty and holiness that is around us. A young man who had heard that a sage lived on top of a mountain goes there. When he knocks on the door someone opens it. As he walked in, at each step, he longed to see the sage. He walked along with the man (who opened the door to him) till the exit. When he got out he asked, ‘Where is the sage?’. Try to know the one who is walking with you. In the first part of the Gospel of St. Mark chapter 6, we see a group of people who do not recognize the Lord. At the end of the chapter we see the picture of the people of Gennesaret acknowledging Him and the blessings that they receive as a result. The reason for the downfall of families and society is this lack of discernment.

f) Approach/attitude determines conclusion.

It is our attitude that determines conclusion. We cannot increase our stature by even one cubit by worrying. This is the Lord’s statement. The voyage of a sailing ship under a captain’s direction with the sails rigged to harness the power of the wind and that of a sailboat wandering carelessly and without direction are entirely different. One must submit to the control and direction of the Holy Spirit who is the Captain/Steward. To achieve this, one must have the desire and attitude for a life of holiness. Is there any purpose in sitting around a shattered person, gossiping and delivering insults? Is it not better to extend the required help? There are people who lose their sanity because there is no one to listen to them and there are people who have corrected their mistakes because there were people to hear them out. For those who cannot even cry out, a person who is there to listen provides great relief.

g) Untraveled roads are ahead.

Can we predict what the future holds for us? The Children of Israel, who came out of the slavery of Egypt, set up camp at the banks of the River Jordan. Three days of preparation are spent in prayer and fasting. What Joshua tells them at the end of this period is important. ‘*Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.* “ (Joshua 3:4)

A King sent his son to a famous sage to learn from him. The sage did not teach him anything. But when the boy would return each day with a pot of water drawn from

the well, the sage would ambush him and smash the pot. Sometimes the boy would be thrashed. . In the end he learned how to evade the blows. He learned the basic and most important skill.

h) Must be bearers of virtue.

Insincerity will never nurture our values. It would destroy the crop as if they were weeds.

Or else, it would wear away our values just as rust corrodes iron. The meaning of the word lamp (Vilakku) in Malayalam is 'one who is called'. Our Lord calls us to be His own people and the proclaimers of His virtue. As St. Mathew recorded, we are to be the lights of this world. The Lord declares that for others to receive light from the lamp without any impediment, it should not be hidden under a bushel but kept on a tall stand. Traditionally, we are taught that twin flames are a bad omen. Twin flames indicate the two natures in us. The second nature is the evil tendencies that permeate us. Slowly it would destroy us by our roots. The flame of the lamp should be unwavering. If the flame flickers we would not be able to see and understand clearly or to give light to others.

i) Must nurture inner contentment.

Isn't contentment the reflection of a person's thinking? No one can experience external fulfilment unless he has achieved inner contentment. Therefore our Lord has commanded that we should be satisfied with what we have. Years ago, the people of a place decided to construct a house of prayer that would be decorated with beautiful sculptures. They searched for skilled sculptors and brought them to work on it. One day a stranger passed by. He asked the sculptors about themselves and about their opinions. One said, "I have to earn a living, so from dawn to dusk I chip rock". Another said, "Good that I am also selected. I do my work well and I get the wages". The third man said, "It is great that my skills have also been included in the construction of this place of worship. I am truly lucky!". He is also getting a wage. But his thinking is at a different level. There is an inner satisfaction in him.

j) Avoid vanity.

We must also consider whether everything that we do for our inner satisfaction is correct.

One day the spiritual advisor of the King (Raja Guru) came to the court carrying his shoes on his head. The King bowed to him and asked him, "Why thus?" The answer of the Guru is noteworthy. He asked the King, 'Why does the King constantly wear the crown on his head?'. Finding satisfaction in repeating the exaltedness of one's position or family traditions may just be a sign of vanity.

k) Do not await good or bad fortune.

Good or bad fortune is transitory. The way to success is to meet these with equanimity.

Unexpected good fortune has been seen to disturb some people's self-possession. Sometimes it does more evil than good. Some lose mental health; in some it causes their behaviour and attitude to change. They turn arrogant. Sometimes misfortune teaches one very valuable lessons. At such times of misfortune, even those who had taken shelter from you may not extend shelter to you. These are good opportunities for correction and renewal. But no one tries to do this and spend time sighing. We can only win the race if we are able to assess the ups and downs of fortune. But our lives are not meant for these. We must try to put into practice God's word to love our neighbour as ourselves.

l) Travel above troubles.

It is noon on a rainy day. Torrential rain is pouring down below. The aircraft is on its journey. It has risen above the clouds. The rays of the sun are visible above the clouds. It is a scene of great beauty. The clouds are radiant in the sun's rays. Far in the distance, in the east of our small state of Kerala, the Sahya Mountain Ranges(Western Ghats) rise and fall and the tall peaks stand with head held high. These, alongwith the wonderful sight of the clouds, are a feast for the eyes. The eagle flies above the clouds and for this reason it is not disturbed by the rain below. We must learn to remain with God prayerfully, thus staying above the troubles in our lives. A pigeon builds its nest at the highest spot available. Living in high places does not mean living on top of pride. It means that we should surrender our consciousness and thought to God above and perform our appointed work.

