

April- June 2014

# ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

## Messages Behind The Lord's Prayer

- Messages Behind The Lord's Prayer
- Look In The Mirror
- The Criminal on The Cross





## Jesus - Lord of the Sabbath!

by Rene D. Corpuz

In numerous occasions, Jesus healed many people (Mat. 4:23-25). He healed them irrespective of which day of the week. At one point, He told the man who had infirmity for 38 years to "Rise, take up your bed and walk". He knew that such an act would catch the attention of the Jews because it was a Sabbath (John 5:8-10). If His only intention was to heal and release the man from his suffering, why do it on a Sabbath day? Didn't Jesus know that His healing activities were considered work by the Jews, and in the process offended them and accused Him of desecrating the Sabbath command? (Mk. 3:2) Why couldn't Jesus just skip His healing "sessions" on Sabbath days thereby avoiding confrontation with those who were offended by the way He kept the Sabbath. So why heal on the Sabbath day?

Now, Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, but never sinned (Hebrews 4:11). Understanding that Jesus did not commit sin is important! The Pharisees, the Scribes, the Priesthood, and even the so-called "Christians" today may think that Jesus violated the Law of Moses and the traditions of the Jews. Of course, Jesus DID NOT violate any of God's laws. If He did, He would have failed to serve as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29. Therefore, every action that he did WERE NOT violations or transgressions of the Law, regardless of the opinions and beliefs of the Scribes and the Pharisees of His day - or of any Rabbi or preachers IN OUR TIME! If Jesus DID SOMETHING ON THE SABBATH, or ASKED HIS DISCIPLES TO DO THINGS WHILE IT IS STILL SABBATH, we can be assured that none of it violates the sanctity of the Sabbath. If Jesus DID IT, it's not sin, plain and simple.

The Lord respects authority. He taught us to "render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Nor was He always opposed to established authorities and officials of the Jews. He acknowledged that "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Matthew 23:2-3).

Every step of the way, God the Father demonstrated His full support to His Son by healing all those who were sick on the very Sabbath when Jesus prayed for them. This clearly proved The Father's approval of Jesus healing activities even on the Sabbath.

So why did Jesus do the things He did on the Sabbath? Because as Lord of the Sabbath, He cannot allow wrong interpretations and misunderstanding of the purpose and the intent of the Sabbath to continue. He had to set the example to His disciples that there are times when they had to go against the interpretation of the established authorities when such interpretations are wrong and contrary to sound judgment. The disciples may even have to risk their own lives and safety if it was necessary. Jesus taught His disciples that the presence of the Holy Spirit will guide them into a better understanding of the laws and commandments of God, and they need to have the courage to STAND BY THE TRUTH as He did. The Lord Jesus is OUR EXAMPLE when it comes to proper Sabbath observance. Therefore, let us continue to keep the Sabbath according to the principles taught by Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

## ARMOR OF GOD

April - June 2014 Circulation : 20,000

The **Armor of God** magazine is published by the Church of God, International [ Philippines ]. It is made possible through the freely given tithes and offerings of members and fellow laborers of the **Church of God, International.**

**Publisher :** Rene D. Corpuz

**Editor-in-Chief :** Eleno S. Mellomida

**Editorial Staff :** Winston S. Co

Melchor P. Arcinas

Marilou G. Sanchez

**Contributing Writers :** Ferdie S. Padilla

**Layout :** Mel Joseph S. Diegor

### PHILIPPINES

Church of God International, P.O. Box 2450  
MCPO Makati City, Metro Manila 1264 Philippines  
Phone : [632] 995-0294 Fax : [632] 995-0577

Website : <http://www.cgiphils.org>

E-mail : [info@cgiphils.org](mailto:info@cgiphils.org)

Mobile : [63917] 811-6365

### UNITED STATES

Church of God International

P.O. Box 2525 Tyler, TX 75710

Phone : [903] 939-2929

Website : <http://www.cgi.org>

E-mail : [info@cgi.org](mailto:info@cgi.org)

### AUSTRALIA

Church of God International

P.O. Box 171 Boonah, QLDN 4310

Phone : 011-61-7-5463-2949

E-mail : [h-thaupt@bigpond.com](mailto:h-thaupt@bigpond.com)

### CANADA

Church of God International, 1299 Oxford St. East

P.O. Box 33034 London, Ontario N5Y 5L4

Phone : [519] 741-0455

Website : <http://www.cgicanada.org>

E-mail : [johncoish@rogers.com](mailto:johncoish@rogers.com)

### JAMAICA

Church of God International,

P.O. Box 776 Kingston 19 Jamaica

Phone : 1-876-925-2260

## Table of Contents

Messages Behind  
The Lord's Prayer

3

Look In  
The Mirror

9

The Criminal On  
The Cross

12



# Messages Behind The Lord's Prayer

by Eleno S. Mellomida



**I**n the community of Christians, no other prayer has been universally memorized than the Lord's Prayer. Out of this prayer, songs were composed, replayed and revived; yet so far no composer or revivalist, with all their musical talent and creativity, has yet come up with new lyrics to replace, edit or re-invent the original wordings Jesus used in the beginning. The wordings of the Lord's Prayer were proficiently arranged by its Author, and it will remain unchanged until He returns.

