

THE WINEPRESS

O taste and see that God is good



What's inside?

3

PRAY FOR A DISCERNING HEART (1 KINGS 3:1-14)

5

PRAY, PRAY AND PRAY, BUT ...

7

ALPHABET SOUP: ERADICATE SINFUL PRACTICES

9

ALPHA TO OMEGA: INFERNO



PRAYER FOCUS FOR APRIL

What should you pray for in this brand new month?

Seek the Lord to empower our ministries, give us renewal of faith in tough times and to move JCC forward through 2022 and beyond.

Prayer pointers can be found on page 2.



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PRAYER FOCUS FOR APRIL

LENT SEASON 2022

Pray that we will personally and actively seek God by drawing close to Him ("Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" – James 4:8).

In troubled times, we keep our confidence in Christ and do not let the noise of the world keep us from hearing the voice of the Lord.

OUR SPIRITUAL THEME: THE LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Pray for JCCians to be disciplined to live the life of discipleship, willing to invest our time in mentoring others and making disciples (for e.g., through joining the JC23 programme).

Pray that we will be convicted to participate in the Goshen Initiatives while the doors are open for us to reach out to the community with love.

DAVID & GOLIATH PRESCHOOL (DGP)

Pray for the continued recruitment of students, that God will bless abundantly in this ministry. As such, may the Gospel take root in the hearts of the children and their family members.

Pray also for God's protection over the health of all staff and students too.



Befrienders of Cyclists

Sundays 3-4pm

assist with bicycle care and making friends / sharing Christ with visitors

Urban Farming

Saturdays

curating church's herb garden and making friends / sharing Christ with other green fingers

Manna Bridge

Fridays 7.30pm on

distributing bread and making friendships / sharing Christ with needy residents

KidsREAD Programme

Saturdays 1-2pm

storytellers trained by NLB to conduct a 6-month reading programme with children

Vulnerable in Community

Weekly/bi-weekly

partnering with MSF to provide social / spiritual support for the less privileged in community

Support for Single Parents

Weekly/bi-weekly

partnering with Fei Yue to provide social / spiritual support for lone-parent families

GOSHEN INITIATIVES

Go to jcc.sg/goshen or email peggytan@lutheran.org.sg

PRAY FOR A DISCERNING HEART (1 KINGS 3:1-14)

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

We are in the midst of the Lent season. We are facing very challenging situations in a chaotic world. While the pandemic crisis is far from over, the world is plunged into another crisis by the war situation in Europe.

What can we do? Lent challenges us to spend more time in prayer, to be peace-conscious in the midst of external turbulence as we put God at the centre of our lives and keep our hearts restful in His presence.

King Solomon (1 Kings 3) started his spiritual journey and career well and steady. However, as a young king, he did feel overwhelmed by enormous challenges of dealing with enemies surrounding him within and without his family. I believe Solomon has something to offer us today in terms of having the marks of a right heart before God.

A HEART THAT PLEASES GOD

"Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David ... The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'" - 1 Kings 3:3-5

For his faithfulness, Solomon heard from the Lord. The faithful heart is vital today. The great challenge for many people today is to get themselves undistracted and untroubled by the noise of wars, pestilences, economic problems, natural disasters, etc. that dominate the news



media. Our spiritual ears should be able to hear when God speaks in response to our steadfast faith despite the storm clouds.

A HUMBLE HEART THAT ASKS FOR THE RIGHT SOLUTION

Solomon came before God in humility, acknowledging his total dependency on God alone – no pride, no prior condition, no masking of himself as he stood before God:

"Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number." - 1 Kings 3:7-8

Not only was Solomon humble, he was also sensible to ask for the right solution for his difficulties:

"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" – 1 Kings 3:9

Solomon's humility and sensibility moved the heart of God!

"So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart ... Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings." – 1 Kings 3:11-13

Solomon could have asked for many things centred on his narrow self-interests, but he was not tempted to do so. His noble prayer resulted in God blessing him with much more than what he prayed for.

A TROUBLED WORLD OR A TROUBLED HEART?

Are we facing a troubled world or a troubled heart, or both?