We must not get confused by the disturbing circumstances around us.

A poet describes suffering as follows:

Pain knocked upon my door and said
That she had come to stay,
And though I would not welcome her
But bade her go away,
She entered in. Like my own shade
She followed after me,
And from her stabbing, stinging sword
No moment was I free.

m) Wickedness and Indolence.

Although the wicked and the lazy outwardly do not have anything in common, both are harmful elements for social good. In a way, wickedness/malice and indolence are two sides of the same coin. The malicious man undertakes wicked actions, relying on his own thinking for his personal gain. Absalom was King David's most beloved son. But his wickedness prompted him to act against his father. That is the demonic mind. It culminated in his very tragic end. In Proverbs 12:3 it is written, *"No one can be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted."* This statement reveals to us the direction in which the life of Absalom would end and the future of King David would take shape. The thinking of our intelligent/ conscious minds, whether good or bad, is only a small part. What is unknown in us is many times more than the known. It is in this manner that the creator has created us and also the universe. For example, we take in oxygen and reject or send out carbon di oxide. This takes place through the intelligence in us that we are unaware of but which has been instilled in us by God. We rarely think about this. When bones break they are joined together by this same intelligence that the Creator has appointed in us. The intelligence and thinking of the wicked is in stark contrast. St. Paul says, *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy"* (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). The ground of every being, the basis of the intelligence in every living thing, is the Spirit of God, says the apostle. Job says, *'Because God's breath is in me I cannot speak or do evil'*. If it leaves us, our thoughts would be demonic. Understanding this truth and living accordingly is true enlightenment.

A person who lives contrary to this understanding is wicked and slothful. A slothful person lives a life of procrastination. This is in opposition to the law that God has given nature as well as to the law for our corporal lives. The inherent characteristic of nature is change, or progress. If this has to be maintained without disruption of its order, man must abandon wickedness and slothfulness.

n) Inner wisdom.

The rain falls. Neither the rain nor we can postpone it to another day. Can we postpone the blooming of the flower which is ready to bloom today? Do the five elements of nature that clad it postpone their actions for the next day? What if the sun decides not to rise today? What would be the state of the earth? But man who has been endowed with special intelligence by God becomes lazy. For this very reason society falls out of rhythm and loses order. A lazy man is blatantly breaking the laws of God and the laws of nature. The Lord makes this clear in the parable of the Talents. We see that the man who buried his one talent thus insulting his Master, was cast out into the darkness and his talent was taken away from him. In the parable the Lord addresses him as “*You wicked and slothful servant!*” This is why it was said at the beginning that sloth and wickedness are two sides of the same coin; this title is not an admirable one.

In the PampakudaNamaskaram book, prayer for Tuesday morning says, “ Lord, though we sin and repent by our own will, we submit that the reason is that Satan makes us fall into sin. Alas! We have done wrong. Alas! We have not repented. Alas! The Last judgement is close by. O Lord!, Be merciful to us in the days of judgment”. The fourteen subjects that we have described above, point to the need for wakefulness and watchfulness or for being awake and alert (Nepsis).

Chapter 8

Sufferings in human life.

Is this not a question that has been asked through the ages? Why do afflictions and sufferings come to even those people who are constantly in touch with God? Job supplies the answer to this quandary. Job, who had walked towards the Lord to some extent, clings solely to God even in the midst of his suffering. He does not loosen his hold on God at any time. His friends mock him. Even his servants keep away from Job seeing his affliction. David also speaks of the same position from his experience in Psalm 38 and Psalm 55 Verse 12. In the second book of Kings Chapter 5:2-4, it is a young maid who sends Naaman to Elisha, the prophet of God. She is undergoing hardships. She must have learned and been educated in all that is good at her own home. She did not rebel against God or think negatively about God who had brought her to this predicament; even in the house of slavery, and in the midst of suffering, she became a messenger of the true God. Thereafter Naaman stopped troubling Israel. She is exalted because she conveyed the Glory of God's Name. She saved not only herself and her family, but an entire society. We must learn that.

a) The Peace of God-For the Glory of God's Name.

