

SHIELD OF FAITH

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EXAMINING DOCTRINES OF SALVATION

by Apostle Henry Alexander

“Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost...And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...”

Acts 2:38 & 42

It is impossible that any doctrine could be more important to a person seeking eternal life than a correct understanding of the doctrine of salvation. Of all the truths that the enemy of God would like to hide, I suppose that none is more important than the doctrine of salvation: For if the adversary could confuse a person about the means of reconciliation to God, he could then cause individuals to imagine that they are saved when in fact they are not! There is little that could be more dangerous than to falsely think that one is reconciled to God when he or she is, in fact, still in a sinful condition before God.

When we speak of salvation, we are speaking of reconciliation to God with the attendant benefits of deliverance from the oppressions of sinful behavior and the consequences that are associated with sinful choices. True salvation speaks of a release from sin and from the emotional, physical and spiritual consequences of sin. The concept of salvation is a somewhat complex one. The word “salvation” is translated from the Greek word *soterion*. Thus the study of salvation is often called the study of soteriology.

The term soteriology comes from two Greek terms, namely, *soter* meaning “savior” or “deliverer” and *logos* meaning “word”, “matter”, or “thing”. In Christian systematic theology it is used to refer to the study of the biblical doctrine of salvation. An in-depth study of salvation often includes such topics as the nature and extent of the atonement as well as the entire process of salvation, conceived as an eternal, divine plan designed to rescue lost and erring sinners and bring them back into eternal fellowship with God. Many regard it as the primary theme in Scripture with the glory of God as its goal.

India Pastor Faith Grows After Attack

NEW DELHI, June 29, 2020 (Morning Star News) – Under pressure from an official in the ruling Hindu nationalist political party, police in Uttar Pradesh state, India have released without charges a suspect in the attempted killing of a pastor last month, sources said. “When we entered the police station for the identification process, the attacker was treated like a VIP, not as a criminal,” Deepak Kumar, brother-in-law of the pastor, told Morning Star News. “He was released the same day, even after we insisted that he is the one.” Four men ambushed 39-year-old pastor Dinesh Kumar as he left Mohiuddinpur village, Mau District on his motorbike on May 28, beating him with clubs so severely that he lost consciousness. A deep wound to his head required 16 stitches, a cut on his arm seven stitches, and he sustained internal injuries; seeing the wound on his arm, a doctor asked his wife if he had been shot. “They had no intentions to threaten me – they attacked to kill me,” Pastor Kumar, of Jamalpur village, told Morning Star News. Police went to Pastor Kumar while he was still in the Intensive Care Unit of Prakash Hospital in Mau to ask if he knew the names of any of the assailants, and he did not give one, the head of the Madhuban police station told Morning Star News. Pastor Kumar said he later called the police station to report that he recognized one of the assailants.

“I had often seen this man in the village when I visited the Christians,” he told Morning Star News. “That day too, he was sitting right opposite the house of the family who had invited me.” Due to coronavirus social distancing measures, Pastor Kumar was standing outside the house of the family that had invited him, praying for a sick member and reading from the Bible, he said. “I noticed him while I was sharing from the Word of God that he was observing me,” he said of the man opposite the house. “Later when he attacked me, I could clearly recognize him, but I did not know his name. I enquired of the villagers the name of the person, and only then could I report his name to the police.” Police arrested the suspect and called Pastor Kumar to identify him two days after he was discharged from the hospital early this month. He and Deepak Kumar went to the police station, and Pastor Kumar identified the suspect, whose name is withheld for security reasons. Pastor Kumar said he was expecting to hear soon from police of the arrest of the other three men and was stunned to learn otherwise. “I was shocked to learn that the police did not charge him with any crime and just let him go,” he said. Due to political pressure, he said, all four assailants are roaming free in the village. His brother-in-law said that police freed the suspect due to the intervention of a well-known political leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The head of the Madhuban police station initially denied to Morning Star News that identification of the suspect took place, then later acknowledged it. “The victim in his FIR [First Information Report] did not name anybody, and later when we went to the hospital and enquired from him, he still did not name anybody,” Station House Officer Sanjeev Kumar Dubey told Morning Star News. “It was only six days after the incident that he named this person.” The original investigating officer has been transferred, and a new one was assigned to the case, Dubey said. The case is still under investigation and “no arrests have been made yet,” he said. “An innocent man should not be punished,” Dubey told Morning Star News. “When Kumar did not name him twice, neither in the FIR nor in the hospital, and later he is naming him, it is doubtful.” Dubey denied the accusation that police succumbed to Hindu nationalist political pressure by releasing the suspect. “If he [released suspect] has done something, he will go to jail,” he told Morning Star News. “Even we try our best that the right person should be caught and right person be sent to jail.”

