



Trumpet's Sound

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Cover photo: Winter in Armenia. Photo by
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ACM praise and prayer points

Praise the Lord for

1. *His blessings during 2016*
2. *His help to patients and needy people*
3. *Supplying us with the necessary funds for winter wood*
4. *Ministry among teenagers and youth*
5. *Our Bible study groups*
6. *Spreading Trumpet's Sound magazine*
7. *The children's ministry*

Please pray for

1. *Ministry needs in 2017*
2. *Showers of blessings upon us*
3. *Safety of our workers*
4. *Renovation of the Gospel Centre in Gyumri*

*The costs of the publication are covered by the gifts of believers,
who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.*

Questions that people always ask

1. Why is the world so bad?

God created all things perfect: angels, animals, sky, water, land, plants, sea creatures, birds, and Adam and Eve. He placed them in the best place possible – the Garden of Eden – but man sinned against God. The wages of sin is death. After the fall God punished Adam and Eve by sending them out of the garden. This world is not our resting place nor our heaven, but is where we are while on our way to eternity. See Genesis chapters 1–3.

2. Why are people so bad?

We must accept what the Bible says: “We have all sinned and fall short of God’s glory” (Romans 3:23). There is nothing good in us. The Old Testament is clear that no one is able to keep the commandments; no one is able to remain faithful to God. Yet God always reached out to mankind through the prophets and His Word. Sadly, our nature is sinful, hateful, greedy, jealous, revengeful, proud, and quarrelsome.

3. Where is God?

God is always there for all who seek Him. The Lord’s eyes are always upon us and He will reward all people according to their deeds, good or bad. We know God’s standard through the Bible; His commands and His laws are clear to all of us. Where is God? His promise is to be with His servants to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

4. Who will be punished?

The wicked, the sinful and all who reject Christ. It is not just that I know about Christ; I must go to Him in repentance for forgiveness of sin, saying “Lord I have sinned, Lord forgive me”. The criminal on the cross cried out “Remember me Lord when you come in your kingdom” (Luke 23:43, John 3:16).

5. Why is there so much pain?

Sometimes pain brings us closer to God. Sometimes it comes as a warning to stay awake and alert. Sometimes it helps us to be focused on the things above. Jesus is the one from whom all our help comes. Remember He will never test us above what we can bear; He is the good shepherd. See Matthew 18:12-14, John 16:33 and John 9:1-3.

6. Who will be saved?

All who come to Jesus for repentance and salvation “For there is no other name on earth or under heaven through whom we can be saved” (Acts 2:38, 4:12, Matthew 18:2-4).

7. When will the end come?

Why will there be an end to the world? God will create a new earth and a new heaven; the old will go and all things will be new in Him. Before this the rapture will occur and many will be taken and will meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds. No one except the Father knows when this will happen. See Mark 13:32, Luke 17:34, Revelation 21:1.

My question to you is “Are you ready to meet your creator today?” Repent and be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

H K

Train, don't try

So much of my life was spent trying to be a good Christian and the woman I thought I was supposed to be. It is no wonder that, looking back, I often felt discouraged. And this is a struggle that seems common among most of the Christians I know. What was I doing wrong? Why do so many believers feel like they're constantly picking themselves up off the floor to “try, try again”?

I have finally learned that trying hard was actually the very opposite of what I should have been doing. Trying involves only a little bit of effort and commitment. It requires only a smidgeon of willingness. Trying implies you will make an attempt at accomplishing something but it does not necessarily involve determination to succeed.

The Bible nowhere tells us to merely try to be a good Christian. Paul instructed Timothy to train himself to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7). God's Word uses the word discipline many times and we read in Hebrews 12:11 that "no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it".

Training, discipline, commitment, sacrifice... These are words that make us nervous. They are words we sometimes believe don't line up with other words we prefer: love, grace, mercy, patience.

However, we know that, without training, failure is inevitable. Soldiers, athletes, musicians, and even business people have to go through training to turn head knowledge into second-nature habits. Violinists don't try to play concertos. Runners don't try to win marathons. They train for everything, practising for countless hours and making necessary sacrifices.