Do we have the marks of a right heart before God like Solomon's?

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." (1 Cor 1:30)

The troubles in the world are to be expected, as Jesus says: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Yet, we still can have peace. The solution to finding that peace in the midst of world troubles is Jesus.

Let Christ be our wisdom today. The King of kings will return soon. Let us, like Solomon, seek God for a discerning heart to serve people and to distinguish between right and wrong.

Unity is strength. With us joining hands, we can do much better to be the "salt and light" to a darkening world – countering evil with our good deeds and be the positive influence that draws people to Christ.

Serving the King with you all!





PRAY, PRAY, AND PRAY, BUT ...

BY JOHN LEE

In this pandemic time, what do Christians do? They pray, pray, and pray. The purpose is to make our requests known to God – requests for the pandemic to go away, relief from stress, guidance in dealing with challenges, protection from the virus, healing of the sick, etc.

It is right for us to pray. This is what the Bible tells us,

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:5b-7)

PRAYER, FAITH AND THE FATHER’S WILL

Yet, Christians do feel disillusioned when prayers seem to go nowhere, when requests are not being met in the ways wished for. Sadly, faith can become negatively impacted; and some stop praying. As if it would be any consolation or of any use to counter the “praying is useless” thought, someone might step in to say, “Oh, it is because of your lack of faith,” or “It is because you ...” (Complete this sentence based on your first-hand experience.)

Instead of being encouraging, such priggish

counsel dampens spirits further. It is also what many false preachers and teachers of the prosperity gospel use as convenient cover when their claims are questioned. They lay the blame for poverty at the foot of their gullible subjects, avoiding the truth that material prosperity is never a given for all faithful Christians.

Jesus prayed: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (Lk 22:42)

Who would say that the Father did not take the cup from Jesus because the latter lacked faith in prayer? The crucial point to note is that Jesus’ prayer request was still subject to the Father’s will.

WAITING FOR THE PANDEMIC TO GO

A familiar understanding of mature Christians is that God always hears prayers, and He answers in three ways:

- **YES** – A widespread problem among Christians is that when a YES answer arrives fast, it can be easily overlooked as an answer from God. Instead, we may look in the direction of worldly-wise explanations. This may be one of the reasons why God often delays His answers.

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- **NO** – 3 times Paul pleaded for the thorn in his flesh to be taken away. The answer he got from the Lord: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor 2:7-9)
- **WAIT** – Elijah prayed on Mt Carmel for rain, and he waited for 3 years for God’s answer. His faith did not falter. Instead, we might say that he passed with flying colours the testing of his faith.

Are we facing the **WAIT** scenario regarding our pandemic prayers?

TWO LESSONS FROM JOB

Tribulations in this world are to be expected, but we take heart that Christ has conquered the world. (Jn 16:33)

James exhorts us: “Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4) (See also 1 Pet 1:6-7; Heb 12:10-11)

Job, a man of faith who still struggled with sufferings, lost his wealth, health, kids ... everything in one day except his wife. Alas!

What did Job do under the grim circumstances? Did he give up his faith? No, despite his faith being stretched to the limits, he held fast to it. In the end, God blessed him double what he had before. Through his experience, he understood that his sufferings were not a retribution for his sins. He grew a deeper relationship with God: “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.” (Job 42:5)

Being righteous in Christ does not mean that we are sinlessly perfect. Since we are sinfully imperfect, we often struggle with pain. We have many tough questions without easy answers – including one about why “righteous prayers” are not answered according to our expectations.