Did the Mother of God have any kind of worldly peace after she had receive the Peace of God? In St. John chapter 14 verse 27 we see the apostles receiving heavenly peace. But did they receive any peace according to the worldly standards? In the letter to the Corinthians St. Paul gives a long list of hardships that he has been facing. But he also says, that he does not really feel anxious about the hardships that he is sure to confront. (Acts 20:23). The reason is that he has been granted the gift of divine peace, the 'shock absorber', that God grants to His beloved children. The efficiency of the shock absorber protects the rider and the vehicle from the impact of the shock even when it falls into a gutter. Divine peace will preserve our lives too in this manner. Such hardships will be given only to those chosen by God. Such people are models for others. They have been purified in a furnace of fire. Our Lord Himself gives an answer to such suffering. In

chapter 9 of St. John, we are told that the misfortune came upon the man born blind for the glory of God's Name. The Saviour of the World was born because The Holy Virgin Mary surrendered herself before God through a life of suffering. The Holy Mother became the ladder that connects us to heaven. Job was cleansed through his suffering so that he was able to see God face to face,

b) To prevent our becoming conceited.

St. Paul speaks about the thorn in his flesh. In 2 Corinthians Chapter 12 he says that he had pleaded three times with the Lord to take it away from him. The answer *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (12:9) St Paul finds a reason for this thorn not being removed. It is *'In order to keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations'*. A truly faithful person can also find plenty of such experiences in his life. The Satan that pricked Job appears here also. Such pricks will only bring good to man. King Solomon was loved by God. His wisdom was great. But his straying from the true path in his last days was due to conceit. The Country split into two. Conceit and waywardness are inheritance that mankind received since the fall of Adam.

c) The troubles which we invite upon ourselves.

The 'King of Aram' refers to the 'King of Syria'. The King of Syria sends his faithful, courageous and valiant commander of his army with a letter to the King of Israel. Look at what happens when he reached there! *'As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"* (2 Kings 5:7) It is that person who had harassed the King till now who stands as a seeker before him. The King of Israel ought to have stood firm and tall in total reliance on God. But he acts like a fool before the one who seeks his aid. In the Bible this is recorded as the eighth miracle performed by Elijah. Did the King's unnecessary fear do him any good? *'When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel."* (2 Kings 5:8). To some, the blessings

they receive are useless like an un-husked coconut. These are the persons who bury their one talent. Whatever the position that one is in, only the persons who have used the good talents that God had given them, appropriately and usefully, would be eligible to be addressed as the 'Good and faithful servant'. The others would even antagonise their own friends and bring destruction upon society. If we act like the King of Israel and lament that we have no one to help us, what purpose can it serve? That is the reason why the poet says that we build our own heaven and our own hell. In order to escape this state, both prayer and meditation are necessary. We must be with God and ask Him. Job's questions were addressed to God.

d) For the sake of retrospection.

Through Naaman, the Commander of the Armies, the Lord gave Syria victory over their enemies and so his master the King considered him invaluable and respected him. Even though he was valiant he was a leper. (2 Kings 5:1) What is the use if one has everything but is not in a position to enjoy it? His body was covered with the sores of leprosy. He could not bear it. His leprosy became the cause of the ending of his attacks and harassment of the People of Israel. For him, it became a cause for retrospection. He came to love the country that he had persecuted and to worship their God. Some of our problems could be warnings. We must see these as the symptoms of disease. We must stay cautious and seek a solution. Lamentations would be futile.

e) Amendments require good companions.

Naaman's uniqueness is in that he had formed a good set of counsellors for himself. We read that he went away from the Prophet in anger. But his servants came to him and said, *"My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!"* The Prophet had not come out or greeted him and this infuriated him. There were better rivers and cleaner waters than that of River Jordan in his own country. The Prophet could have spoken a word to him. These thoughts made him angry. However, the correction imparted by his self-effacing counsellors in humility and with wisdom cooled down his temper. He bathes in the

river Jordan. After he had immersed himself in the water seven times, he becomes clean. This taught him a great lesson. The flatterers we take with us will dig our graves, we need good counsellors around us.

King David was a prophet. Yet because of the multiple responsibilities that he carried, he appointed seers to look into his own actions and that of his people. Prophet Nathan points his fingers at him and says, "*You are the man*". David acknowledges his sin. Naaman accepts the good advice of his servants. We too can succeed only if we accept corrections. For this, we need good advisors near us.

However, self-seeking false prophets are bound to rise up. We must not falter before their pointing fingers. They have their own purposes to achieve. The greatest weapon available is purity. No power can stand up against holiness. Prophet Elijah did not come down to greet Naaman but sent his messenger to speak instead because of the power of his holiness.

When we have troubles we must reflect on them prayerfully. The reason for our sorrows could be one of those mentioned above. We usually approach a good physician to diagnose our diseases. In the same manner, approach appropriate persons within the Body of Christ, the Church, for the diagnosis of your spiritual illnesses. It is said that the musk deer runs about everywhere seeking the source of the scent of musk. We should not be like that. Our Lord declares, "*They shall all be taught by God*". The prodigal son who was not completely out of the circle of influence of God, returns to the father. As far as those called by God are concerned, the circle of influence of God is the boundary that is never to be crossed. The Rich man in the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus did not use his chances wisely. The Prodigal son in the end of his profligate life remembered his father's love and corrected himself.