Travis Robertson, a real estate coach and business strategist in California says: "Training requires a plan of action. Training requires commitment to the plan. Training requires a shift in your mindset. Training requires accountability. Training requires expert help."

So how do we train ourselves to be godly? Prayer and Bible study are key components, but we also need to worship, to have fellowship and to serve faithfully. How do you train for godliness? We would love to hear from you!

Ann-Margret Hovsepian



Zechariah's lack of faith

Read Luke 1:5-25

In a previous article we asked ourselves how persistent we are in prayer. Now we want to think more about Zechariah's response to the angel's message.

When the angel made the announcement that Zechariah's prayer was being answered and that he would have a son, the priest was completely unprepared for the message. His question was "how shall I know this, seeing I am an old man and my wife is well along in years?" This was a response of unbelief – unbelief that ruined his important day and resulted in dumbness until after the birth of his son.

Zechariah was looking at the situation from a purely human viewpoint. Was there any excuse for unbelief? If he had thought about his nation's history, he would have remembered that Abraham was once in a similar situation. At 100 and at 90 respectively, Abraham and Sarah were even less likely to have a family than Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah may have stopped praying for a son, but he needed to learn that with God nothing is impossible.

Of course there may be situations when it is right to stop praying for something we have prayed for. Paul was troubled by a thorn in the flesh and three times he asked God to remove it. But God's answer was that His grace was sufficient for Paul. He had to stop asking for relief and rely upon God to meet all his needs. This may happen to us. God may make it clear that we are not to continue asking for something we want, but to trust Him to guide us for His glory and our blessing.

Zechariah's question showed that he did not believe the angel. His question was not the same kind of question that Mary later asked. She asked how she could bear a son because until that time (and since) no virgin could conceive a child. But she was willing to be the handmaid of the Lord. Asking a question is not necessarily wrong. Think of John the Baptist. When in prison, he had doubts about whether Jesus was

the Messiah. He sent two of his disciples to ask the Lord “Are You the Coming One or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3 NKJV). The Lord Jesus graciously answered the Baptist’s question. It is not wrong to ask questions about things we do not understand. However, Zechariah’s problem was unbelief.

Zechariah was punished for his unbelief by being struck with dumbness; he was not able to speak until God’s promise was fulfilled. We may wonder if Zechariah was also deaf because when John was circumcised the people had to make signs to him to find out the name of the child. The punishment also involved embarrassment. A dumb priest cannot do his work. Think of his problem when he tried to bless the people in the words of Numbers 6:24-26. He would have lifted his hands in blessing, but no sound came forth. A dumb priest! One can hardly imagine a worse fate for Zechariah.

However, let us consider God’s compassion and His faithfulness. The priest’s unbelief did not attract further punishment. God did not cancel the promise of a son. We take encouragement from this. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” What God has promised to do, He will accomplish. Our unfaithfulness may mean a loss of blessing, but it does not mean the annulment of all the good things that God has promised. All who have believed will be saved, but some will miss the rewards they could have received; they will be saved, but so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Are we listening to God?

The story of Zechariah has up-to-date applications. Have we ever asked God for something and wondered if He will answer? Do we keep praying? Think of real life situations. A young Christian man or lady is looking for a life partner. Time passes. No prospects are in sight. Alternatively, imagine an unemployed person looking for work. Someone else gets the job. Another person longs for good health, yet remains weak. In each case people have kept praying. But perhaps we wonder if God has heard our prayers and cares about the difficulties that we face.

There are at least two problems here. Either we lose faith in God

and stop looking in dependence to Him or we go into a shell and assume that nothing good will ever happen to us. Either way our Christian testimony suffers.

What do we do? We must realise that God has His eternal purposes for us and that He alone knows our future. He may grant our requests at a later date or He may have something better for us. In His time He will give us that which will be for His glory and for our blessing.

Let us continue to trust Him and believe He will answer our prayers.

Don Stormer

Changed and changing

I wonder if you ever feel intimidated by that statement of the Apostle Paul “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Anyone who gives it a moment’s honest reflection would have to admit that there are times when the old in us doesn’t seem gone at all. In fact it often seems alarmingly present. It is the new nature that frequently seems absent, not the old.