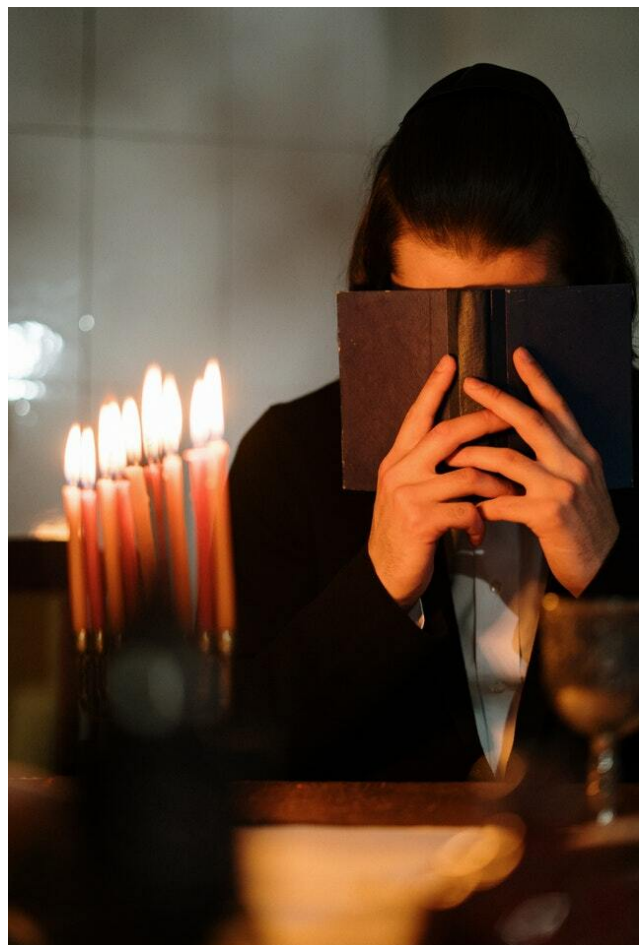
Two lessons we can draw from Job:

1. Righteous people can suffer, and this does not suggest God’s injustice. (Note Job’s friends’ misplaced criticism of him that his suffering was due to his own faults. God corrected their misunderstanding.)
2. Although our ears have heard about God, it is through our lived experience of the vicissitudes of life that we can appreciate the higher ways and thoughts of God. (Ref Isa 55:8-9)

CONCLUSION

PRAY, PRAY, AND PRAY, BUT we should never quarrel with God’s sovereign will or be too quick to lay a guilt trip on ourselves or on others when prayers are not answered the ways wished for, especially when there are things we don’t understand because they are secret things that belong to God. (Ref Jer 29:29)

We don’t have to fully understand what God’s will is in order to pray that His will be done.





E RADICATE SINFUL PRACTICES

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
Galatians 5: 24 (NIV)*

When we received Jesus into our hearts and made Him our Lord, that was the start of a new life. At that moment, God quickened our spirit which was dead in sin and made it alive to Him. But He did not remove our old nature because He created us as free moral agents with a free will to choose between good and evil. The good news is: *God has given us a new nature and all the power required to live a new life.* Sin has no more hold and authority over us. Yet it still lurks around to try and tempt us to continue with our old habits and sinful behaviours that we would otherwise be ashamed to share in public. Sin will hinder our prayers and stump our spiritual growth. We are members of the body of Christ. When one member sins or suffers, the whole body is affected. As such, each one of us must seek to eradicate sinful practices from our lives so that the Body of Christ can be built

up in purity and holiness to fulfil its mission to be the salt and light of the world.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICAL LIVING?

What does God say about this?

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

- Colossians 3:5 (NIV)

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- Romans 12:2 (NIV)

There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.

- Proverbs 6:16-19 (NIV)

Sin is like gangrene if left unattended. In our physical body, if there is no blood supply to a tissue, that tissue dies. In our spiritual body, we must ensure that the Holy Spirit fills every part of us of our being. This means allowing Him access to every area of our lives. We need to watch our words, our thoughts and our deeds.

We may have our favourite sins that so easily entrap us. These can be lustful thoughts, pride, anger, envy, lying, greed, covetousness and being involved in sexual immorality. Only God can help us. But we must first determine to confess our sins, lay them before God, repent and ask Him to help us overcome and stop

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committing those sins on a daily basis. Confession is good for the soul. When we are truly sorry for our sins and come before God with a repentant heart and a contrite spirit, He will forgive us. When we constantly seek to eradicate sinful practices and pursue godly practices with discipline, we will develop spiritual muscles and become stronger. We will also find it easier to obey God's Word and be more sensitive to the guidance of His Holy Spirit in every life situation. When we do that, we will always emerge victorious in Christ.