Christians thrown in jail while trying to report violence by Hindu extremists in India have come to fear police. When the officers visited Mohiuddinpur to investigate, Christian families became frightened, said Pastor Kumar, who suspects the assailants threatened them. “The families got so scared when police reached their homes that they denied even knowing me,” said the father of three children, ages 3, 6 and 8. Pastor Kumar planted his first church in 2008 and began to visit Mohiuddinpur three years ago. There are now seven Christian families in the village, but Pastor Kumar had not visited them or led worship services there since coronavirus shelter-in orders came into effect, he said. A church member there had called him three consecutive days requesting that he come to pray for her family, he said. “I told the lady that I will pray for them over the phone, but she pleaded that I visit them personally,” he said. Pastor Kumar reached the home in Mohiuddinpur, 22 miles from his home, at 3 p.m., after an hour-long ride, he said. He planned to stay the night at his in-law’s house, only three miles away. “There were three families who shared their concerns with me, and I prayed for each of them one after the other,” he said, adding that he stood in front of their homes to offer prayers, rather than entering, due to the Covid-19 restrictions. One of the assailants was intently watching him the entire time, Pastor Kumar said. After praying for the family and sharing from Scripture, he left for the house of Deepak Kumar, his wife’s brother. He had gone about 500 meters when the four men emerged from the dark and attacked him with clubs, he said. Pastor Kumar was hit on the head and he fell to the road, his wife said. “Bleeding profusely from the head injury, his thigh, hip, back and hand took all the beatings,” Mumta Kumar told Morning Star News. “His thigh had turned completely blackish-blue, his hand sustained a deep cut, and doctors had to stitch the hand opening. He sustained several internal injuries and blood clots on his hip and back. His leg immediately began to swell after the attack.” The assailants fled only after the headlight from a passing milkman’s motorbike hit them, Mumta Kumar said. “The brutality with which they hit him, his hand, leg or even his head could have sustained fractures, but it is only God’s doing that his life is spared,” she said. “The doctor asked me if someone fired a bullet at him.” Beside the road where they attacked the pastor is a deep trench, the pastor said. “If they had a chance, they would have thrown me in the trench, and I would be gone forever,” he told Morning Star News. The milkman alerted Mohiuddinpur villagers, and Christians there informed Pastor Kumar’s brother-in-law. Deepak Kumar rented a car and took him to Fatehpur Government Hospital; he was then referred to Sadar Government Hospital, which further referred him to the private hospital in Mau, given the extent of his injuries. The doctors rushed him to the Intensive Care Unit, where he remained for six days. “The cut on his head is quite deep,” Operation Theatre Technician Pradeep Pal told Morning Star News. A doctor told Mumta Kumar there were many blood clots in his head, she said. Pastor Kumar said the attack has strengthened his faith in Christ. “To live is Christ, and to die is gain,” he said, quoting the Apostle Paul. “Even if people kill me for Christ’s sake, I will not stop doing God’s work. I have no fear, nor will I ever fear.” In each village where the pastor has ministered, there are 25 to 50 people who eagerly testify of the work of Christ in their lives, he said. “Jesus did such an amazing works, and people still did not recognize him; Jesus is using me and doing marvelous works through me,” he said. “There is a reason why Christ saved me. If He had no reason for my life, the way I was attacked I would have not survived. I should have died. My heart tells me that the Lord is still going to use me, and that is why He saved me.” The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom on April 28 urged the U.S. State Department to add India as a “Country of Particular Concern” to its list of nations with poor records of protecting religious freedom. India is ranked 10th on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2020 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The country was 31st in 2013, but its position has worsened since Narendra Modi of the BJP came to power in 2014.

How to Care for Your Spouse's Heart in These Stressful Times

BY JOANNA TEIGEN



Deep, lasting stress makes a mark on a marriage. Life's troubles either wound and divide us, or they pull us together as a couple. How can a husband and wife encourage one another? Why does stress create friction and distance between us? How do we solve problems as a team? Can our faith make a difference in our home? For families today, these questions are more urgent and important than ever.