I suppose over the years this verse has been used to support a kind of teaching that leaves the impression that when people become Christians they are miraculously changed overnight from whatever they were, into someone who combines the best features of the Apostle Paul and Mother Teresa. I can remember some Sunday school songs that tended to support this dubious theology. Those of us who inhabit the real world find that generally this is not the case. Paul, who was bluntly realistic about human nature, certainly did not intend us to take this piece of wishful thinking from his statement.

The problem with this idea is that it heightens our expectations of one another and of ourselves to an unrealistic level. When someone fails to behave as we imagine “a new creation in Christ” should, then

we are hit by a cold wave of disappointment and wonder “How can ‘a new creation in Christ’ behave like that?” To feel the impact of that devastation, try counselling a young Christian who has been deeply hurt or discouraged by the behavior of old Christians they look up to. Or what about the Christian who thinks “If I have failed like that, perhaps I am not a ‘new creation’ at all”.

What is the answer to being overly idealistic in our expectations and the accompanying danger of profound disappointment? Perhaps we should develop a hardened cynicism that says “Expect the worst and then you will never be disappointed”. Maybe we should foster a state of mind that is unfazed by disappointing failure and that is amazed if someone actually reflects the Spirit of Christ in their lives. But that certainly doesn’t sound right. Paul described even the decadent Corinthians in glowing tones as “sanctified in Christ Jesus” and “not lacking any spiritual gift”. That does not sound like cynicism. To function and grow in a community of broken but redeemed human beings, we have to find a perspective that helps us not be overwhelmed by human failure, and yet never content with mediocrity.

The metaphor of new birth is perfect. In a baby we have a new creation and new life. We have something at once complete and incomplete. It is rich with potential. And yet every parent knows that on the journey from childhood to maturity there are many grazed knees to be bandaged, many untidy messes to be cleaned up, and sometimes sicknesses to be treated. A good parent is both a realist and a visionary. In the parent’s heart there is a loving acceptance of what is, and a vision for what can and will be. In that sense, Paul’s comment about a new creation fits perfectly with what I see around me in my church and in myself. It tells me that something new and wonderful has begun. It tells me that I and the people around me are rich with godly potential, but far from finished yet. That way I am protected from disappointment that might overwhelm me when I see failure. But a vision for that potential in ourselves and others protects us from cynicism, and provides a solid basis for both encouraging others and being encouraged.

Extract from “Is God Really Good?” by Rex Dearlove

Two life lessons from king Saul

A few years ago we made a photo collage of all the members of our church. Everyone's face was in it. For various reasons some of these people no longer come to our church. More would be missing if we had photos taken 10, 20, or 30 years ago. I wonder how many of these are still following Jesus today. Unfortunately some people who seem to start well in the Christian faith, don't finish well. There is a danger of turning away from God. Today we are looking at two life lessons from King Saul. One is an example to follow and the other is an example to avoid.

Saul followed God

Until he met Samuel the prophet, Saul was an ordinary guy who worked for his father by doing jobs like searching for lost donkeys. This changed when Samuel told Saul that he was chosen to be the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:27-10:1). Saul changed to follow God. The Bible says that he was changed into a different person because he received power from God; God was with him and changed his heart (1 Samuel 10:6,7,9). He was now up with the prophets instead of down with the donkeys. The people were so amazed when he prophesied with the prophets, exclaiming "Is Saul among the prophets?" (1 Samuel 10:10).

After Saul was declared to be their king, the people celebrated and shouted, "Long live the king" (1 Samuel 10:17-24). Saul had many military victories. After they defeated the Ammonites, there was a great celebration and the people renewed their allegiance to God and confirmed Saul as their king (1 Samuel 11:14-15).

So Saul was called by God and he followed God's leading. What a great example for those who have been called to trust in the salvation provided by Jesus Christ. The Bible says "each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them" (1 Corinthians 7:17). We are not kings, but God has placed us in situations where we can serve Him daily.

God used Samuel to call Saul and He uses the Holy Spirit and the gospel message to call us to follow Him today (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). During this period of his reign he served God faithfully. And faithfulness characterises those who follow the Lord as it is listed in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

All was going well so far for Saul. But life is a marathon, not a sprint. We turn to the next stage of Saul's life.