REFLECT AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

1. Identify a couple of favourite sins that only you know about and confess them to God.
2. What are the reasons that you are still choosing to harbour those sins?
3. Find someone whom you can be accountable to and let him/her keep tab on your progress in eradicating that sinful practice within each week.

LET'S THINK & TALK STRAIGHT

BY BRYAN TAY

*"A son honors his father, and a slave his master.
If I am a father, where is the honor due me?
If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty.*
Malachi 1:6



"I am the truth, the way and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 NIV). Jesus is either who He says He is or He is the greatest liar in history. And the apostle Paul said that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is futile. We would still be lost in our sins and have no hope beyond this earthly life. More importantly, we are to be **most pitied people** of all. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then He is not alive today and forever. And everything that we have done in church, in our families, in our so-called devotion to God are useless and meaningless. We should just "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die".

ARE YOU REALLY ON GOD'S TEAM? WHY WOULDN'T YOU TRUST HIM FULLY?

Do we feel laborious and half-believing at most in our conversations about God? We grind through our personal devotional time with God, worship services and bible study. We give prayer meetings a convenient miss without even a thought when that is the most important activity of the church and our lives. Are all the singing, praises,

hallelujahs and prayers offered to an unseen God merely some sort of look-good or feel-good activities to meet the minimum requirements of a holy God, just in case? God forbid. Our God is a personal and jealous God. He is also a God of love and wrath. He disciplines us because we are His legitimate children.

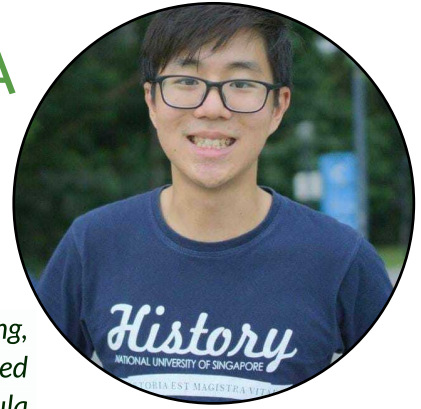
GOD IS ASKING:

- If you have chosen to trust Me for your eternity, why are you not trusting Me fully?
- Why do you put your trust in man as if they can have the final say?
- Show me your faith and obedience, and I will show you My works and My power.
- Satan and his evil ones are working hard to destroy the world.
- What are My people doing?

I welcome your comments, thoughts and sharing on this reflection. Write to jccwinepress@gmail.com and we'll publish your contribution in the next issue.

AΩ ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG 



i is for INFERNO

"We believe simply that the entire person, God and human being, descended to Hell after his burial, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of Hell, and took from the devil all his power" (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article IX)

WHAT IS THE INFERNO?

Inferno (Italian for "Hell") is the first part of Italian writer Dante Alighieri's (c.1265-1321) 14th century epic poem *Divine Comedy*, which was completed in 1320. *Inferno* describes Dante's journey through Hell.



Satan in the Inferno is trapped in the frozen central zone of the Ninth Circle of Hell. Illustration by Gustave Doré, c.1860

HELL, HADES, SHEOL?

The Hebrews knew of an underworld which they called Sheol (often translated as "the grave"), a place of darkness to which all the dead go, both the righteous and unrighteous (Job 7:9, Psalm 6:5). When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the word "Hades" (the Greek underworld) was substituted for Sheol. Hades is used in the New Testament as both the underworld and the personification of evil it represents (Matthew 11:23, Luke 16:23). Jesus

spoke also of Hell, calling it a place of unquenchable fire which destroys both soul and body (Mark 9:43, Matthew 10:28).

While the details are scant, we know that Jesus descended into Hell in the period between his Crucifixion and Resurrection. This was hinted at in 1 Peter 3:19-20 and professed in the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds. This event is also known as the Harrowing of Hell. Luther preached on Christ's descent into Hell in a 1533 sermon and it is affirmed as Article IX of the Formula of Concord.

