

Bible Witness



Hostility of the World : *Unprofitability of the World
World, Offences & Woes
Who Commands Your Love: God or Mammon?
The World that Chokes the Word
If the World Hate You
Nonconformity to the World
Children's Page: Thomas Bilney*



Editor

Prabhudas Koshy

Publishing & Circulation

Co-ordinator

Lok Kwok Wah

Technical Editors

Adrienne Foo, Carolyn Koshy
Ho Kee How, Jenny Lok, Lok Kwok Wah
Mah Lean Choo, Ruth Low

Layout & Illustration

Wang Peigang

Publisher

Bible Witness Media Ministry of
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church
Singapore

Printer

Ee Tai Press Pte Ltd

Contact Information

By mail:

Bible Witness Media Ministry
510 Geylang Road, #02-06
Singapore 389466

Tel: (65) 6741 1910 **Fax:** (65) 6741 1016

Website: www.biblewitness.com

E-mail: editor@biblewitness.com

CONTENTS

Hostility of the World

3 Unprofitability of the World
Prabhudas Koshy

6 World, Offences & Woe
Reggor Galarpe

8 Who Commands Your Love: God or Mammon?
Joshua Yong

13 The World that Chokes the Word
Lek Aik Wee

16 If the World Hate You
Prabhudas Koshy

20 Nonconformity to the World
Dennis Kabingue

Children's Page

23 Bible Trivia – Exodus 7 & 8

24 *The Story of Thomas Bilney*

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The magazine is distributed free from 2006 onwards. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).
Postage and handling charges for 2 years (12 issues):

SURFACE MAIL	Singapore/Malaysia S\$10.00	Other Countries S\$14.00
AIR MAIL	Asia S\$26.00	Other Countries S\$34.00

International bank draft, money order or postal order drawn on a Singapore bank in Singapore dollars may be made payable to "Bible Witness".

LOVE-GIFT

Bible Witness Media Ministry welcomes love-gifts from readers to meet the cost of publishing and distribution. The Ministry also sends the magazine freely to churches in poorer countries. Hence your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated.

USE OF ARTICLES

The articles may be freely used for non-commercial purposes, so long as they are quoted verbatim, and the writer as well as the source identified.

Unprofitability of the World

Prabhudas Koshy

What is the greatest advantage or profit a man can have in his life? The most common answers would be: “great wealth”, “material comfort”, “fame and prestige”, “great power”, “excellent education”, etc. Certainly, no one can deny that there are real advantages in this earthly life if one has such worldly gains.

The Bible instructs Christians not to be sluggish but to work hard to earn their bread (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Industrious Christians are also taught to be generous (Roman 12:13; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:18). While the Bible encourages us to pray for our daily bread (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3), it also promises that God would provide all the needs of those who seek His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Nonetheless, Jesus sternly warned everyone who thinks that worldly gain is all that matters and who would even neglect the care of his soul to secure

an affluent earthly life, “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” (Luke 9:25). By “the world”, Jesus meant all the pleasures, riches and honour that this world presents to man. If there is a man who possesses all the earthly glories but fails to care for the salvation of his own soul, he is, according to Jesus, a terrible loser because he let his soul be a castaway in hell. All his material achievements will not contribute anything at all to purchase a safe eternal destiny for him.

A man of worldly affluence may astonish his observers, winning for himself their admiration and praise. However, within him is a weary soul, crushed by the wrath of God against his sin and unbelief. So a man who lives just for worldly achievements has an awfully impoverished soul. All his wealth and stature are utterly powerless to save his soul and help him secure eternal peace.

God's Word has long declared, "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever)" (Psalm 49:6-8). Likewise, Proverbs 11:4 states, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." This is why Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Material wealth cannot purchase the redemption of one's soul. All the wealth in the world will not be sufficient to redeem a man's immortal soul.

Worse still, trusting in worldly possessions will lead to eternal peril. "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall" (Proverbs 11:28). One's confidence in his wealth will keep him from believing and submitting to the Lord. This was graphically illustrated by the example

A genuine Christian must always be willing to give up any earthly pursuit that would impede his desire to follow Christ.

of a rich young ruler who came to Christ seeking eternal life and yet refused to submit to His command to follow Him after selling all his possessions and giving them to the poor (Matthew 19:16-22). When he

went away sorrowful, Jesus said, "That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23-24).

Besides, worldly gain accumulated through unrighteous and selfish means will provoke God to wrath. James, the apostle, forewarns, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (James 5:1-3). Man's fascination with the worldly gain will make him a real loser of his soul to hell.

The danger of loving material prosperity is clearly and strongly cautioned against in God's Word: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). Why would one covet after something that would afflict him with excruciating pain? Worldly pursuit can bring horrifying anguish upon a man's soul because of his departure from the faith, resulting in remorse and guilt; painful recollections of his folly and the dread of the future wrath of God.

Just prior to the warning of the unprofitability of the world, Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24). These words of Jesus make it plain that there can be no spiritual progress if one is unwilling to make the sacrifices required by the Lord. A genuine Christian must always be willing to give up any earthly pursuit that would impede his desire to follow Christ.

Worldly affluence provides no guarantee of spiritual prosperity. Too often, especially when one is indulging in material gain and pleasure, it is a sign of his spiritual poverty. Jesus said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

What then is the real profitability of being preoccupied with worldly glory? Nothing at all. No one who wants his soul to be saved and be spiritually empowered and enriched should ever make worldly achievements his priority. The world's wealth cannot secure spiritual wealth and joy. To be totally occupied with the world's prosperity is to become spiritually bankrupt. One's unrestrained pursuit of earthly gain will leave his soul utterly famished. Great wealth is certainly no great gain.