When you listen to the Lord's Prayer sung during worship services; or when you silently recite it in your regular prayer habit, can you find some points of interest that will make it more meaningful, passionate and significant? Do you feel the awe, the touch and the reverential aspect of the composition? Or, do you just mumble the words insincerely and rehearse it repetitively in a hollow, uninspired and routinary manner? Is there something critically important in the messages of Christianity's universally 'mouthed' prayer?

It's about time to take time and examine some of the interesting and important lessons contextually overlooked or grossly misunderstood about the Lord's Prayer.

## Pretentious Prayer

Jesus said: When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you (Mat. 6:5-6).

To publicly display one's piety is not always a sign of spiritual sanctity. The outward form may appear righteous but the surrounding distraction is not conducive to stimulate sincerity. It can even be construed as pretentious or pure religious hype. Jesus said such showmanship have already

earned the 'practitioner' the reward of having been seen by men. But such a reward is temporal, fleeting and caters only to human vanity. Jesus termed it bluntly by calling it pure hypocrisy.

## Repetitious Prayer

Again, Jesus said, "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be you not therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him" (Mat. 6:7-8).

Apparently, Jesus' admonition against repetitive prayer in verse 7 included habitual recitations of the "Lord's Prayer". Now, it's only natural to feel bothered or getting annoyed with someone who



keeps saying the same thing again and again - like an unalterable cliché - using exactly the same words everytime he or she makes a request or an appeal. How much more with the Father who "already know the things that we need before we ask Him" (v-8)? And to think that He possesses the kind of "photographic memory" that even the best minds cannot and will never come close to it (Mat. 10:30; Luke 12:7).

God designed the human body; it is therefore naïve to assume that He is unaware of what its needs are to make it work. To draw a simple analogy - any car manufacturer knows what is needed for his product to keep it functional and effective. And mankind is much more valuable to God than a car!

### Prayer Attitude

Jesus said, "In this manner therefore pray" (Mat 6:9). He did not say, "repeat after me". He is simply giving the pattern on how we should compose our prayer. (Aside from that, the Lord's Prayer is not Jesus' personal and private prayer. His personal prayer is recorded in the 17th chapter in the gospel of John.) Thus, if we repetitiously recite the same wordings, this will go against His instruction in verse 7.

Jesus granted His disciples the leeway on how to compose their preferred approach to God according to the pattern He provided. He knew how individuality works (John 2:24-24). People have divergent ways of expressing themselves without deviating from the general

guideline. The best prayer is one expressed with feelings - not withholding what is in the mind, laying it openly bare before the throne of the heavenly Father. Reciting the same words again and again will certainly redound to boredom and monotony rather than openness and sincerity.

Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come **boldly** to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." To come **boldly** (*Gk. parhessia*) - means all-out spokenness, frankness, openly, freely and plainly with confidence. Prayer therefore should be expressed in utmost sincerity, revealing the innermost contents of the heart and mind with full confidence in the knowledge that you are talking to someone who is real and is there listening. And God expects us to come to Him and truly pour out what we feel, think, want or ask for.

### Two-part prayer

Pray then in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen (Mat. 6:9-13, NASB).

There are two (2) parts in the prayer. The first part is directed to the Father, and the second has everything to do with our personal needs and our relationship with our fellowmen.

If you go back to the Ten Commandments listed in Exodus chapter 20, the same pattern exists. It is also divided in two parts. The first four (4) commands define our obligations to God; and the last six (6) tell us how to conduct ourselves in our relationship with our neighbors.

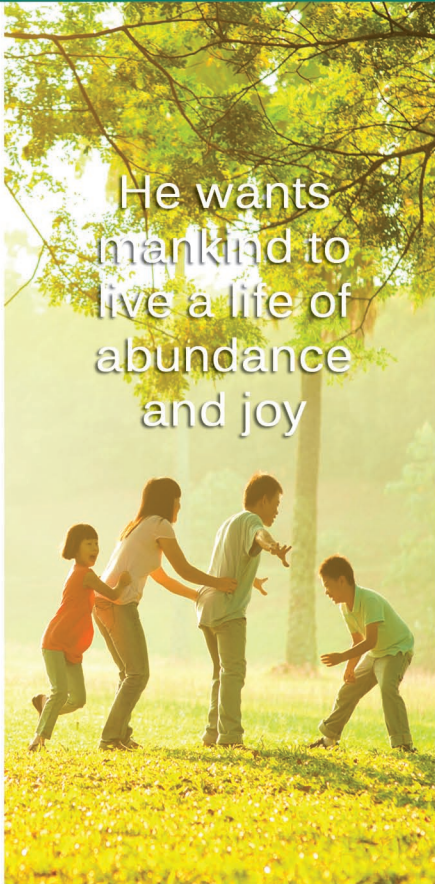
### The First Part

#### 1. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Hallow means holy, venerate, concentrate, sanctify. No one has ever claimed to have been around aeons of years before anything else ever existed (John 1:3; Isaiah 44:6-7; 45:5-8). Thus, first and foremost and above everything else - from the beginning countless of years ago - God was already there. He created all things and sustains it (Rom.1:20; Eph. 3:9; Rev. 4:11; Heb. 1:3). It is only fitting then that He alone deserves to be prayed to, worshipped and venerated. While there are those who are looked up to as reverential by their followers because of their position in the churches of this world, Jesus said "call no man father, for one is your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 23:19).

Obviously, Jesus is not telling us to avoid calling our biological father in our traditional way of addressing them because Paul whom Jesus Himself mentored (Gal. 1:12; 1 Cor 11:23) wrote: "We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" (Hebrews 12:9). On





He wants  
mankind to  
live a life of  
abundance  
and joy

top of that, the fifth commandment tells us to "honor your father and mother - a great commandment which carries with it a great promise (Exodus 20:12). Apparently, addressing someone "father" in the spiritual context is what Jesus tells us not to do.

The apostle Paul tells us that there are various positions, gifts and functions in the churches of God (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29). There is no suggestion though that we have to address any of them as father. Tradition may have conceived the idea of calling them "church fathers". But Peter, one of the acknowledged pillar (Gal. 2:9) of the early church referred to himself as a bond servant, an apostle and a fellow elder (1 Peter 1:1; 5:1).

We only have one Father in heaven who is worthy of veneration, reverence and

worship; and one Lord Jesus Christ in whose name "every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11). God's name is the only name worthy to be hallowed, sanctified, revered and concentrated.

Again why venerate and hallow God's name? It is because apart from Him nothing came into existence (John 1:3). Through Him everything came into what they are and how they came to be - including His most important creation - the one which corresponds to His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), you!

Now, there is no shortage of men and women who possess exceptional talent and ability. Sadly few among the "best and the brightest" have the time to consider God. If they do, it is likely only to doubt, casually acknowledge, or perhaps outrightly deny His existence.

## 2. "Thy Kingdom Come"

This brings into focus God's master plan for mankind. To be born into, and be a bonafide member of the divine family of God is the sum total of God's grand design. This is the ultimate destiny of man. The kingdom of God is His divine family that will have dominion over the entire creation. It is more than a physical occupation subject to vicissitudes of time. There are no limits to the sovereignty of God's kingdom. The vast expanse of the universe, even the one beyond, will be under

the domain of a kingdom composed of God Beings. Nebhucadnezzar, the documented well-known and powerful ruler in his time, finally admitted the superiority of the God of heaven (Daniel 4:3, 34; 7:14, 27). And Jesus priority revolves around the Kingdom of God. This can be easily understood from His parables and teachings. He commissioned His followers to carry on with the same gospel that He preached (Mk.1:14; Mk. 16:15; Mat. 28:19). And Paul never deviated, but carried the same message throughout his ministerial journey (Acts 28:30-31). *(For a thorough understanding of the subject, request a copy of the Armor of God, The Kingdom of God-What is it? July-Sept. 2013 issue)*

## 3. "Thy Will be done"

Prior to His crucifixion Jesus appealed to the Father to forestall His imminent death. Since God's plan to save humanity has already been laid out step by step, Jesus knew His appeal is "moot and academic", thus He humbly yielded to the Father's will (Mat. 26:39). He urged His followers to seek the Father's will and yield to them (Mat. 7:21; Eph. 5:17). Our carnal and individual will will only result in death (Rom. 8:6). Left to our own devices we will not fulfill God's masterplan for mankind. All of God's will are favorable to mankind; and these are:

- He wants mankind to live a life of abundance and joy (Jn. 10:10; Jn.15:11).
- He wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth



# Free yourself of hatred and animosity - then come to God in prayer.

(1 Tim. 2:4).

- He wants us to choose His way so that we will be granted with glory, honor and immortality ( Rom. 2:7-10).
- He wants us to have eternal life and live forever (John 3:16; Mat. 19:29-30).
- He wants us to become His literal children and inheritors like Jesus (John 1:12; Rom.8:14).
- He doesn't want anyone to take us out from His hands (John 10:18, 29).
- He is not pleased with the wicked's death – but is patiently waiting for the wicked to repent and mend their ways (Ezekiel 18:21-23; 2 Peter 3:9)
- He is pleased to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

There may be many more of God's will. Yet, the above-mentioned are sufficient enough for us to appreciate God's will for humanity. Now, Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts let him come to Me... (John 7:37). "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood (pictured during the ceremony of the New Testament Passover which all Christians are commanded to observe -1 Cor.11:23-26) has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 7:54, 58). Those statements ( note carefully the words anyone and whoever), contrary to the claim of some, can only mean that the path to salvation and eternal life is open to all - on conditions set forth by the Savior - and not exclusively reserved to a few.

## The second part

### 4. "Give us this day our daily bread"

We are supposed to be conscious of our daily bread - not the bread for tens or hundreds of generations to come. However, Jesus is not endorsing a 'hand to mouth' existence. The bible strongly encouraged everyone to draw attention to the diligence of the ants (Proverbs 6:6; 30:25); and Paul issued a strong admonition against the slothful and lazy (2 Thes. 3:9).

But if one's energies are solely focused on the accumulation of wealth in utter disregard for the things of God, the following parable of Jesus tells us that wealth apart from godliness will not be enjoyed in perpetuity. Notice: "The land of the rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, 'what shall I do since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said. 'This is what I will do, I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grains and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul shall be required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared? So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God"

Luke 12:16 -21). The psalmist added: "Each man's life is but a breath. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro; he bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth not knowing who will get it"(Psalms 39:5-6, NIV).

God did not create man to solely and continually rely on the substances that come out from the ground. Jesus said we need more than rice and wheat (John 6:49). God designed the human body to last only for a limited period of time. Within that time frame, God expects us to use it to qualify to live forever and be part of His divine family. He is eager to give us life - eternal life (Deut. 30:19).

Jesus' instruction is to seek first the kingdom before our physical needs and convenience (Mat.6:33). Now, there is nothing wrong with striving hard to make life convenient, comfortable and prosperous. But always and at all times, the main reason for our very own existence supersedes and renders secondary all other things normally sought after and prioritize by the average man.

### 5. "Forgive us our sins as we forgive our debtors"

One who is forgiven should be willing to forgive. Forgiven and forgiving are inseparable. You cannot have the one and neglect the other. An unforgiving attitude poses a major obstacle towards being



born into the Family of God. Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:23-35 drives home a very good lesson on forgiveness. The story is about a servant who owed his master a large sum of money. Upon his pleadings and entreaties, the master mercifully forgave and cancelled his debts. But the same servant went and manhandled his fellow servant who owed him a small amount. Upon hearing of the unfortunate incident, the master changed his mind, called the forgiven servant and demanded payment of all the he owed him, and have him detained until cleared of all his indebtedness.

Being a recipient of God's mercy, compassion and forgiveness is the main reason why we should have a forgiving attitude. God's principle works in all aspects; what you sow you reap. The unforgiving heart will be justly reciprocated and compensated with the same.

Jesus also made it clear that ill feelings, disputes, misunderstandings, and disagreements with your brethren has to be settled first before coming to God in prayer (Mat. 5:23). To do otherwise are likely to result in unanswered prayer. Don't pray if you harbor hatred against someone. Agree or settle amicably. Free yourself of hatred and animosity - then come to God in prayer. Here's a very short prayer Jesus said deserves justification: "...the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy, said Jesus

## 6. "Lead us not into temptation"

James wrote: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:12-15, KJV).

thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet He did not succumb to sin (Heb. 4:15). He was able to overcome (John 16:33), and told us we too can by regular prayer habit (Mat.26:41; Mk.14:38) and through Him (John 15:5).

## 7. "Deliver us from evil"

Unlike the battles being fought by warring nations, the Christian battle is a tough one to engage in. The enemies are invisible, and they are powerful. In His appeal to the Father, Jesus said: "I pray not that you take them out of the

One who is forgiven should be willing to forgive.

Temptation is not a sin. There is a process before it 'evolves' into a sin. Temptation starts with a situation where the mind reacts and accommodates. Therefore it can be managed. The biblical remedy is overcoming. Paul provided the solution to stamp out temptation before it breeds sinfulness. He wrote: For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every

world but to keep them from the EVIL ONE (John 17:15). The evil one is more powerful than Christians. And he is determined to prevent and block your way towards God's kingdom. He is the untiring adversary (Satan means adversary) who will see to it that you will not become a literal son of God. He worked hard on this objective by trying to challenge Jesus twice by questioning His sonship of God (Mat. 4:3,6). An adversary is always opposed to the cause and objectives of his opponent. Whereas God wants people to be born into His family, the adversary is consistently against it. But



Jesus made a guarantee that NO ONE can take you out of the Father's hands (John 10:27-29).

Then Paul provided the mechanisms to fight the Christian battle. He enumerated the armaments available to Christians:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:10-18, KJV).

### **The Acknowledgment**

Finally, the acknowledgement that, “Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory

The unforgiving  
heart will  
be justly  
reciprocated  
and  
compensated  
with the same.

forever.” It started with the acknowledgement of God's awesome power, and close with the glorification and exaltation of His divine position.

This is our sincere acknowledgment that He indeed is the only one worthy to be worshipped and obeyed; that all power emanates from the Almighty and nothing supplements Him! It is indeed amazing why He wants us to partake of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) when He can do everything without us. We can only surmise that He did it because of His unfathomable love for the beings He created after His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). He is truly the epitome of love in that He risked the life of His only begotten Son for our salvation and final inclusion to His divine family (John 3:16).

It might be interesting to note that the total number of points emphasized in the Lord's Prayer is seven, “coincidentally” God's number of completion! Jesus said pattern your prayer after this.

**AG**







**P**aul to the Corinthians wrote:

*“Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old leavened of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor. 5:6-8).*

Christ, the Apostles and the early Christians kept a festival of the Lord known as the Days of the Unleavened Bread. The instructions are found in the the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy: On the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread...for seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory...(Lev.23:6; Deut. 16:3-4).

The Days of Unleavened Bread has always been regarded as the appropriate time for all Christians to get rid of the old yeast. Yeast represents sin during this season. Jesus likened yeast to hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). Hypocrisy may not appear dreadful, but it is one sin that can easily breed into multitude of sins like lying, cheating, pride, covetousness, envy, hatred and eventually murder.

### **Insidiousness of sin**

Sin is insidious. Paul said a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. James then tells us the gradual steps by which sin is committed. He wrote, “Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15).

All sins started small, like a tiny yeast. It starts with what appears to be a little and harmless temptation. And, when the temptation turns into a desire it leads to sin, and sin leads to death!

Temptation, like the yeast of malice must be gotten rid of right away. It must be “nipped in the bud” before it overcomes us and eventually kills us. There should be no delay in getting rid of the old yeast of malice and wickedness before it kills us - but how?

### **Find Your Faults**

Where do we start to kill the old yeast? Where can we find them? When we clean our houses of yeast, as the scripture instructs during this festival, we look at every nook and cranny, and every conceivable place where in all probability they have been stacked; from the kitchen, dining room, bedroom, pantry, inside the refrigerator and oven. And after days of cleaning our homes of leaven, we somehow accidentally found leaven laying somewhere under our noses.

The scripture in Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? “I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.”

How then shall we get rid of the old yeast in our lives? How do we unleaven the malicious, sinful and wicked attributes of our own selves? It is truly difficult to find them unless we do some serious soul-searching, self-reflection and self-examination. And that is the only way to find these old and malicious leavenings.



Paul said we ought to examine ourselves. (1 Cor. 11:28). Self-examination is to exercise introspection and the willingness to learn more about nature, purpose and action. Finding our personal faults and sins is something many of us rarely do. We are carried by the standards of this world and the cares of this life. By self-examination and reflection, we hope to find our bearing and compass in our spiritual life. The reason to self-reflect during the season of the Days of Unleavened Bread is so that we can start cleaning and unleavening our lives (2 Corinthians 13:5-8).

### Mirror

To find something in the dark you need a flashlight. To find something that is on you and in you, you need a mirror. Let us take a look at ourselves in the mirror. James said: "For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:23-25).

Most of us consult the mirror before we leave the house. Some of us spend hours in-front of the mirror before we begin our day. We look at the mirror to be sure we are presentable.

James said; we need to see ourselves in God's mirror, which is the word of God. As a mirror, the Bible reflects the condition

we are in and reveal who we really are. Through the mirror of God, we can see our faults and sins and yes, the old yeasts.

James contrasts two types of people; one who hurries in the morning, takes a casual glance pass the mirror and cares not what he looks like. And, another one who uses the mirror to tidy-up himself.

Many just glance at the Word of God; but have not really looked into the Word of God. In contrast, James describes the person who "looks into" and "continues therein" (v. 25). The word for look here means to peer into, scrutinize; searching

for its true intent.

This is how we should "look" into the mirror of the Word of God. When we look intently into the mirror of God's Word we see our true reflection, only then can we begin to deal with what we see.

And, we need to act on what we see. When we see dirt or yeast in our life, we need to take action. We need to purge out the old yeast of leaven. We need the mirror of God – the perfect law that brings liberty.

Then when we gaze intently into the Word of God, not only do we see our shortcomings,



Then when we gaze intently into the Word of God, not only do we see our shortcomings, we also see the image of Jesus Christ who is our hero and model.



we also see the image of Jesus Christ who is our hero and model. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18; "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

As you look in the mirror, you endeavor to become like Christ. We are to grow into the image, likeness and character of our

deeds against God's laws. How do you know God's standard? To know and understand God's standard of righteousness one needs to read the Bible. The 10 commandments are enumerated in Exodus 20; the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:19-21 and similarly in Colossians 3:5.

## 2. Be honest with yourself.

The most tragic of all is for men to lie to themselves. And

is not an easy struggle against sin. Although we are wretched because of sin, we must strive to be righteous before God. This is a product of intense and honest self-examination.

## 3. Plead guilty.

Very often when we are confronted with wrong doings, we rationalize and try to explain the misdeeds. Try to put the blame on someone or something else. Don't blame it

By self-examination and reflection, we hope to find our bearing and compass in our spiritual life.

Lord Jesus.

The Bible, the Word of God, is a mirror in our hand. It is the only instrument to examine and see ourselves where we stand in God's sight. It is the basic tool that will enable to us to transform from glory to glory. As Peter said, be holy for I am Holy.

## Mirror of Your Life

The Days of Unleavened Bread is the best time to review our lives and acknowledge our sins. This process will bring to our attention the sins we have committed - which in most cases we are not fully aware of. Then we repent of them and implore God's mercy. Sins, like yeast are invisible to our consciousness. That is why we need to look at ourselves in the mirror. How?

### 1. Use God's standard.

Use God's mirror, the Ten Commandments and the Scriptures. Measure your

many lie to themselves. This is called self-denial in psychology. The right way to do self-examination is from a third person's viewpoint; it is the most objective and unbiased. To recognize our own sins, we need a truth serum. Let me give you 2 tips;

First, pray to God to help you see yourself as He would see you. We need to examine ourselves from God's vantage point.

And secondly, reflect on reproof and criticism from friends and family members for embedded faults that we need to undo.

If you do these 2 things properly as Paul did, you will realize how wretched you have been. Paul admitted his wretchedness saying, 'what I want to do I do not do and what I ought not to do that I do' (Romans 7:14-25). Paul struggles to do what is right before God. And, we all know it

on the weather, traffic, spouse, children, boss, and neighbor. We must be quick to acknowledge sin. Plead guilty as charged. It is only when we own up to our misdeeds can we truly feel the horror of the error, and only then can we truly repent of our ways.

### The Time is now

It is never too late to take time to look at our selves in the mirror. Look at the perfect law intently to see where we have come short of so we can change. Look for the reflection of the glory of Christ so we can be transformed from glory to glory into His image and likeness.

God in all His wisdom has taught us to examine ourselves against the perfect law and the opportunity to grow into the image and likeness of His Son Jesus Christ. **May we all one day reflect the glory of Christ! AG**





# The Criminal on the Cross

by Rene D. Corpuz

**W**e have a common saying ***“for every rule there is an exception”***. While in some cases it may apply, yet in most instances we end up justifying our actions - especially the wrong ones - as an exception to the rule. And eventually we tend to look at ourselves as exempted from the rules. What about in our relationship with God? Does God provide certain exemptions from His rules, from His laws, from His commandments or from His instructions?

## Relationship with God

With God the Father and the Lord Jesus there are no favoritisms (Galatians 2:6, Luke 20:21). What we sow, we shall reap – be it physically or spiritually (Galatians 6:7). God, through the Prophet Jeremiah said: “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings...” (Jeremiah 17:10). The Apostle Paul also teaches that “...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Therefore, our actions are governed by certain standards, and if we consider ourselves Christians, the standards that govern our conduct are prescribed by God through His laws. And if we

break those laws, we sin because sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4); and as a result, a death penalty is imposed because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), but there's a remedy that Christians can avail of—the shed blood of our Savior can cover all our sins if the conditions are met (Heb. 9:22; 1 John 1:8-9). And God declared, “I am God, I do not change...” (Malachi 3:6). It is evident then that God has a different perspective compared to ours. We love to excuse ourselves from responsibility, liability and obligation. But God is consistent, He doesn't make compromises. That is how the Father introduced Himself. He is predictable - and for a very good reason. Knowing His character, we can be assured that if we follow instructions we will be richly rewarded; and if

we are disobedient, we can expect unpleasant consequences. With God, there are no exceptions to the rule. Every action will have to be accounted for – good or bad (Rom. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Now, if God is not playing favorites, and if we are supposed to reap what we sow, or get rewarded according to what we have done, and if God does not change, what about the criminal or the thief on the cross? Did Jesus make an exception out of his case, thus giving him an easy entry into the Kingdom?

## Lord, Remember Me ...

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you



are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Did the criminal get himself an easy ticket to salvation - a free ride to immortality, and end up ruling with Christ in the millennium? (Rev. 20:2-6) Was he exempted from all the trials, hardships, and persecutions that Christians needed to experience and go through? Remember Paul said 'We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22); and 'If we suffer we shall also reign with Him' (2 Tim. 2:12).

### Conditions for Salvation

Unless one is born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5) If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17). Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come, eternal life (Luke 18:29). If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has

cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:25-27, 33).

If the Scriptures quoted above apply to the disciples and Christians alike, how is it that Jesus promised salvation to this criminal without going through the same tests, difficulties, and persecutions that the rest of us will have to go through?

To avoid jumping into wrong conclusions, and to have a better perspective and understanding of the situation, there are questions that needed answers in the light of this seemingly paradoxical circumstance.

1. How much do we know about this thief or criminal? The Scriptures does not say much; this seemed to be the first and the last time we read about him in the gospels. It is wrong for us to say then that he had it easy when we do not know how he lived his life. What was he like as a person? What is his character? Was he good, bad or even so wicked? We do not know if he is younger, or older than Jesus. He could be 23, or 48 years old.

2. What was he doing before he was in prison? How long was he in prison? Why was he in prison? And why the death sentence? He deserved the death sentence - that we know because he admitted it. By Roman Law, there are few crimes that are punishable by death. Murder and rebellion against the rule of Caesar are among the primary reasons.

3. Is this really the first time that he met or encountered Jesus? Or had they met before? This criminal obviously knew and is familiar with Jesus. While in Scripture we are only told of their encounter at Golgotha, there are 'elements' in their conversation that provided hints that we are not dealing here with a person who had just met and knew Jesus for the very first time in his life. He knew Jesus quite well; he respectfully addressed Him as Lord, and believed that He shall be a King.

### If You are the Christ...

To address a person as the "Christ" requires a bit of knowledge of the prophecies. John who wrote the gospel by-lined after him, presented an intriguing scenario in John 1:35-40. Here, John the Baptist declares Jesus as "the Lamb of God". Yet, when Andrew, who is a disciple of John the Baptist found his brother Peter, he introduced Jesus to Peter as the "Messiah" or the Christ. In both instances, John the Baptist publicly introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 35), Andrew equated "Lamb of God" as the Messiah, or the Christ.

It appears that in those days, the Jews and Israelites connect the identity of the Christ, the Son of God and the "Lamb of God" to one person. The angel Gabriel who appeared before Mary introduced her future son as "Son of the Highest" and that at the same time David shall be his father, and shall reign over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32-33).



These criminals knew that the One being crucified with them is called the Christ. One of these criminals admitted that their punishment is just, and he accepted it. But he knew that Jesus was innocent. What is truly interesting in this encounter was what one of the criminals asked from the Lord, and the Lord's response to his request:

1. Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom;
2. The Lord replied, I promise to you today, you shall be with me in Paradise.

Christ, the King of Israel. This criminal had a very good idea of who Jesus truly is, and he believed in Him.

Despite the certainty of death, the criminal believed Jesus would come again, alive, and shall reign as King. He believed in a future resurrection; that Jesus had the power and authority to grant his request. That is "real faith"! How he came to know Jesus we are not told. But, it is clear that he has enough knowledge of who the Lord Jesus is. We are not told if the criminal was a Jew. But it is important to realize that anyone

believed Jesus only at the "last hour" before dying. We are dealing here with a criminal who is a believer, who had faith!

### You Shall Be With Me...

But perhaps the more amazing part of this brief story is that Jesus recognized and honored the request, and made a promise to the criminal. And for Jesus to make such promise is of enormous significance. The criminal asked for Jesus to remember him when He comes into His kingdom. He knew he would die that day and accepted his fate. He knew he deserved it. But he believed Jesus shall live again and shall be King! The criminal deserved to die for the crimes he has committed; but he strongly believed in the resurrection. At the very least he believed Jesus would be resurrected, and that Jesus possessed the power to bring him back to life. It is this belief and faith that Jesus saw in him that Jesus assured the man he will be in Paradise. Jesus makes promises, some of which have conditions that must be met (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30). He will also deny a request if it is not within his authority to grant it (Matthew 20:23, Mark 10:40).

Jesus has heavy demands from those who would become His disciples (Matthew 19:21, Luke 14:26-27, 33, Mark 8:34-38). In John 3, He made it clear that those who would enter his Kingdom needed to fulfill two conditions: to be born of water (baptism) and to be born of the spirit (spiritual birth). Baptism involves repentance, a promise to make changes in one's character. To be born of the

Jesus can see through a person's heart, it's intent, whether there is sincerity or deceit

### Lord, Remember Me...

First, this criminal acknowledged and addressed Jesus as Lord. This clearly indicates that he recognized Jesus as someone of high esteem. He too acknowledged earlier that Jesus was innocent; and that Jesus did not deserve to be meted with the death sentence like them - let alone to die in the cross.

The criminal's request tells us that his knowledge about Christ is more than just a casual information. Otherwise, it would have been surprising for someone to express an unusual degree of faith towards somebody whom he doesn't know. In all possibility, he heard Jesus being preached as the

who sincerely recognized Jesus would have at least a basic knowledge of the prophecies and strongly believed on them! To make such a request from Jesus, he would have known and believed in at least three things:

1. To acknowledge Jesus as a King, he would have to accept that Jesus is both Son of God, and Son of David, Luke 1:31-33, John 1:40-49, Mark 14:61-62.
2. He would have to believe in the resurrection, and;
3. He would have to believe that Jesus too would be in that resurrection, and possess the power to bring him back to life.

We are not dealing here with a person who knew and



Spirit means that the Father acknowledged and accepted the person as a son or a daughter—and if the promise of Jesus to this criminal included immortality and entry into the Kingdom of God, it is not simply a resurrection to a physical life again. It means that the Father will bestow upon this criminal the gift of the Holy Spirit, and take note of this carefully—it can only mean that this criminal fulfilled the requirements, the conditions for salvation and eternal life!

#### **But How?**

Jesus can see through a person's heart, it's intent, whether there is sincerity or deceit (Luke 9:47, Matthew 9:4, 12:25). He is careful with His words, and warns us to be careful of our own as well

(Matthew 12:37). He does not make promises lightly and warned us not to make promises we are unable to keep or meant to fulfill (Matthew 5:37).

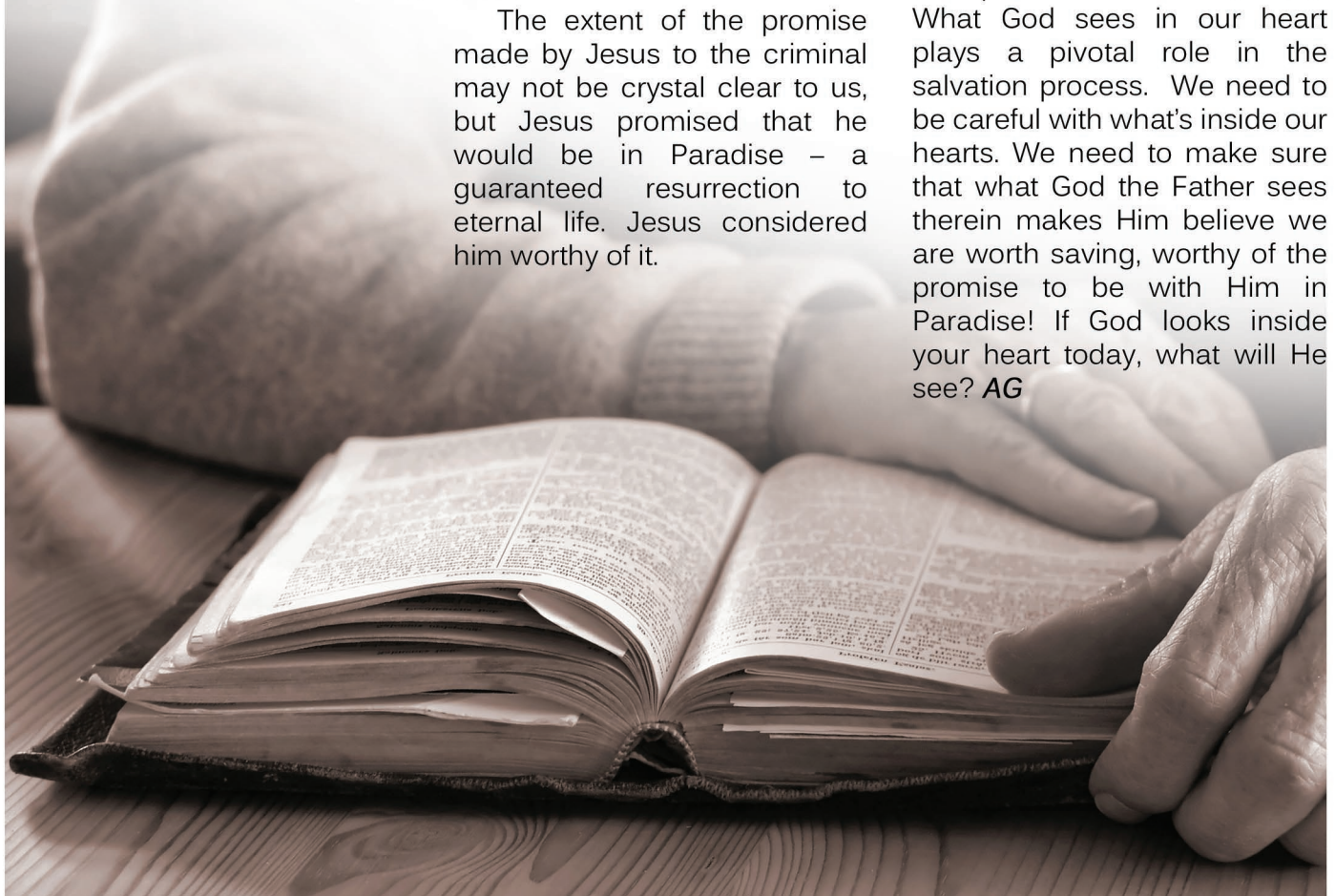
Thus, for Jesus to make such a wonderful promise to this criminal means Jesus intended to keep that promise. For Jesus to go so far as to make such a promise means he had seen the criminal's heart, and saw that he is worthy and deserves the promise!

There's a very crucial lesson for us to learn in this encounter. What this means to us is that even at the very last moment of our lives—what is in our heart at that very moment—can spell the difference between entering the kingdom, or denied entry into it.

The extent of the promise made by Jesus to the criminal may not be crystal clear to us, but Jesus promised that he would be in Paradise – a guaranteed resurrection to eternal life. Jesus considered him worthy of it.

#### **Salvation**

The foundation of salvation is belief, faith, or trust. We need to prove to the Lord and His Father that we are worth saving; that we deserve the promise of a resurrection to immortality. Let us learn from the example of the criminal. It's not always about how long one has been a disciple or a believer of the Lord that matters. If we plead sincerely, and turn to God for salvation, we can be saved! The criminal is not an exception to the rule. He knew who Jesus was; he asked for another chance. He asked for salvation. And in the judgment of Jesus, he fulfilled the basic conditions of salvation. Jesus believed in him. Jesus saw what was in his heart and considered him worthy of the promise of resurrection. What God sees in our heart plays a pivotal role in the salvation process. We need to be careful with what's inside our hearts. We need to make sure that what God the Father sees therein makes Him believe we are worth saving, worthy of the promise to be with Him in Paradise! If God looks inside your heart today, what will He see? **AG**





# FREE BOOKLETS

TEXT FULL NAME &  
COMPLETE ADDRESS TO  
0917-811-6365 FOR A FREE COPY  
[ ALLOW 4 TO 6 WEEKS FOR MAILING ]



## THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACES

### **Manila**

6th Floor, Peaksun Building  
Princeton St. [ Along Shaw Blvd. ]  
Mandaluyong City, Saturdays, 10:00 am

### **Naga**

Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City  
Saturdays 10:00 am

### **Alabang**

4Th Floor Metropolis Star Mall, Alabang  
Muntinlupa City, Saturdays, 2:00 pm

### **Negros Occidental**

Brgy. Vito, Sagay City  
Saturdays, 10:00 am

### **Malolos**

Hiyas Convention Center - Governance Bldg.  
Malolos City - Bulacan, Saturdays, 2:00 pm

### **Mindanao**

Alson's Palace, Maranding, Lala  
Lanao del Norte, Saturdays, 10:00am

### **Cebu City**

Elegant Circle Inn  
Fuente Osmena Circle  
Saturdays, 2:00 pm [Every 1st Saturday of the Month]

### **Iloilo City**

Iloilo Midtown Hotel  
Yulo Street  
Saturdays, 2:00 pm