Saul turned away from God

Samuel told Saul to wait for him at Gilgal until he came and offer sacrifices to God (1 Samuel 10:8; 13:7-15). When Saul became impatient, he disobeyed Samuel and God by offering the sacrifices himself and therefore Samuel rebuked him. Only Levites were allowed to offer sacrifices and Saul was a Benjamite. It was the first of several sins that resulted in him being replaced by David as king of Israel.

Next Saul disobeyed God again by keeping the best animals and sparing the king when they defeated the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:3,9,20). Then he proudly set up a monument in his own honor instead of acknowledging God (1 Samuel 15:12). The Bible says that he turned away from God (1 Samuel 15:10). He reverted. Instead of being up with the prophets, he was back down with the donkeys. Because he rejected God, God rejected him as king (1 Samuel 15:23).

After David defeated Goliath, Saul became extremely jealous of David and several times tried to kill him (1 Samuel 18:8-11, 28-29; 19:9-24). Then Saul chased him all around the land of Israel (1 Samuel 18-26). During this time he had 85 priests killed, including the high Priest, because they helped David to escape (1 Samuel 22:6-23).

So Saul went from bad to worse. When he was afraid of the Philistines, he consulted the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-20). Finally when Saul was critically injured in battle he killed himself (1 Samuel 31:1-4). Saul didn't finish well.

What does the Bible say about those who turn away from God?

The Galatians turned against the gospel by following Jewish legalism (Galatians 1:6; 4:9-11). They deserted God to follow a false gos-

pel. False teaching and false teachers can deceive us. The Ephesians stopped loving the Lord and were told to repent and do the things they did at first (Revelation 2:4-5). The Corinthians tolerated sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). They were not concerned and carried on as though it didn't matter. The churches at Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea were urged to repent and turn around to follow God once again (Revelation 2:16, 21; 3:3, 19).

The Bible says sin is the source of turning away from God. And the cure is confession of the sin and turning back towards God in repentance. David and Hezekiah are good examples of this.

Lessons for us

The two life lessons from King Saul correspond to the two stages of his reign. The first was faithful and fruitful, but the second was unfaithful and unfruitful. In the first he was godly and obedient, but in the second he was ungodly and wicked. In the first he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but in the second he did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Although Saul's reign started well, it didn't finish well. Solomon followed the same pattern.

Let's follow Saul's good example. Let's follow God faithfully as Saul did in the first period of his reign. Let's serve the Lord in the daily circumstances that He has given to us.

Also let's choose to not follow Saul's bad example. Don't turn away from God as he did in the second period of reign. Keep living up here, not down there because turning away from God ruins our Christian testimony. If we have wandered from the Lord, it's good to know there is a way back. We can always turn around to follow the Lord once again. We can be restored like the prodigal son.

When we sin we don't have to turn away from God because He has provided a way to turn back to Him. Let's be loyal to the Lord and finish well.

George Hawke

What changes are expected in someone who repents and follows Jesus as Lord?

When someone accepts the Lord, his or her life changes. It's not just a spiritual change which they can feel within themselves. It's an overall shift in personality, attitudes, behaviour, language, thoughts and actions.

First we need to understand what accepting the Lord means. Asking Jesus to take His place in our heart does not mean He now has a small section of our hearts to Himself. It means we have given our entire hearts to Him. Every part of it is in His ownership and we are adopted into His family.

If accepting Jesus leads to spiritual adoption, this means we belong to a new Father. Being brought up in a family influences character; this is scientifically proven. Therefore to grow into Jesus' family means we adopt His characteristics and lifestyle.

If Jesus is holy and pure, we who were once sinners must now reflect Jesus' lifestyle. This is because we are seen as holy and clean in God's eyes. When He looks at us, He looks past our sins and sees the perfection of Jesus (Ephesians 4:24).

To go from being a sinner, and having the guilt of everything upon us, to being cleansed and blameless will certainly impact every aspect of our lives. It means we now love our enemies, it means we respect the unrespectable, it means we forgive the unforgivable. We will have faith even when everything is hopeless, pity for those who cannot see the light because of blindness, proclaim the gospel at every possible opportunity, and do everything to the best of our ability for the glory of God (Colossians 3:23).