John Flavel (1627-1691), an English Presbyterian pastor, puritan

and author, offered an excellent illustration of the unprofitability of worldly preoccupation. He wrote, "Two things a master commits to his servant's care,' saith one: 'the child and the child's clothes.' It will be a poor excuse for the servant to say, at his master's return, 'Sir, here are all the child's clothes, neat and clean, but the child is lost!' Much so with the account that many will give to God of their souls and bodies on that great day. 'Lord, here is my body; I was very grateful for it; I neglected nothing that belonged to its content and welfare; but as for my soul, that is lost and cast away for ever. I took little care and thought about it.'"

Let no one be fooled into thinking highly of this material world and its glory, and fail to care for the salvation and nurture of his soul. The world is full of corruption and seduction that endanger our souls. Its glory is both unreliable and fading. Hence, let us not love the world (1 John 2:15). Take heed of the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23-24). ■

World, Offences & Woe

Reggor B. Galarpe

In Matthew 18:7, the Lord Jesus gives us a stern warning against causing others to stumble and leading them into sin, “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”

Woe unto the world because
of offences!

We are living in a sin-filled world that is full of offences. The myriad of snares of sin in the world can be a stumblingblock to a child of God any time. This is not surprising, for what else can we expect from this fallen and sin-filled world? As long as we are in this world, there will always be offences. We must expect temptations to come and be vigilant against being offended. In fact, offences are certain and inevitable as Jesus had already forewarned: “for it must needs be that offences come.”

The Lord’s pronouncement here is a clear warning to us to be alarmed and be armed against such offences of the world, and for every child of God to be sober and vigilant, giving no occasion for offence. It is often said that “to be forewarned is to be forearmed”.

But wait, have Christians really taken the Lord’s warning seriously? An honest

assessment would show us a totally different scenario. What we see in our time is more of worldliness instead of godliness. Sad as it is, many Christians have no qualms about accommodating the world’s principles and practices into their own life, rather than separating from them. Instead of confronting the evils of the world, we see many conforming to them.

Indeed, this is one sad condition that we see even in many churches today—both in the pews and at the pulpit. Church members and pastors alike are guilty of such great compromise. Notice how church members dress up for church meetings and services, listen to the kind of music that they play and sing, and preachers deliver the messages from the pulpit—one can easily sense worldliness!

In recent years, this worldly spirit has become more obvious, if not blatantly visible, in the way many Christians conduct themselves in today’s most popular mass media—the social media on the Internet. You can just see for yourself the messages and the photographs they post, the links and the websites they share, the products and the places they promote, even the items in there that they click “Like”. More often than not, we cannot help but say, “It’s worldly!” My friends, how about you?

Great woe to the man by whom offences come!

Consider what the Lord Jesus said in the last part of Matthew 18:7—“...but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” While “woe” is pronounced upon the world because of offences, a greater “woe” is pronounced upon the person by whom the offences come. Yes, greater woe is upon those who wilfully offend, causing others to stumble.

Dear reader, realize that you have a great obligation and responsibility not only to yourself but also to all believers around you (especially the new believers). You may not have thought about it, but understand that your own conduct may be one that causes other believers to stumble and fall into sin. You may be quick to reason out, “I’m responsible for my actions, so others must be responsible for theirs too!” Please know that it is our solemn duty that “no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Romans 14:13). We should resolve to act conscientiously so as not to give a wrong impression to others that could lead them into sin. Every genuine Christian is expected to refrain from being an offence to other Christians.

It is very possible that others may be seeing inconsistencies and double standards in our lives and yet think none the worse of them. Thus, the need to live a life of godliness and righteousness lest we cause others to stumble. Besides, it is no small matter to cause others to stumble.

Consider what Jesus said in Matthew 18:6, “But whoso shall offend one of these

little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Notice the seriousness of offending others—it would be better for him to die rather than live and offend others, causing them to sin.

Likewise, notice the seriousness of wilfully giving ourselves to offences. We read in Matthew 18:8: “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.” This is not about maiming and mutilating our bodies, but figuratively speaking, cutting off all occasions and avenues whereby we sin, and the kind of attitude we might have towards anything in our lives that causes us to sin and that we should be willing to put off or part ways with them.

Think about it—causing others to sin is grievous and causing oneself to sin is equally serious. So, whether we cause others or ourselves to sin—great woe is upon us.

As a child of God, every Christian must be mindful of keeping a right relationship with God and man; living a sanctified life unto the Lord and bearing a good witness and testimony before others. This is the only way he can ensure that he does not become a stumblingblock to others’ spiritual walk. Therefore, let us resolve to live our lives in holiness and righteousness, giving no offence in anything. ■

Who Commands Your Love: God or Mammon?

Joshua Yong

The Lord Jesus Christ in this verse declared a very sharp and penetrating truth that is most needful in this day and age. Everything around us is fighting for our attention daily: studies and work; family and friends; leisure and recreation; riches and wealth; music and entertainment, etc. Besides, we also have duties to fulfil as Christians. In the light of these things, sometimes we are wont to think that though we are serving more than one master, we are managing quite well in keeping the balance.

Yet the Lord Jesus Christ maintains, “No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” This truth assumes that there are people who are trying, and perhaps trying very hard to serve more than one master in their life. Yet if one understands what a master-servant relationship entails, he will realise that it is impossible for him to serve more than one master. Above all, if one truly understands the kind of master our God is, he will want no other master.