DANTE'S WORLD

Dante lived in a politically disunited Italy. He belonged to the Guelphs, a political faction that supported the Papacy, who were in opposition to the Ghibellines, who supported the (German) Holy Roman Emperor. The Guelph-Ghibelline conflict engulfed the Italian city-states of Northern and Central Italy, including the Republic of Florence where Dante was born. Florence's Guelphs split into the White and Black factions in 1300, and Dante was among the Whites exiled in 1302 at the request of Pope Boniface VIII, who supported



Posthumous portrait of Dante by Sandro Botticelli, 1495

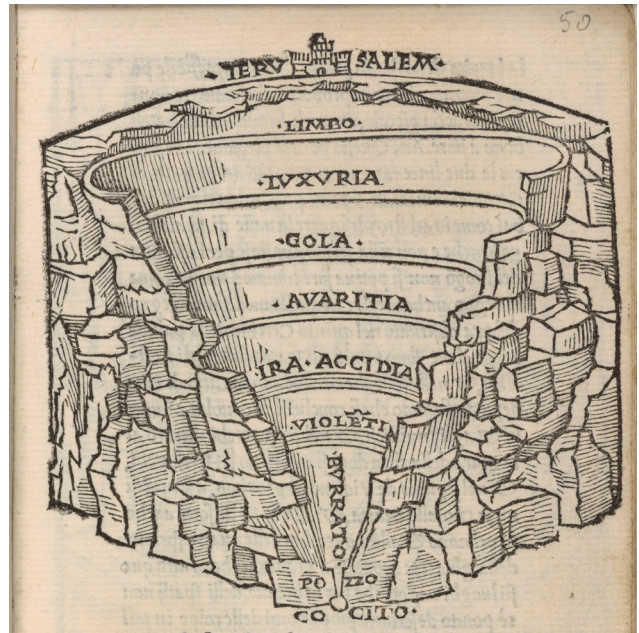
the Blacks. This exile, which lasted the rest of Dante's life, shows its influence in many parts of the *Divine Comedy*, which served as both religious allegory as well as a scathing commentary on the politics of Dante's day.

The Catholic Church was immensely powerful in Dante's day, and *The Divine Comedy* is representative of the medieval worldview that had developed in the Church (e.g. the Earth being the centre of the universe)

OVERVIEW OF INFERNO AND THE DIVINE COMEDY

As an allegorical work of fiction, the *Divine Comedy* represents the journey of the soul towards God, with the *Inferno* describing the recognition and rejection of sin. *Purgatorio* (Purgatory) and *Paradiso* (Heaven) are the subsequent parts of the *Divine Comedy*, representing the penitent Christian life and the soul's ascent to God respectively.

In *Inferno*, Dante starts his descent through Hell on the evening of Good Friday and emerges from it just before dawn on Easter Sunday. Dante is guided by the prominent ancient Roman poet Virgil (70-19 BC), whom he idolised. Hell is depicted as nine concentric circles of torment located within the earth, with each circle representing a gradual increase in wickedness,



Overview of Inferno's Hell by Antonio Manetti, 1506

culminating at the centre of the earth where Satan is held in bondage. Circles 2-5 make up Upper Hell which punishes the incontinent – those who demonstrated weakness in controlling their appetites, desires, and natural urges. These sinners suffer lesser torments than those consigned to Lower Hell (Circles 6-9), which punishes acts of violence and fraud since those involves abuse of the specifically human faculty of reason.

Number	Circle	Classification
First	Limbo	NIL
Second	Lust	Upper Hell (The Incontinent)
Third	Gluttony	
Fourth	Greed	
Fifth	Wrath	
Sixth	Heresy	Lower Hell (The Violent and Fraudulent)
Seventh	Violence	
Eighth	Fraud	
Ninth	Treachery	

"AN EYE FOR AN EYE" - *INFERNO*'S PUNISHMENTS

Dante sees and sometimes interacts with the shades of the damned of each circle, who are punished for eternity in a fashion fitting their sins. Punishment comes in the form of a *contrapasso* (i.e. poetic justice either resembling

or contrasting the sin itself), inspired by the works of Aristotle (Greek philosopher) and Cicero (Roman statesman and philosopher).