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that when we accept Jesus we are new creatures. There is no physical aspect of change that can describe such spiritual change, but every part of our inner being is reconstructed and reformed with Jesus as the centre; this changes us from the inside to the outside. We reflect him in our lifestyle and seek to reciprocate

the example he set for us. This is because understanding the great sacrifice He became for us, gives us no other choice but to constantly give Him praise (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Considering these truths, we can confidently say that when we repent and follow Jesus as Lord, everything about us will change. We live in a new body infused with hope and eternal life through Jesus rather than a body infused with sin and hatred. This change will impact our every thought, action and word.

Arleen Kiujian

"Have I been with you so long?"

In the Gospel of John, chapters 13-16, we read about the very intimate conversation the Lord Jesus had with His disciples – a conversation followed by the priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus in John 17.

The Lord Jesus answered Thomas' question about where He was going and the way which would lead there by saying "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:6-7).

This time Philip takes the role of the interviewer! He said "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." And Jesus' reply was "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?"

Philip's request was pretty bold and surprising. But where was Peter in this scenario? I thought that Peter will surely step up and ask Jesus a question like this, because he was more likely than any other disciple to speak boldly in this kind of situation. But it is Philip who says "Show us the Father, the Father whom we see You constantly pray to, whose will You want to do, to whom You give the praise, whose kingdom You preach and by whom You do Your miracles."

In fact that question was deep inside each of the disciples, but Philip became their spokesman. All of them were holding their breath and looking to Jesus to hear the answer. But if they were a bit more attentive to Jesus' sayings they would not have asked such a question. Two chapters earlier the Lord has already said "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. *And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me*" (John 12:44-45).

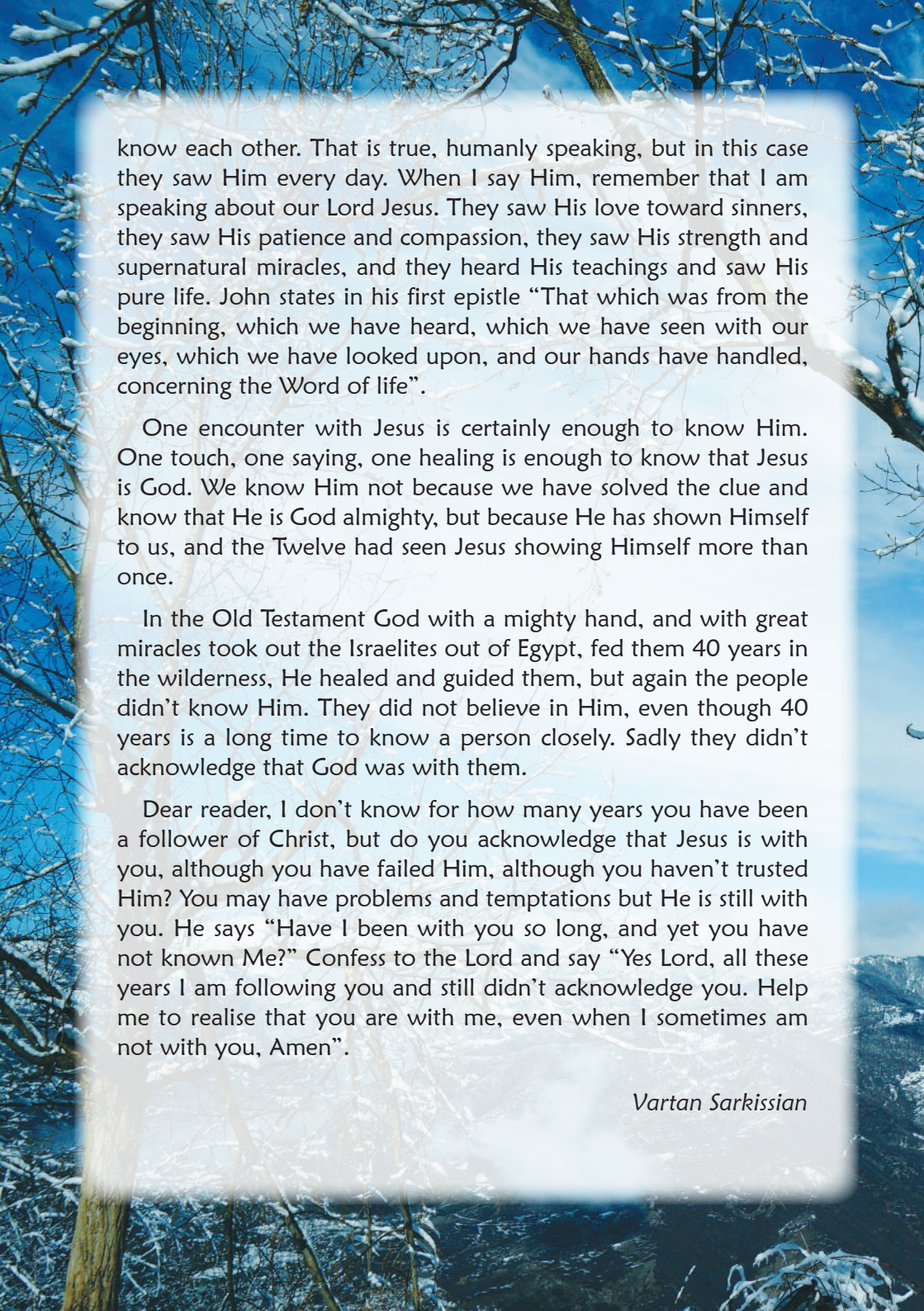
Was it Jesus' fault that the disciples did not believe 100% in what He was saying? Jesus plainly explained that whoever saw Him, saw the Father. Let us not condemn Philip and the Twelve and forget about ourselves. Do we believe every verse, every promise God gives us in the Bible? Or do we forget them, and question God again and again, questioning His love, His care, His providence, and His faithfulness.