We will therefore first seek to understand what is the master-servant

relationship that the Lord Jesus Christ was describing here, and then we will go on and see the choices we are compelled to make and how we ought to choose God over mammon.

What is the master-servant relationship?

In the parallel passage in Luke 16:13, we are also told that the Lord Jesus Christ reiterates, “No servant can serve two masters.” The term “servant” used by the Lord here is noteworthy. It describes a household servant who is committed to the service of his master. The term “master” used together with the idea of the household servant therefore gives us a picture of a master who is the lord of a household. Such a master has full authority over his servants and his household. He also has the power to make binding decisions. He commands and his servants obey. The word “serve”, repeated twice in our text, is also significant as it describes a servant who is personally owned by his master; he is therefore to yield completely to his master.



**“No man can serve two masters:
for either he will hate the one, and love the other;
or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.
Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”**

Matthew 6:24

The Lord Jesus Christ emphasised the exclusivity of this relationship by using absolute terms like “ye cannot” instead of “you should not”. These terms describe total inability and suggest that no matter how hard you try, you cannot serve two masters; it is impossible for one to serve two masters.

This master-servant relationship therefore, on the part of the servant, is an exclusive relationship. This exclusive relationship is further explained by the words “hate”, “love”, “hold” and “despise”. The Lord Jesus Christ deliberately draws our attention to these very strong words. The word “hate” carries the idea of “detest” or “reject”, and the word “despise” is to “think against” or “to hold in contempt”. On the other hand, the word “love” shows a total and unconditional commitment, and the word “hold” describes how one “cleaves to” or “holds fast” to another in order to give his fullest attention.

Serving one’s master requires one’s fullest dedication. It commands one’s commitment, time, energy, affection, even the whole being. His master demands that he serves him with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. This is what it entails to be a servant. The question we need to ask now is then, “Who do you want to be your master?”

Who do you want to be your master?

There are two choices laid before us: God and mammon. In order to understand these choices, first consider

what “mammon” is. This is a term that is used not only to describe a person’s money, riches or possessions but also more significantly, it describes the possessions or riches a person would place his trust in. In other words, mammon describes that which you would put your trust in to see you through your daily needs and cares. It is because you trust in your riches and possessions to take care of them that you would serve mammon.

Now, consider who God is. The context describes God as “your heavenly Father” who feeds the fowls of the air (v. 26), as the God who clothes the grass of the field (v. 30) and as “your heavenly Father” who knows all your needs (v. 32). He is the God who is in control of all the little things, and He cares for us who are more important than the fowls of the air and the grass of the field. Why then do you not put your trust in God? You serve a person because you place your trust in that person. As a household servant, you trust that the master will provide for your needs and be a fair master who rewards you. God is such a fair master, so would you not choose to serve Him?

But the Lord Jesus Christ was not merely offering His disciples a choice; the Lord Jesus Christ was also declaring to the disciples that if they wanted to serve God—and they should choose to serve God—they must give up putting their trust in mammon. So He later said in Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Conclusion

Today, many church-going people have their own “mammon” whom they serve. They trust in their own possessions, wealth, or the means to these things (e.g. studies, or job security). They invest time, energy, money and even their whole life to serve their “mammon”. They trust in them so much that they pay little attention to God the Almighty.

If we trust in riches, we will not place our trust in God. So we cannot and must not trust in riches if we want to trust God.

When you start trusting God, you will find yourself having no desire to trust in riches. When you acknowledge God as your Master, you will trust Him, and when you trust Him, you will love Him, hold on to Him and serve Him. This service to your God will demand your soul, your life and your all. The world continues vying for our attention, but our life must be wholly offered to God. As Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). ■

Bible Witness *Media Ministry*

Spreading the Gospel throughout the world and edifying the body of believers
A ministry of the Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church



Listen to Bible Witness Web Radio
on your laptop, iPad, iPhone or Android device
24 hours everyday

biblewitness.com/webradio



Watch our Lunchtime Bible Study
LIVE on Wednesdays at 1.15 p.m.

biblewitness.com/bookroom/lunchtime-bible-study



Watch and listen to our Lord's Day Worship
LIVE on Sundays from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

gethsemaneipc.com



“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”

Mark 4:19

The World that Chokes the Word

Mark 4:19, cf. Matthew 13:22

Lek Aik Wee

Jesus gave insight into how a man's heart responds to the Word of God through the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-9; 14-20). Jesus likened God's Word to seeds that a farmer scatters on the ground. Seeds that fell on good ground brought forth fruit in its season—"some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred" (Mark 4:20). The seeds of God's Word sown either thrive and bear fruit or wither and die without fruit.

Jesus explained that the world, ruled by Satan—the prince of this world, competes to nullify God's Word in the hearts of the hearers. Some seeds fell by the wayside and were devoured by the birds—there was no opportunity for them to germinate (Mark 4:15). Some fell on stony ground. The seeds grew into young plants but having no depth of root and not being able to withstand the scorching sun, they died. These hearers may have a semblance of spiritual life but when affliction or persecution arises, they choose to reject the Word, having no true faith. The Bible says, "they are offended" (Mark 4:17).

Yet other seeds fell on thorny ground where weeds so deprived the young plants (that grow subsequently) of their

nutrients, causing them to die. The verb "choke" means "to crowd out". The potency of the world to "suffocate" a man's heart is very real. The present tense of this verb in the original suggests a continual bondage that these thorns impose on the hearers to render them inept to receive the truth.

And these thorns, Jesus told us, are the (1) cares of the world (2) deceitfulness of riches and (3) lust of other things. The repeated use (4 times) of the conjunction "and" in Mark 4:19 emphasizes the constant bombardment of these ungodly pursuits that prevent the hearer from receiving the Word of God and bearing fruit.