The following table provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of punishments depicted in *Inferno* and the corresponding *contrapasso*:



Circle	Sinners	Punishment	Contrapasso
1st Circle - Limbo	Virtuous pagans who did not (or did not have the chance to) accept Christ	No punishment, but being unable to ever enter Heaven	Being denied Paradise for lacking Jesus, who is the only way to God (John 14:6)
2nd Circle - Lust	Carnal malefactors - those who allowed their earthly desires to sway their reason	Endlessly buffeted back and forth within a violent storm	As the lustful drifted into self-indulgence and were carried away by their passions, they now drift aimlessly forever
5th Circle - Wrath	The Sullen - those who were passively wrathful	Lying gurgling beneath the swampy, stinking waters of the River Styx	As the sullen sulked in life, they are forever withdrawn into a black sulkiness, unable to express the rage that chokes them
8th Circle - Fraud	Sorcerers and fortune-tellers	Having to walk forward with their heads twisted backwards, blinded by their own tears	Just as sorcerers and fortune-tellers tried to see the future through forbidden means, so they are forever unable to see what is ahead of them
	Hypocrites	Walking around a narrow track for eternity, weighed down by leaden robes gilded on the outside	Just as hypocrites put on a holy outward appearance masking deceit, so they are weighed down by their falsity

Inferno concludes with Dante and Virgil climbing down Satan, passing through the Earth's core and emerging just before dawn on Easter Sunday at the foot of Mount Purgatory, depicted as being in the only land mass in the Southern Hemisphere.

INFERNO'S CULTURAL AND LITERARY IMPACT

The Divine Comedy is widely considered to be the

pre-eminent work in Italian literature and one of the greatest works of world literature; *Inferno* stands out as its most famous part. *Inferno* has been a source of inspiration for countless artists for seven centuries, with many references to it in literature, music, theatre, cinema, television, and video games. Notable works inspired by *Inferno* include John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667).

CONCLUSION

Man has always been fascinated with life after death, however he often disregards the fact that Hell is a real place from which there is no return (save for the victorious Christ – which we affirm in the Creeds). Dante's *Inferno*, however vivid, is still a work of fiction and must be understood as

such. What we do know is that Satan and his followers will ultimately be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10); Hell is likely worse than anything our limited minds can perceive. Let us hence give thanks to God for giving us salvation and eternal life through Christ Jesus, that has delivered us from eternal damnation.



Dante and Virgil in the Fifth Circle of Hell (Wrath) by Stradanus, 1587

 Let's see what you remember!

<< Click on the image to access the short quiz.

All information and images taken from the respective Wikipedia pages unless otherwise stated. For further reading, do check out the following Wikipedia articles:

1. *Inferno*
2. *Divine Comedy*
3. *Dante Alighieri*

HAPPENINGS IN MY LIFE IN 2021 (PART II):

AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S GOODNESS (CONTINUED)
BY BORIS KHOO

This testimony of mine about God's goodness endorses the message of the famous poem "Footprints in the sand," which is that God is always there for you when your heart is filled with sadness and despair.

While I was downhearted, seeing only one set of footprints in the sand, the reality as I come to appreciate on hindsight is that God was carrying me all along, helping and blessing me in the following ways as well:

THROUGH PEOPLE

God not only talks to me through music, encouraging cards and a quiet place, but he also sent people to encourage me. Sometimes after

work, I would message my fellow CG members and the pastors to keep me in prayers. I was thankful for their responsiveness and patience. They didn't give up encouraging me even though my replies to them were fraught with pessimism. They helped me to focus on God and pass easier through the very challenging period.



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One of them reminded me of Joseph in the Bible, who used to have a good life until he was sold to Egypt and later thrown into prison. God was with him all the time. Similarly, my fellow CG members wanted me to understand that God was also with me during this very tough period even though I did not understand His purpose for sending me to work in the prison environment.

CALLED TO SERVE

My emotional state led me to discover my sensitivity to music. While listening to worship songs during one of my chapel sessions, I felt concerned for the needs of people who want to go to church for worship service but must make do with online service due to Covid restrictions. I

tired reaching home after work. I sought to be released from the master's programme, but my boss was unable to accede to my request.