Three months ago, the world turned upside-down for every household. We found ourselves confined under quarantine and the stay-at-home order. Schools closed, beginning a season of online learning, loneliness, and kids' fears about the future. Friends and loved ones lost jobs, security, and health. We all suffered the hurt of isolation from one another. COVID-19 brought stressors we've never experienced before. In this anxious time, our country is also experiencing sorrow and violence from the racism in our culture. Social media overflows with reports of painful injustice. Anger and conflict are dominating the headlines. Our families are grieved, exhausted, and struggling to cope. Yet in the storms of life, our marriage can be one of life's greatest blessings. We can grow in strength and love for one another. Here are six ways to care for your spouse's heart in stressful times.

1. Stay Present

In times of stress we crave comfort and distraction. It's tempting to escape into our devices or binge-watch our favorite shows late into the night. We might obsessively clean and organize or throw ourselves into work to gain a sense of order and control. Anxiety is exhausting—we may find ourselves checking out, eating, or sleeping extra hours. In our desire for peace, we make the mistake of running to our coping mechanisms and away from our spouse.

It takes intentional effort to give one another the undivided attention that's needed. In your marriage, you can make a game plan to keep you from drifting apart. Set boundaries to protect your connection with each other, such as

- Unplugging from your devices at specific hours each day.
- Choosing set times to go to bed and wake up side by side.
- Committing to sit together at the table during meals.
- Hanging a calendar on the wall and scheduling quality time with each other.
- Sharing daily activities such as running errands, walking the dog, or working in the yard.

By staying present with your spouse, you'll be available to talk through your needs and feelings along the way. You will feel reassured by a partner who shares the burden of stress you carry.

2. Give Grace

Stress is sure to expose the cracks in our armor. We may lose our ability to focus or accomplish our to-do list every day. Emotionally, we might feel we're riding a roller coaster of fear, frustration, and sadness that changes by the hour. Small obstacles feel like mountains to climb, causing us to overreact or lose our patience. In times of stress, our weaknesses demand a greater amount of compassion and understanding from our spouse. Grace teaches us to adjust our expectations when our husband or wife is overwhelmed. It offers forgiveness for grouchy moods and careless mistakes. Grace gives unconditional love instead of pressure to earn our affection. It chooses to think about "whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy" instead of dwelling on each shortcoming (Philippians 4:8). Stress provides the opportunity to love one another like Jesus, who never gives up or walks away when we struggle.



3. Serve Generously

You see how stress is depleting your spouse. The effort to parent the kids full-time, fulfill work responsibilities, and process news headlines is stretching your partner to the breaking point. Today, the best way to say "I love you" could be folding a load of laundry and running the dishwasher. It might be taking the kids for a hike to give your spouse a quiet afternoon. Perhaps a back rub could ease the knots in her shoulders or tidying the bedroom could help him relax into a restful night's sleep. By actively looking for ways to serve, we lighten our loved one's load and ease their anxiety. Jesus set the perfect example of servanthood to everyone he met. He gave up his own convenience and comfort to heal the hurts of others. He gave care and attention to demonstrate the love of God. If we ask, the Spirit will give us that same attitude toward our spouse. He'll help us to put love in action and serve in tangible ways. In your marriage, you will both feel seen, valued, and helped when it counts the most.

4. Kindle Romance

After weeks at home, spontaneous fun or romance can feel like a distant memory. How do you create special moments with so little privacy and nowhere to go? After twenty loaves of banana bread and three months away from the salon, how can you feel flirty or attractive? Is it possible to put stress and worry aside and focus on enjoying one another? Romantic quality time and lovemaking set a marriage apart from every other relationship. In times of stress we need the kind of nurturing love that only our husband or wife can give. We lighten the mood with laughter at our own private jokes. We're soothed by physical affection. When we're together and close, feelings of loneliness are lifted. Romance keeps us bonded and built up to face what comes our way. Yet romance won't happen by accident. Take initiative to leave a note or fresh flowers on the counter. Schedule regular dates, even if it's just a video and popcorn after the kids are in bed. Hold hands in the car and kiss in the kitchen. Take every opportunity to communicate that you love and like the one who holds your heart.



5. Give Thanks

After weeks of bad news with no relief, it's hard to hang on to a positive perspective. Complaining and criticism seep into our conversations. We express doubts and fears instead of hope and faith. Our negativity is contagious, and it becomes hard to find joy in any corner of our home. Yet no matter how dark the valley of our trouble, God will give glimpses of his light. You can care for your spouse's heart by celebrating the good in your life. Is there food on your table? Give thanks. Did you witness a gorgeous sunset or did an inspiring song catch your ear? Praise God. Was a prayer answered for help or healing? Share the good news of God's love. Search for signs of his faithfulness and enjoy him in your marriage. Extend thanks to your husband or wife as well. Name the ways you've been blessed and helped. Express gratitude for little things like a hot cup of coffee or the freshly-washed sheets on your bed. Affirm the selflessness you see that sets an example and brings out your best. As you choose gratitude over grumbling, contentment will fill your home. You'll feel needed and appreciated. Faith will flourish as you recognize God's hand in the details of your life. Your marriage will recapture joy and happiness you've been missing.

6. Pray Every Day

Prayer is your greatest weapon in the battle against stress. God promises in Matthew 18:20 that if the two of you come together in Jesus' name, he's right there with you. Prayer allows you to release heavy burdens from your shoulders so Jesus can carry them for you each day. (Psalm 68:19) It sets you free from depending on your own limited strength and wisdom. Through prayer, you find the rest and peace you're longing for.

How do you pray as a couple? Build it into your routine. Jot down a list of people and problems to pray over and note the ways God answers. Let prayer books and devotional apps put words to your needs and concerns. Speak words of thanks at meals to remember how God was faithful. Pick up the Bible and pray the Psalms that express your heart. To become a praying couple, simply begin. Day after day, prayer will become woven into your relationship.

Your faith will grow, your marriage will deepen, and you'll be a "cord of three strands" that is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Stress does not have to have the last word in your marriage. By turning to God together, he'll use it to build your faith and draw you closer than ever before. He'll give you strength to overcome and hope for the future.

"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Peter 5:10). His love is able to transform your relationship in all you face today.

Joanna Teigen and her husband Rob have shared over 25 years of marriage and life with five kids, plus a beautiful daughter-in-law.

The Wonderful Peace of Jesus Christ

by *Vernon Mcgee*

**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with
God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)**

The Bible mentions several kinds of peace. First, there's world peace. Well, my friend, as long as there is sin in the hearts of men, there never will be peace in the world - not until the Prince of Peace comes. Christ will bring peace on this earth. But world peace is not the kind of peace that Paul is talking about here.

Then there is that peace which is known as tranquility of soul. That is the peace to which the Lord Jesus referred when He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you ..." (John 14:27). This is a peace that comes to certain believers who have trusted Christ and who are resting in Him and who are doing His will. I wish I could say that I experience this peace all the time. I do not. I suppose I am like most believers in that I have up and down experiences. However, Paul is not referring to the peace of personal tranquility.

Then there is a third kind of peace which Paul mentions to the Philippian believers - "the peace that passeth all understanding" (see Philippians 4:7). Well, since it passes all understanding, I certainly don't know what it is, and I have a notion that you don't know either. The peace Paul is talking about, which he lists as the first benefit of salvation, is "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the peace that comes to the soul of one who has trusted Christ as Savior and knows that God no longer has any charge against him, that he is no longer guilty. He knows that God, who had to be against him in the past, is now for him. He knows that he has a salvation that is permanent and eternal. This is the peace that comes because of sins forgiven and because everything is right between you and God. You will notice that Paul mentions again and again that we have peace through the blood of Jesus Christ, which means that everything is all right between our soul and God. That is wonderful peace. This was explained to me by a wonderful pastor when I was a young boy in my teens. He said that when man sinned in the Garden of Eden, not only did man run away from God - and found himself alienated from the life of God, with no capacity for God and no inclination to turn to Him - but God also had to turn away from man. Then when Christ died on the cross, God turned around, so that now a holy God can say to a lost sinner, "Come." His arms are outstretched. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will rest you" (Matthew 11:28, literal translation mine). This is peace, the rest of redemption.

My friend, God is reconciled. You don't have to do anything to reconcile Him, as we have seen. A great many people think that you have to shed tears to reconcile God. You don't need tears to soften the heart of God! You don't have to do anything. Because Christ died on the cross, God is reconciled today. The message of the gospel is, "Be ye reconciled to God." The next move is yours. When you accept His salvation, then you experience peace that your sins have been forgiven.