The cares of the world

These are literally the worries, anxieties and distractions of this present life that hold captive the hearts and minds of the hearers to the extent that there is no room for God in their lives; no room to consider, ponder, receive and give priority to things eternal. We see here the weariness from the energy-sapping effect of the cares of the world. They drain the heart of strength so much so that it cannot find true hope and life. To these, Jesus

says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Our daily struggle as depraved earthlings are often between two states. When we have plenty, we want more. When we are poor, we worry non-stop. Often overwhelmed by temporal concerns, we become as it were, incapacitated, incapable of discerning the weightier matters concerning our souls! In present-day Singapore, children’s education, health

pursuers. They promise much but satisfy little. They are deceptive. They do not satisfy the true need of the soul. This idol often blinds the heart, making it insensitive to the Gospel. More often than not, those who possess material prosperity deny the existence of God. They ascribe success to self or factors other than God. Hearts deluded by riches are often full of conceit.

Jesus warned that riches dull the senses and make the heart grow cold towards the things of God. Jesus gave the



Only a faith that leads to obedience to God will enable a man to allay his fears and anxieties.



concerns, housing issues, cost of living or job promotion prospects can preoccupy the heart of an average Singaporean. His heart is so taken up with these cares that he is incapable of sparing a thought for anything else, which may even be of greater value. These present-day cares seem so innocently legitimate, yet, the preoccupation with them obstructs the entrance of the Gospel into these care-filled hearts.

Jesus gave the antidote to overcome this world’s cares when He advised, “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luke 12:31). Only a faith that leads to obedience to God will enable a man to allay his fears and anxieties.

The deceitfulness of riches

Jesus described riches as deceitful because they fail to give true and lasting happiness, comfort and security to their

example of the rich man who pulled down his barns to build bigger barns. This man thought to himself, “...there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:18b-19). God pronounced judgment upon such a man: “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:20). Indeed, a man who lays up treasure for himself is not rich towards God (Luke 12:21).

Truly, God, by His Spirit, must open and prepare the heart to be tender towards the entrance of His Word.

The lusts of other things

There are other inordinate, sinful desires that captivate the heart of the unregenerate man, preventing him from

receiving the truth. These “lusts” describe the diseased condition of the soul. Luke 8:14 cites these “lusts of other things” to include the “pleasures of this life”. One may have the opportunity to come to church and hear the preaching of God’s Word and be touched or moved by it. However, immediately after the service, he may be ushered to some worldly recreational activities that will cause him to lose his foothold on God’s Word.

The bondage of sin can only be broken when the Spirit of God, by His Word, brings conviction to the heart to repent and turn to Him.

Conclusion

May we plead with God for His mercy upon those whom He has burdened our hearts to reach out to that they may not be choked by the cares of the world! ■

Gethsemane Bible Institute

Cebu, The Philippines

13 First St., Happy Valley, Cebu City, The Philippines 6000

Tel: (+63) (032) 254-1544

Email: gbpcmissions@yahoo.com



Please pray for and support the work of GBI in preparing preachers of the Word.

Cheques may be made payable to **Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church**. Please indicate “GBI” or “Gethsemane Bible Institute” on the back of the cheque.

A ministry of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” – 2 Timothy 2:2

Gethsemane Bible Institute

Alem Gena, Ethiopia

PO Box 46519, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel: 0911-385223 / 0911-823720

Email: gethsemane_eth@yahoo.com



IF THE WORLD HATE YOU

John 15:18-21; cf. John 17:14; 1 John 3:13

Prabhudas Koshy

Christians should not expect the unbelieving world to be always friendly towards them. It will never be possible for them to avoid the hatred of the world. Jesus had categorically said to His disciples that the world would hate them—“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:18-20). When Jesus prayed for the believers, He said, “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14).

The adverse reaction from the unbelieving people is described by the word “hate”. The original Greek word for “hate”, *miséō*, implies an expression of hostility or ill will either in word or in conduct. The world’s hatred towards Christians will manifest both in verbal and physical assaults; unbelievers may unleash their unhappiness and fury against Christians any time. The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

John, the apostle, also reminds Christians about the world’s hatred in 1 John 3:13: “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” From time to time, the unregenerate people will express their dislike and intolerance of the Christian faith and practice. Their antagonistic

behaviour should not surprise Christians at all. Christians should always anticipate and be prepared to face strong opposition and severe troubles from the unbelieving world.

Jesus said that hatred against Christians can come even from their closest of family members who are not yet saved. “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:21-22). So the message is clear that Christians must always be prepared for harsh realities of hatred towards them, even from close quarters.

Jesus also said, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:16–18). Even as the Lord cautioned Christians to be careful to do nothing malicious to provoke the hatred of the world, He also told them to be prepared for unsympathetic and aggressive actions from the world.

REASONS FOR THE WORLD’S HATRED

What reasons did Jesus give for the hatred of the world? Why does the world hate genuine and godly Christians,

especially when they are only concerned about the salvation and well-being of the souls of men?

The first reason that Jesus gave in our text was that the world hated Him whom we follow. He said in John 15:18, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” The reason why the world turns against Christians is that it hates their Lord and King, Jesus Christ. So whoever that lives to serve Him will also be treated cruelly by the world.

This reason for the world’s resentment is restated by the Lord Jesus in John 15:20 that we may not forget it—“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” Herein is a confirmation of what Christ had spoken about being hated by the world. It is only reasonable to expect the world’s hatred for Christians

“It will never be possible for them to avoid the hatred of the world.”

when we are mindful that it hates their master, Christ, who is far more excellent than them. Just as they have been vicious in their attack of Christ, they will also act viciously against Christians. Just as they maliciously used Christ’s words against Him, they will also maliciously use the words of Christians against them.

