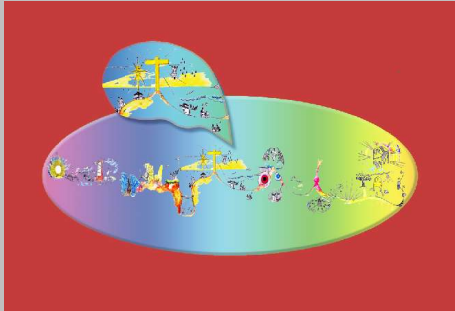


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APRIL 2007

NO 138



Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【SANCTIFIED FOR PERSEVERANCE】

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and every-one undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true son....Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees! "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord. See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many... But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do

not refuse him who speaks...now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things— so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12.

As we approach the most significant season of the year we are led to contemplate the most historic event, i.e., the very core of the gospel; the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another precious season has come around again when we focus on His love, suffering, endurance, death, burial and resurrection.

When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written between 60 CE and 70 CE before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple some of the original apostolic leaders had already passed away and most Christians had begun to lose their initial enthusiasm for their faith and had become despondent and slothful. Among them were those who had once been zealous adherents of Judaism and who had begun to be disappointed with Christianity because no visible earthly kingdom seemed to have been brought about. On top of that, while the great majority of Jews still continually practised their visible and attractive religious activities, Christians were in the minority, daring to share the offensive reproach of a suffering and crucified Messiah against the times, and they also faced persecution from the increasing anti-Christian majority. The then Christians were severely shaken by what they could see and were being tempted to disown Jesus as their Lord and Messiah.

As quoted at the beginning, the author of the epistle exhorted Christians to fix their eyes on Jesus and on His triumphant achievement on the cross. He calls on the feeble and weary Christians to recall what Christ had to endure in the face of extreme shame and suffering of crucifixion, and also the fact that Christ was able to overcome the furious opposition by sinful men, and the indescribable suffering because He anticipated the joy set before Him. Since Christ suffered much more than anyone else, even to death, i.e., ***'to the point of shedding (His) blood,'*** He is sufficient to enable us to complete what He led us to start. i.e., our faith, as ***'the author and perfecter of our faith.'*** In other words, His followers' sufferings remain light in comparison with Christ's. The author regards God's chastisement for correction and education as practical proof that He is dealing with them as sons. The product of painful trials and disciplines is ***'a harvest of righteousness and peace,'*** and those who have been trained by it may share in God's holiness. Pursuing holiness for believers is a must because ***'without holiness no-one will see the Lord.'*** It is important for Christians to be on the watch for one another lest any of them should not only miss the grace of God's salvation, but also cause a perverting influence defiling the whole Christian community. There are two ways; either wavering Christians are completely restored (***'the lame'*** may be healed) to obtain the grace of God by the help of the upright conduct of other Christians, or they fall back to their old ways and soon become worse and completely disabled. As a presence of such a man can bring defilement on the whole Christian community, Christians should care for each other so that no-one should fall.

For this purpose, Christians need to be well versed with the characteristics of their new covenant, compared with the old covenant. The old covenant is primarily characterised by how it was given through Moses at Mount Sinai; as being something tangible, burning with fire, darkness, gloom and storm, a trumpet blast or a voice speaking words. To put it plainly, it was something terribly threatening. On the other hand, the new covenant is completely different, characterised by ***'Mount Zion,' 'city of the living God,'*** the ***'heavenly Jerusalem,'*** ***'thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,'*** the assembly of ***'church of the firstborn,'*** ***'God, the judge of all men,'*** and the ***'spirits of righteous men made perfect.'*** In other words, it is characterised by not the literal but heavenly one, the dwelling place of God, and the redeemed ones and pre-Christian believers who both make up the church. More significantly, the new covenant is further characterised by ***'Jesus the mediator of a new covenant'*** and the ***'sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.'*** While Abel's blood just cried out for justice and retribution, Christ's blood now speaks of forgiveness and reconciliation. All those features of the new covenant indicate that believers in Christ are obliged not to consider returning to the old covenant. Through both covenants the same God speaks, in whatever way He takes; through the overwhelming and terrifying voice or in mercy through the sprinkled blood. Having had greater revelation today, we have much more responsibility and much less possibility to escape from dealings with God. There is a good summary by the author in the same epistle: ***'We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels***

was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?’(2:1-3). Therefore, true Christians are those who continue to ***‘run with perseverance the race marked out for (them)’*** and who thus strive after holiness to survive God’s ***‘consuming fire’***, i.e., judgment, and consequently, to eternally reign with Christ.

Today, there is a sense of instability and unease overwhelming almost every area of life and the world. The church, the Bible, and the preaching of the gospel are all under increasing attack. It is said that in dozens of countries more than two hundred million believers in Christ are suffering some form of ongoing persecution; being oppressed, beaten and martyred. While the decline and the corruption of the church are increasing in industrialised nations, in some parts of the developing world, unprecedented spiritual awakening are taking place, yet under persecution, oppression and suffering. Asia is said to be on the verge of a great awakening. In China and India, despite severe opposition and obstacles the church has grown in the past decade. Astonishingly, South Korea, whose people have only in recent decades embraced the gospel is reported to have now become the second-largest missionary-sending nation in the world. However, behind such an exciting growth of faith in Christ around the world, in parallel, vicious attacks against Christianity are happening daily and increasing. Very lately in Ethiopia, more than one thousand Christians became homeless and they have been living in the bush after their houses were burned to the ground, and churches were torched by Muslims. Similar atrocities are being committed worldwide. The rise and spread of militant Islam across the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Africa is regarded as one of the great causes of ongoing persecution against Christians. However, despite the present despondence and despair, and humiliation for the gospel’s sake, we are encouraged by the Scriptures including passages quoted at the beginning that such opposition and oppression against Jesus’ followers are what is expected. We are also encouraged by the surpassing prospect of future glory promised to the Lord’s faithful followers. Christ’s and the apostle Paul’s words are really helpful to understand a life in faith on this side of the world: ***‘Remember the words I spoke to you: “No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.’ (John 15:20). ‘We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. ...For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eye not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.’(2Corinthians 4:8-11).***

The following is amazing testimony of a true follower of Christ, who is working as a coordinator for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in India. He (Prakish) was beaten and shot by radical followers of other gods on his way back home in Lucknow. Thanks be to God, however, despite the enemy’s malicious, inhumane dealings the Lord has spared his life and he is now recovering fast. “I had boarded an SUV, a Tata Sumo model, to return to Lucknow around 7 p.m. One of the local pastors had come to see me off. We were talking about the My Hope India programmes. I was asking him to fully cooperate with the My Hope India project. There were five people in the vehicle, including the driver and those people were overhearing our Christian talk. When the vehicle started, the pastor left. I was sitting in the back seat when one of the fellows asked me to go to the front seat as he said he wanted to sleep. I felt a bit odd about it, but did it anyway. After going a while, they started talking with me, asking me if I was a devout follower of their religion. I told them, ‘No, I am a Christian.’ To this I heard a fellow saying, ‘I am getting crazy after hearing all this talk about Christianity.’ Then two of them in the back seat grabbed my head and started manhandling me. I was shocked. They put chloroform on a hanky and put it to my nose. I was overpowered by four men. One of them started hitting my head with a pistol butt. They started taking my rings from my fingers. They took my mobile phone. At this point I was losing my senses. I started praying, ‘Jesus, take care of me’ and, in case I died, ‘Jesus, take care of my family.’ They had taken my bag also, which contained important documents like my vehicle registration papers and my diary. After taking my belongings and money, they opened the door and tried to push me out of the running vehicle. At this point, one of them took out his pistol and shot me in the back. The bullet came out through my belly. They pushed me out and I became

unconscious. About two hours later I became semi-conscious, and I saw people around me. I could tell that they thought I was a drunkard. I called out to them and pleaded with them to inform the police. The police station was not very far away. They called the police, who were so kind to take me to the hospital and to inform my family.” –At the hospital, Prakish was in severe pain, his face burned black from the chloroform. He gave hospital officials the My Hope state coordinator’s name and telephone number, then underwent surgery to repair intestinal damage. The head wound, where he was hit with the pistol butt, was superficial and healed quickly. When the state coordinator visited Prakish at the hospital, his first words were, ‘Brother, praise the Lord.’– (A magazine of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, ‘Decision’ Ja./Fe.’07, p.14, Emphases added)

For the present-day Christians who are all heading for the unknown, unstable end–times, what happened to him out of the blue is not irrelevant. This is an amazing testimony by one who literally played the role of a servant of Christ illustrated in 2 Corinthians 4 in real life. There, Paul exhorts Christians not to lose heart whatever happens since when God calls and commissions His servants, He also supplies the strength necessary for them to persevere in the face of hardships and persecutions: *‘Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God....The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.’* This was exactly in accord with Jesus’ prayer to the Father for His followers’ sake: *‘I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ...I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name –the name you gave me– so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by the name you gave me. ...I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ...Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.’(John 17:9-20).* It is clear from these words of Jesus that “being holy” in the biblical sense is not intended to mean “being taken out of the world” in the sense of the Christian community withdrawing from this secular world. Instead, it means “being set apart by God” so as to be sent into the world and in the midst of opposition and persecution, to make disciples of Christ. God sanctifies Christians for this purpose not in heavenly havens but in the very secular world, to say plainly, in the enemy’s domain. That is why we definitely need God’s protection. Otherwise, it would neither be possible for us to endure opposition, hostility and persecution, nor to overcome fear, pain and death. Only with a firm conviction of God’s abiding power and His presence, we would be prompted to go forth into mission in this hostile world.

As examined above, the Epistle to Hebrews 12 assures us of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ as our ultimate deliverer from sin; the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Accordingly, we should not waver in our decision on faith in Christ, no matter what happens to us; persecution or oppression or hardship, and whatever its source; false religions, godless societies or hostile cultures. Our faith in Christ under the new covenant is distinctive from anything else, especially in respect of our privilege of belonging to the abiding eternal order. That is why the author of the epistle repeatedly warned the Christians never to return to the old order that was physical and external, temporal and provisional, merely depending on conformity to the law, once the new order has been brought about by God Himself. In contrast to the old one, the new order is spiritual and internal, depending on the indestructible life of Christ alone. Our utter failure of keeping the law won’t be counted any longer once we entered into the new order. However, if we yet deliberately reject this final truth of and final revelation of God we are in danger of disobedience and apostasy. Lest any of us should yield to such temptation of abandoning Christ we ought to take care of one another because the danger of apostasy would increase if we fail to check other fellow-Christians. For the time-being, Christ’s followers may have to go through hardships and often find themselves stand on the threshold of alternative decisions before the time of final decision; life or death comes. This is the Father’s loving discipline for His true sons, through which they are sanctified.