With only my faith in God to stand on, I hoped that God would let me have a way out of my dilemma. Two weeks later I received good news. My boss told me that I would be posted out to somewhere near my home as one of my colleagues at that client site went for a long medical leave and they needed someone there.

In my early days at my new workplace, I had problems communicating with my colleagues as I was still holding on to the working lifestyle in the prison environment. I found it very hard to open myself up and often avoided talking to my

colleagues unless there was something important to talk about.

Thanks be to God that I again had my dear CG brothers and sisters in Christ to turn to for prayers and advice. I saw improvements in my ability to collaborate with my colleagues. I was able to concentrate on my master's project. God

continued to show me that what is impossible in my thoughts becomes possible when I choose to trust him. When I thought that my master's project would fail due to my lack of knowledge and time to do the project, it turned out that I managed to pass it. It was truly a miracle from God.

CONCLUSION

My experience bears out the truth that the bridge in the song 'Goodness of God' from Bethel points out. We may never understand what God has for us; but when we choose to surrender and let God handle the situation, we will experience and see that His goodness is running after us.



felt the calling upon me to use my talents to bless others in an aspect of multimedia ministry (projectionist/video), to at least ensure that the sound quality of the live streaming of our worship service is clear enough for everyone to hear the hymns being sung and the Word of God being preached. I felt happy as I served.

BLESSED BY GOD

During my third month working in the prison environment, I received an email saying that my master's programme that the company was sponsoring me required me to do a project with other colleagues who were in the same programme as me after work. However, there was a hitch. Due to my situation, it seemed impossible as I would usually be very late and



THE WAR FAR AWAY

BY MARTIN CHEAH

There are wars and rumours of wars far away that don't seem to have any significant effect on our daily conduct. We go on living and planning our activities like tomorrow is just another day. Do we stock up on toilet paper? No! (Which means that we have no worry.)

Should we be concerned or unconcerned?

AWARENESS, PRAYER, CARING AND SHARING

Christians need to be aware of what is going on. Today it may be in Europe, tomorrow it might be in Asia. We must pray that God will not allow the war to spread out of hand. We also have to open our eyes to see areas where we can show care for the victims. The immediate victims are in Ukraine but when the prices of goods rise due to this war, the victims could be the poor in our midst.

We must also be prepared to share the peace of God with those who fear.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 4:6

Why doesn't Jesus return yet?

I recall that some people used to ask why Jesus doesn't return yet when the signs mentioned in end times prophecies in the bible seem to be occurring.

The Bible tells us that before Christ's return, there will be wars and rumours of wars. However, Jesus did not suggest that wars would be existing at the time of His return (Mt 24:6). Nevertheless, we must still ensure that we are not caught unprepared as the day of the Lord will come like a thief:

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be discovered." (2 Peter 3:10)

"Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" – 2 Peter 3:11-12

This is what The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB) says:

"Since you know that everything must pass away, both heaven and earth, consider how completely you must be prepared with a saintly and godly life and conduct to meet this Day."

To answer the question about why Jesus doesn't return yet, I again quote from TLSB:

"The Lord's delay in returning is actually a matter of urgency for the Church, which He has called to spread the Gospel of repentance and salvation."



COMBINED PRAYER SERVICE WITH PARTNER CHURCHES

BY MARTIN CHEAH, SOME PHOTOS BY KYLIE CHIA

For the first time in five years since the rebuilding of JCC, the Partner Churches came together on a date to remember to pray together as one church. The Combined Prayer Service was held on Tuesday 22 February at night in place of JCC's usual Prayer Service every 4th Saturday of each month.

The atmosphere was uplifting and the people who came were filled with spiritual joy as they prayed together as one people.

It also happened to be on a date that read "22022022" in all numerals, Rev Anthony noted during the service.



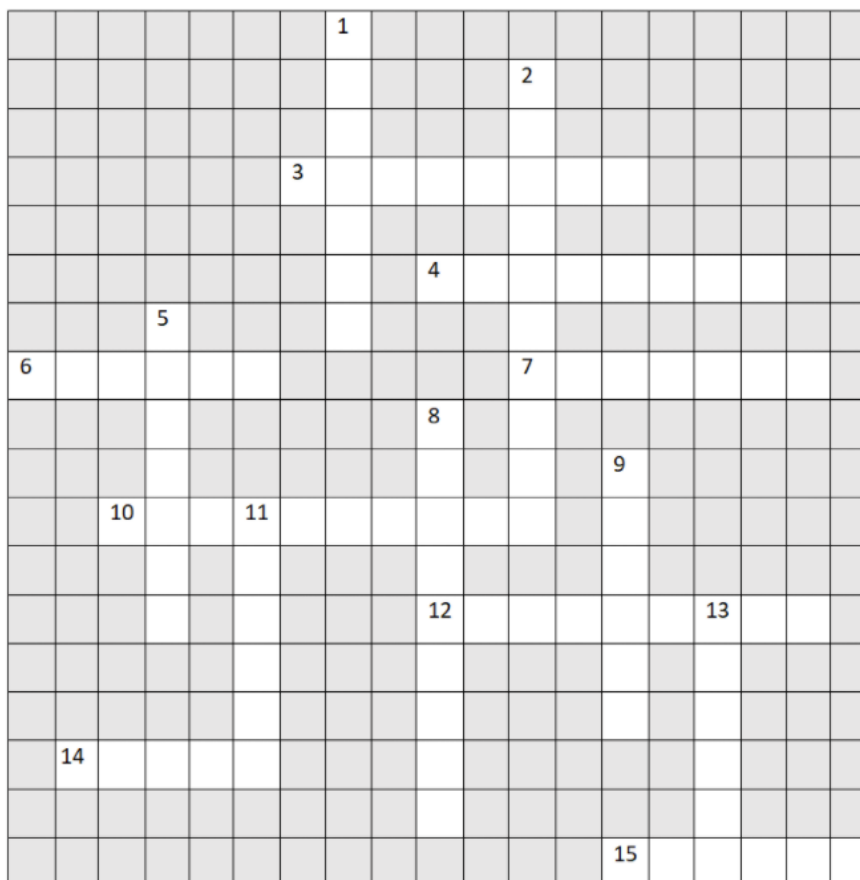


THE PASSION OF CHRIST

BY JOHN LEE

2 March 2022 is Ash Wednesday. It begins the season of Lent. The "Ash" in Ash Wednesday signals that this is not a season for joyful celebration, but a time of penitence for us to reflect on the Passion of Christ. It is a solemn reminder of our sinful nature whereby we need reconciliation with God through His Son who paid the price for our salvation. (John 3:16)

Here is a simple crossword puzzle. There are Bible references among the clues. Hopefully, the quiz will get you going into the four gospels for the compelling accounts of the Passion of Christ as we embark on our Lenten journey to Easter – the joyful consummation of the Lord's saving work with His resurrection.



ACROSS

3. The hill just outside of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified. (Mt 27:33)
4. Jesus was crucified at the time of this Jewish Feast.
6. Roman governor of Judaea who authorized the crucifixion of Jesus.
7. Caiaphas' servant whose right ear was cut off by Simon Peter. (John 18:10)
10. This event happened and destroyed the temple after Jesus' death.
12. They ordered Jesus' tomb to be made secure until the 3rd day. (Mt 27:64)
14. The disciple who betrayed Jesus. (Mt 27:3-5)
15. Here, Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights. (Mt 4:1-2 NIV)

DOWN

1. He asked Jesus: "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:18)
2. Jesus was arrested at this garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives.
- 5 Another name for Golgotha. (Lk 23:33 KJV)
8. Jesus was charged for this crime.
9. Number of times Peter denied Jesus before the rooster crowed. (Mk 14:72)
11. An apostle of Jesus who doubted Jesus' resurrection. (John 20:25),
13. After the resurrection Jesus met two of his disciples while they were on their way to this village and discussing what had happened. (Lk 24:13-35)