The prince of the world, Satan, is the archenemy of Christ. Jesus said, “...the



Woodcut engraving by Gustave Doré

G. Doré

prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). The satanic hostility towards Christ dominates the whole world, and that undergirds the world’s animosity towards Christians. Matthew Henry said, “If we should put it to the vote between Christ and Satan, Satan would out-poll us quite.”

The second reason that Jesus gave in our text was that Christians do not belong to the world. Jesus said, “If ye were of the

An uninterested attitude towards the world makes Christians intolerable to the world.

world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19). While Christians are in the world physically, they are not of the world spiritually because Christ has chosen them for Himself. They are not in the world to live for the world but for Christ. As far as their desires, choices and actions are concerned, they are led by Christ and for His glory.

Genuine Christians appear dead to worldly passions and goals as Paul said in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Such an uninterested attitude towards the world makes Christians intolerable to the world. Moreover, the words and actions of Christians will be a rebuke to the world that lies in sin. They are

exhorted to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11). Hence, the rest of the world finds Christians at odds with them, giving rise to their bitterness, dislike and hatred.

The third reason that Jesus gave in our text was that the world is ignorant of God, the Father. Jesus said in John 15:21, “But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.” Later in verse 23, He said, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.”

As Jesus reminded the disciples that the fury of the world would rage against them, He also mentioned that it is because they do not know His Father who sent Him to call and save them for Himself. Just as the world’s hatred towards Christians is shown in its hatred towards Christ, it also proves its hatred for God who loves them through Christ. This is wilful ignorance; it is a conscious rejection of the truth of God in Christ, which is embraced by Christians. Such deliberate ignorance of God provokes the world to make war with Christ, His Father and His people.

When the world rejects the authenticity and authority of the Gospel of Christ, its disregard for God who authored and designed it becomes very apparent. Rejection of Christ is rejection of God. Hatred for Christ is hatred for God and this explains the world’s hatred for those whom God and Christ love. The world that hates God will hate His darlings who live in the world. ■

Nonconformity to the World

Romans 12:2

Dennis Kabingue

The Bible warns us against the influence of the world. Its ideas and activities are patterned after the nature of its god, even Satan (Matthew 4:8; 2 Corinthians 4:4). This is why the culture of the world is contrary to God's Word. Its dress code, music, entertainment, philosophies, morals and ambitions are not profitable to Christians. When churchmen



like Demas conformed to the ways of the world, they were not only destroying their own spirituality, but were also causing serious damage to the ministry in which they were involved (2 Timothy 4:10).

An unbiblical thought that is not purged is like a little leaven that will permeate and negatively affect your soul very quickly. It will distract you from pursuing the will of God in your life as it takes your heart away from Him. To save yourselves from the corruption of the world and build a thriving spiritual life, you need to take heed to the biblical truths laid out in Romans 12:2.

A call to nonconformity

The first counsel in Romans 12:2 is “be not conformed to this world”. Take note that this is a prohibitive command. In biblical Greek, there are two kinds of prohibition. The first one is to prohibit an action from being carried out while the second is a command to stop an action that has been ongoing. It is the second type of prohibition that Paul used here. This tells us that the Christians in Rome were not free from the influence of worldliness. It appears that some of them had fallen prey to the world’s influence.

So Paul wanted them to know that it is not acceptable in the sight of the Lord to be conformed to the world. How can a person testify that the Lord has delivered him from the corruption of the world when his life is still lost in the world? Is it not being pretentious? True repentance demands separation from and not conformity to the world. The Bible describes a repentant

person as one who loves the Lord and hates every evil that is propagated by the world. “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil” (Psalm 97:10a). So the apostle Paul calls the attention of Christians to the fact that they have to stop conforming to the world so that they may be prevented from being further corrupted by the world.

Furthermore, the biblical injunction to Christians to be nonconformists is of paramount importance if we are to be effective witnesses of His righteousness and truth. We cannot serve Him as the salt of the earth and the light of the world unless we stop conforming to the ways of the world. We can be witnesses for the Lord in the world only when our lives provide the world with an opportunity to see the glory and beauty of a life that is holy (Matthew 5:13-16). Thus we must fight to keep our lives away from the world’s influence. This is God’s way of protecting our souls from the corruption of the world as well as making us effective witnesses for Christ.

To live as a nonconformist in this world is very hard. Only if a Christian is ready to be transformed in his mind, then can he live a separated life in this world. So Paul wrote: “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2b). These two biblical principles of nonconformity and renewal of mind are like Siamese twins. Both must co-exist in a Christian.

Our life’s transformation unto holiness is of utmost importance to God. He hates to see His children being tainted by the sins of the world, for He has called us unto holiness. He longs to see our conduct moulded after

Christ. According to the apostle Paul, a thorough transformation in a Christian's life can only be attained "by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2c).