There is another remarkable point we see in this narrative. Did you notice that the Lord did not say "You have been with me so long", but "I have been with you so long?" It seems that the Twelve were with the Lord after He called them and they followed Him for three and a half years; but no, the truth is that the Lord was with them.

The Lord was with the disciples when there was a storm on the lake of Galilee and they were fearful, He was with them when they were afraid of the Pharisees and the scribes and did not know what to answer. He was with them when they were arguing together. He was with them at home, in the temple, indoors and outdoors. Yet after seeing and hearing all this, how was it that Phillip and the other disciples didn't understand that Jesus and the Father are one?

When I am with Jesus, this does not change many things, but when Jesus is with me, this changes everything. It is a great honour when I stand beside the king, but the greatest honour is when the king stands beside me. My standing beside the king does not change anything, but His standing beside me changes everything. The King of kings is with me; what a great privilege. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

One may object by saying that three and a half years is a very short time to know a person. Couples live together for years and still don't



know each other. That is true, humanly speaking, but in this case they saw Him every day. When I say Him, remember that I am speaking about our Lord Jesus. They saw His love toward sinners, they saw His patience and compassion, they saw His strength and supernatural miracles, and they heard His teachings and saw His pure life. John states in his first epistle “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life”.

One encounter with Jesus is certainly enough to know Him. One touch, one saying, one healing is enough to know that Jesus is God. We know Him not because we have solved the clue and know that He is God almighty, but because He has shown Himself to us, and the Twelve had seen Jesus showing Himself more than once.

In the Old Testament God with a mighty hand, and with great miracles took out the Israelites out of Egypt, fed them 40 years in the wilderness, He healed and guided them, but again the people didn't know Him. They did not believe in Him, even though 40 years is a long time to know a person closely. Sadly they didn't acknowledge that God was with them.

Dear reader, I don't know for how many years you have been a follower of Christ, but do you acknowledge that Jesus is with you, although you have failed Him, although you haven't trusted Him? You may have problems and temptations but He is still with you. He says “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me?” Confess to the Lord and say “Yes Lord, all these years I am following you and still didn't acknowledge you. Help me to realise that you are with me, even when I sometimes am not with you, Amen”.

Vartan Sarkissian