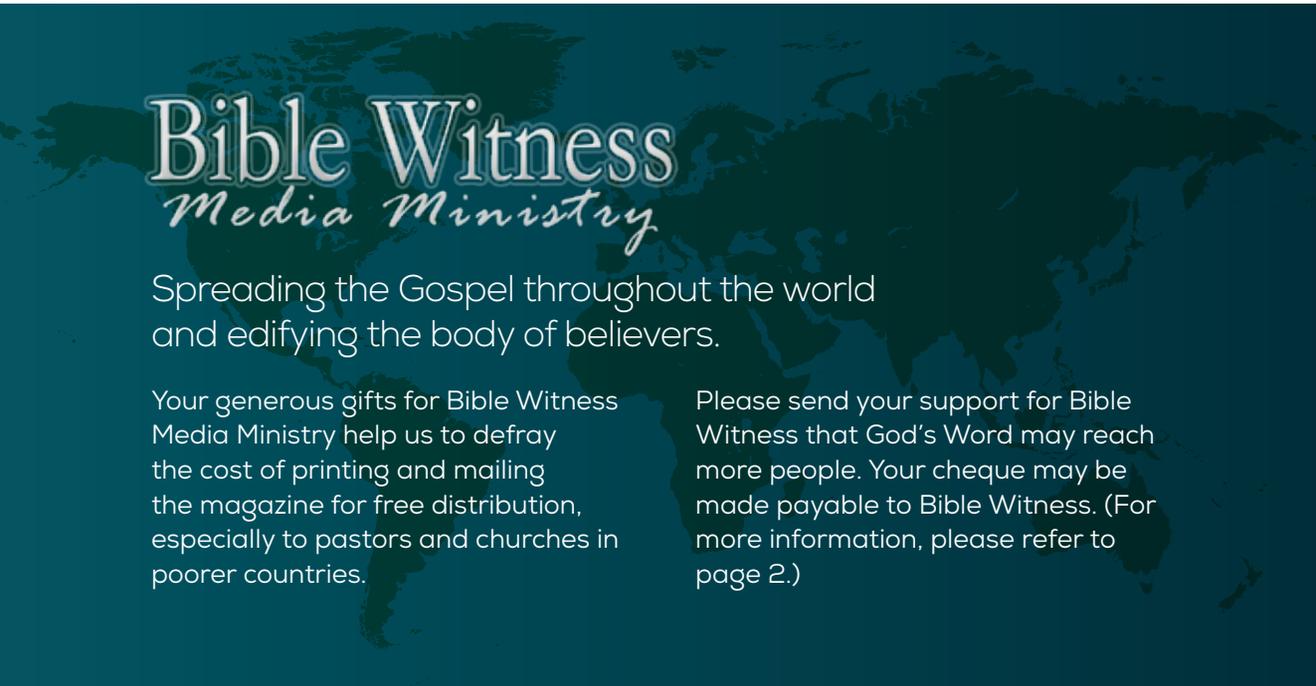
To renew our minds is to nurture our minds to think biblically. The human mind is the command centre of the person. The body only obeys the mind. When the mind is filled with evil thoughts, the person cannot help but to give way to those thoughts and thereby act accordingly. That is why the mind must be given special care and nurture. It must be indoctrinated with the wisdom of God. Feeding it with the Word of God is the only way to sanctify the sinful mind. That is the only way to cleanse our thoughts, which have been polluted by the world. The Psalmist says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

So we must cultivate the good habit of reading His Word daily and meditating upon it. We must also read sound

books, which are faithful to the Word of God. Attending worship service on the Lord's Day and Bible studies must be our priorities in life. We must do everything that we can to know His Word. Our minds must be immersed in God's Word. We must delight ourselves in the study of and obedience to His Word. If we ignore or disobey God's precepts, we will backslide and return to our old sinful ways.

The blessings of a nonconformist

Obedience to the Lord is not without its rewards. The apostle Paul promises us that nonconformity to the world will result in our finding the most important treasure in a Christian's life—"that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God". Nothing is more important for a Christian than that his life may prove to the world what the will of God is. So let us give up the world. It is well worth trading the corruptible for the incorruptible! ■



Bible Witness Media Ministry

Spreading the Gospel throughout the world
and edifying the body of believers.

Your generous gifts for Bible Witness Media Ministry help us to defray the cost of printing and mailing the magazine for free distribution, especially to pastors and churches in poorer countries.

Please send your support for Bible Witness that God's Word may reach more people. Your cheque may be made payable to Bible Witness. (For more information, please refer to page 2.)

BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 7 & 8

Sarah Yong

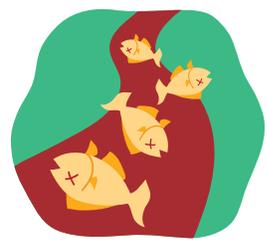
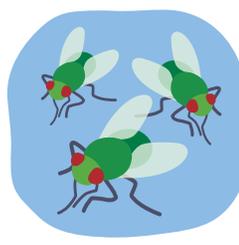
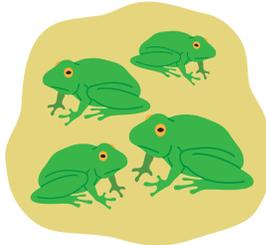
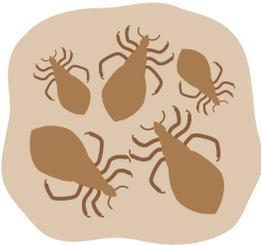
MATCH THE ORDER OF THE PLAGUES TO THE RIGHT PICTURE BY DRAWING A LINE TO IT. THEN DRAW ANOTHER LINE FROM THE PICTURE TO THE CORRECT DESCRIPTION OF THAT PLAGUE.

First
Plague

Second
Plague

Third
Plague

Fourth
Plague



A

Aaron stretched out his hand and they came up, covering the land of Egypt.

B

Aaron lifted his rod as the LORD commanded. This plague lasted for seven days.

C

Egyptian magicians could not imitate this plague that affected man and beast.

D

The insects brought grief upon Egypt but the land of Goshen was spared.

SPIRITUAL LESSON

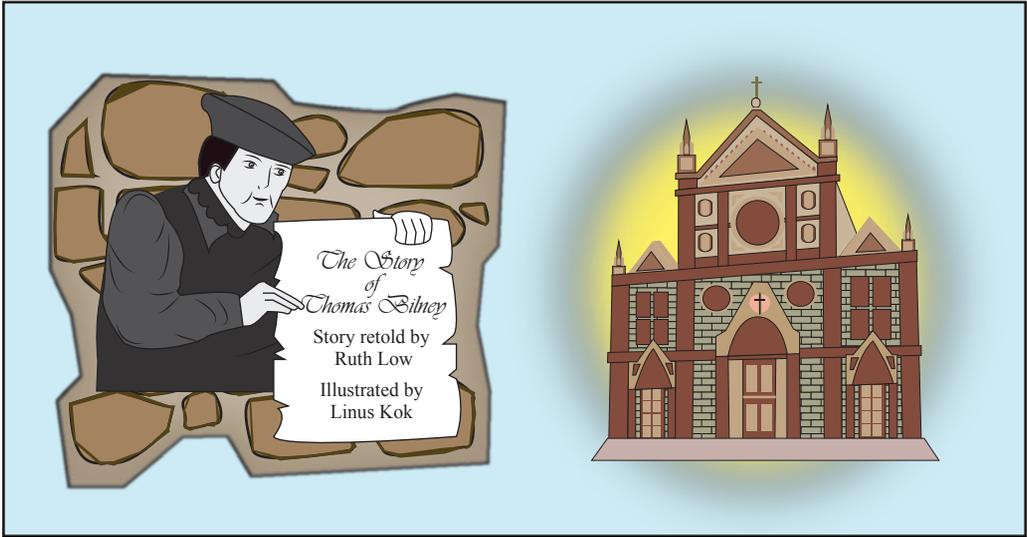
The Lord strengthened Moses and Aaron and enabled them to stand before Pharaoh to carry out His mighty plan of redemption for the children of Israel. He also put a division to stop the plagues from affecting His chosen people.

Fill in the blanks in the verse below.

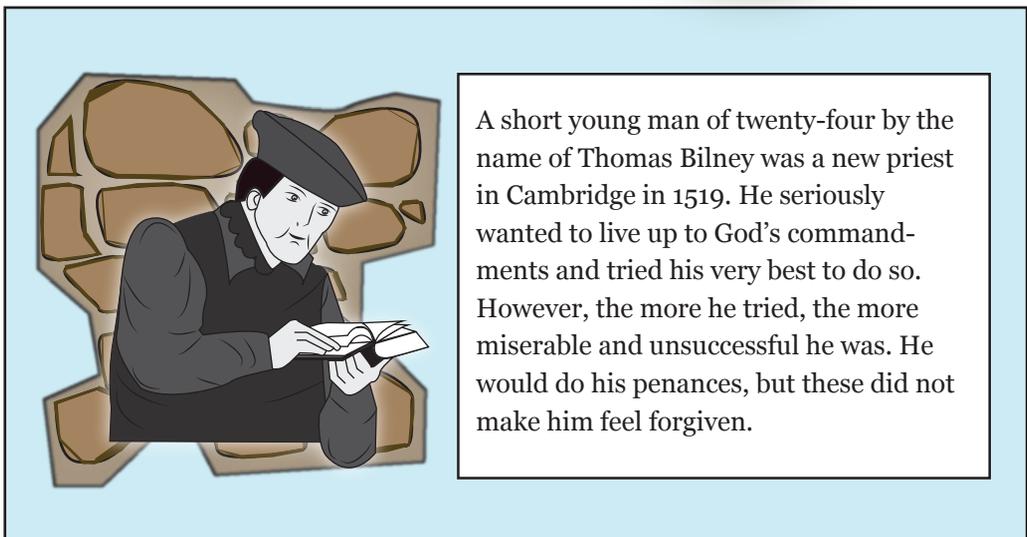
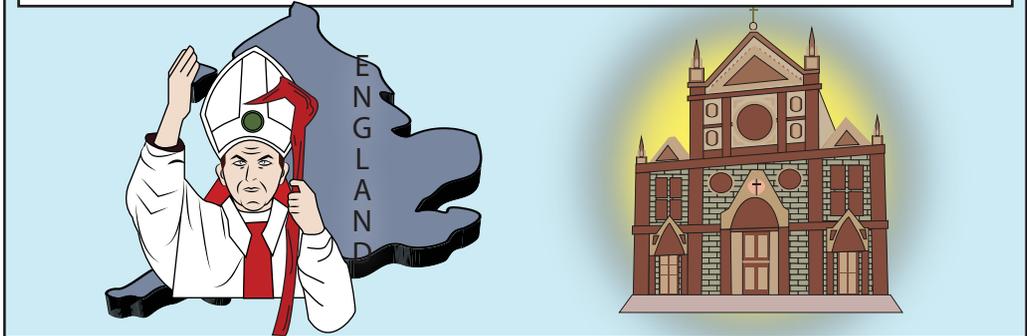
**"The LORD will give _____ unto his _____ ;
the LORD will bless his people with _____ " (Psalm 29:11).**

ANSWERS TO VOLUME 12 ISSUE 3: BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 5&6 (P.23)

1. True 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. False 6. False 7. False; JEHOVAH



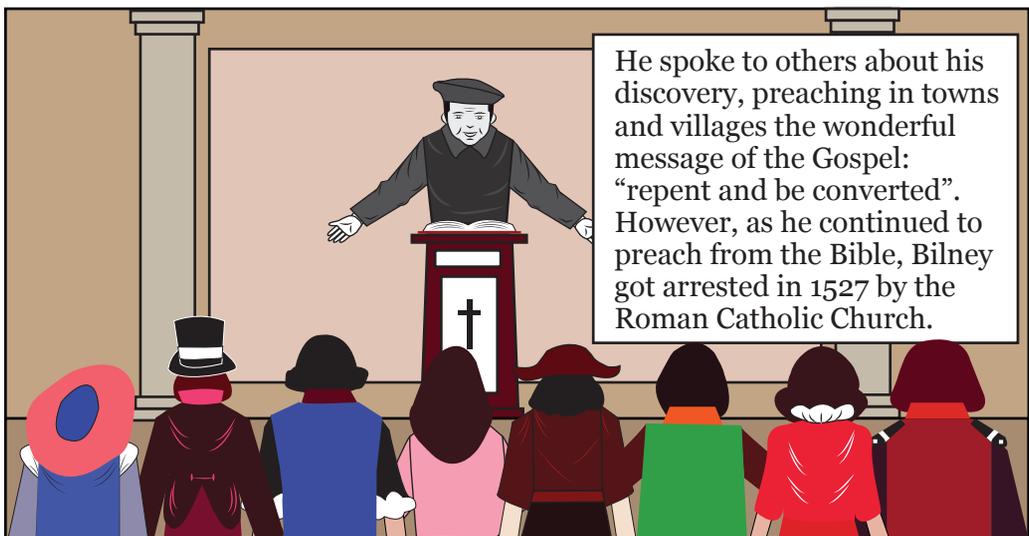
In England, in the early 1500s, the Roman Catholic Church held much power over the nation. It was also around this time that Erasmus' Greek and Latin New Testaments began circulating. The Roman Catholic priests protested against these books, knowing they would raise doubts and questions in students concerning the authority of the pope and bishops.



One day, Bilney heard about Erasmus' New Testament and secretly bought a copy. As he read it, a verse comforted him greatly: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).



He later wrote: "This one sentence did so uplift my heart, which had previously been wounded with guilt and almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness, inasmuch as my bruised bones leapt for joy." Bilney turned to Christ in faith that day.



He spoke to others about his discovery, preaching in towns and villages the wonderful message of the Gospel: "repent and be converted". However, as he continued to preach from the Bible, Bilney got arrested in 1527 by the Roman Catholic Church.



He was thrown into a damp cell, awaiting trial for heresy. Friends tried hard to persuade him to submit to the Roman Catholic Church and preserve his life. At first, Bilney stood firm in his faith, but after 3 days of pleading from his friends, he was so discouraged by them and weakened by the entire ordeal that he broke down and signed a paper that showed he “repented” from his “errors”.



Bilney was released from prison the next year, but he had lost his peace because like Peter, he had denied his Lord.

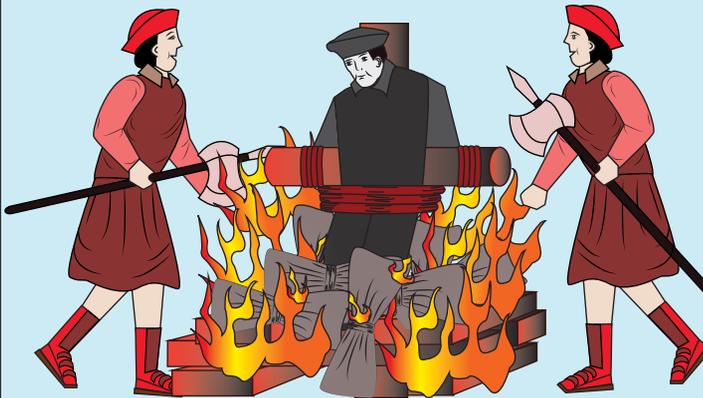
However, by 1531, Bilney recovered his faith and decided to preach again. So he went to a place called Norfolk where he spoke to crowds about God’s forgiveness, and against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

He also openly repented of his previous denial of Christ. Bilney preached extensively, even in London and Norwich, and distributed copies of the New Testament.





Bilney's active work for God was soon reported and he was then imprisoned and condemned to burn at the stake for heresy. He prepared himself for his impending death by recalling God's promise in Isaiah 43:2 — "...when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." He knew that while his body would be burnt, the fire of the Holy Spirit could purify his soul and take it to heaven.



On 19th August 1531, Bilney was led to the Lollards' Pit where he confessed his faith to a deeply moved crowd before he ascended the wood and reeds to be burnt. As the reeds were set on fire, and flames consumed his body, Thomas Bilney went to be with his Lord.



Dear child, if you are living for Jesus Christ, are you ready to die for Him too, like Bilney did? "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).

Gethsemane Bible - Presbyterian Church's 25th Anniversary Events

**“Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus
throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” – Ephesians 3:21**

In thanksgiving to God for 25 years of ministry, Gethsemane BPC
will hold the following events on five Saturdays of March 2013.
We warmly invite our readers to come and rejoice with us as we exalt the
Lord Jesus, our Saviour, through the preaching of His Word.

Gospel Rally

Level 5, Auditorium, Singapore Post Centre

2nd March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Paul Ferguson



Public Lectures on “The Doctrine of the Church”

Level 5, Auditorium, Singapore Post Centre

Lecture 1: 9th March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew

Lecture 2: 16th March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo

Lecture 3: 23rd March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy



GBPC 25th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service & Dinner

The Regent Singapore

30th March 2013, 7.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy