

The Strength of Weakness

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This book is
dedicated
to the memory of
my Father and Mother

Augustine and Kunjalia Salins

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PROLOGUE

FROM THE SHADOWS OF SAINTS

"Words cannot describe the feelings that tugged at the heartstrings as I took in what the familiar handwriting had to convey. My mother had always been what today's women call "a woman of substance", a working professional, a medical practitioner of great repute – how did she adjust to the demanding, unfathomable role of meeting the needs of a servant of Christ who had devoted his every breath to the service of God?"

Augustine Salins has been called the 'weeping prophet of India.' In *The Strength of Weakness*, his daughter Monica Jayakumari Benjamin, etches out a rare document of uncommon passion and determination, the dramatically intertwined story of the prophet and his wife, that was inexorably tied to the nation's spiritual history. Here is the author's pre-embarkation note.

The godly lives of my parents, Augustine and Kunjalia Salins, have left their indelible mark and impression in the hearts and minds of those they left behind. Children are strongly influenced by the information that is released around them during their formative years. The Bible has exhorted parents eons ago to "train a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6 "How can a young man keep his way pure? "By living according to your word", said the Psalmist in Psalm 119:9.

I was born and brought up in Udupi, South India and I studied Medicine at KMC, Manipal/ Mangalore. At a later stage, I followed as the Lord led, to Jiwan Jyothi Christian Hospital, Robertsganj, Sonbhadra in Uttar Pradesh along with my husband Christopher Benjamin.

My father went to be with the Lord in 1985 and my mother 15 years later in November 1999. During one of my visits to Udupi in December 2011, my Father's sister, Eileen Kaundinya (nee Salins) had a surprise gift for me – a notebook with my mother's handwritten autobiography. Aunt Eileen had been the one who had inspired my mother to write and then for some incomprehensible reason – maybe she waited for the right God ordained moment - she kept the document all these years.

Words cannot describe the feelings that tugged at the heartstrings as I took in what the familiar handwriting had to convey. My mother had always been what today's women call "a woman of substance", a working professional, a medical practitioner of great repute – how did she adjust to the demanding, unfathomable role of meeting the needs of a servant of Christ who had devoted his every breath to the service of God?

How did she learn humility and submission? How did she learn about the strength of weakness?

It is a story that needs to especially be told to the contemporary Indian woman, who stands at the crossroads today, because of the turbulence that erupted following the heart-rending violence against women.

Not every cry in the land of India is ridden by anguish, but every single life has its own cry and has heard the cry of another who is struggling and searching for meaning - a heart consuming battle. For one, it may be the daunting and haunting spectre of guilt. For another, it may be loneliness or singleness. For yet another, it may be a question - "When I have done all that I know to be right, why do I not feel God to be near?" And for still another, it could be the question of all questions - "Who are you God?"

Kunjalia, my mother's inspiring and sacrificial story will encourage, motivate and bless everyone and the network of blessings will flow on to generations as we pass it on. On one hand Kyunjalia wanted to break out from the centuries of oppression that have suppressed women through the ages; yet she did not really want to forsake tradition and things she had held sacred. What could she do? There seemed so few alternatives.

There seem to be so few role models for today's women.

A seed of thought – that of producing a book, the proceeds from which would go to support Indian Christian Missionaries serving the Lord in remote villages of India, was planted. Although we live in the UK at present, my heart is very much in India.

I have all the doors and windows to the past that I need in my Bible and in "The Strength of Weakness", it is with great enthusiasm that I have traced the network of blessings which run like a thread through the Holy Book linking our very family to history via Abraham, to God's family via grace, and to eternity via God's promise.

My father Augustine's story has also become relevant in an era where terrorism and technology have managed to change the balance of controls and diminish human worth and strength to near-negligible. Today's young man does not consider himself a unique creation of God, endowed with gifts to glorify his Creator; youth are consumed with fatalistic thinking of "not knowing what tomorrow holds and whether one will even see tomorrow" and therefore getting totally immersed in the call for self-indulgence propagated by the advertising media which functions without any kind of moral or spiritual guidelines.

I believe the trail marked by the blazing humility of Augustine Salins is a story that will challenge the present generation. It is the portrait of a helpless man who was taken from weakness to strength, doubt to deliverance, hopelessness to hope and confidence, darkness to light to present the Good news of Jesus Christ - to enlighten people and to make inroads into areas of spiritual darkness. People can be utterly transformed by the Good News of Jesus Christ, as we have seen it happen again and again, right through the passage of civilization.

It is my sincere prayer that God may raise many more 'Weeping prophets' in India and around the World.

All of us, as God's people, are called to be witnesses, but some are also called to be evangelists. (Eph 4:11)

May we all echo in our hearts these words from the Triumph of John and Betty Stam.

“See all the careless multitudes, Are passing by, now passing by,
The world is sick with sin and woe,
All men must die, some day must die
The time is set for our Lord's return, Is drawing nigh, draws ever nigh,
Send us in all Thy cleansing power
Lord, here am I! Here, Lord am I.”

FOREWORD

THE CALL FOR STARK HONESTY

by Dr. Paul C. Salins

"My mother was in her late thirties when she met my father who had come to preach in the local church at Mercara (Medikeri). One could say he was an itinerant preacher. A delicious pleasure invaded her as she listened to him, it was evident he was no scholar but – as with the early disciples – the words came from a deeper source than the human intellect and a fiery passion burning within. A passion sublimated and so focused on God that an overpowering love for all lost mankind emanated from the preacher and overwhelmed my mother."

'Unless a biography is starkly honest as it unravels the human soul within, it would fail in its primary task which is to permit us to enter the secret recesses of another's mind, share the dreams that reside there, along with the fears, passions, hatred, love and even indifference,' Professor Dr. Paul C. Salins gives the author, (his sister) the green signal for the unfenced biography of their parents Augustine and Kunjalia Salins.

*T*here is a reason and it is a good one.

The story of Augustine and Kunjalia Salins needs to be told today because we live in an age that has lost faith in faith and obliterated the need for goodness; even love makes us anxious and we pursue happiness without hope and manage despair with drugs! Our best relationships have to be risk-free, carefully-crafted artefacts of our practiced veneer ensuring an indifferent personal freedom. Consequently we possess few really cherished memories, and what we do cherish seems a chimera. The love and life story of Augustine and Kunjalia is a refreshing tale of two very dissimilar people, each possessing great individuality and emotional character but culminating in surmounting differences in culture, upbringing, physical appearance and age. Their union, through the redemptive power of God, bears testimony to a mighty Saviour.

A biography is a struggle to answer the question "what was she or he like?" However saintly our recorded virtues and lofty our documented thoughts, unless a biography is starkly honest as it unravels the human soul within, it would fail in its primary task which is to permit us to enter the secret recesses of the mind of another, share the dream, experience its fears, and share passion in hatred, love and even indifference. When a biography succeeds, we find a precious kinship with the subject as though we have found at last a friend to commit unashamedly our secret longings, private

griefs and unexpressed pleasures. Reading the pages of the Bible, one wonders how God chooses his favourites! The biblical narratives capture so vividly each character's humanness, fallibility and unworthiness that even as we feel we would have disliked if not hated many of them had we really known them, we begin to discover traits of them in us.

When my mother first met my father who was an art teacher (just turned at the time of their meeting into an itinerant preacher) she was past 35. As the only daughter in a highly orthodox Syrian Christian family, pursuing a career instead of an early marriage – her stubbornness, as always, had won. She had gone alone to study medicine at Madras and had passed with distinction, later securing the Gold Medal award for her academic achievements. She had numerous options as one of the very first lady doctors in the country at that time, but back in Kerala, for her own family, the only path of honour, meant a marriage with no further delay. Once again, she obstinately surmounted convention, choosing a professional career far away from home.

*M*any factors contributed to her convictions.

She had by then become a zealous born-again Christian believer having neither time nor tolerance for orthodoxy and ancient rituals emblematic of the ancient Christian faith of her family rooted firmly in tradition traceable all the way to the era of St. Thomas. In the medical college she had become a 'brethren Christian' and any organized religious order now was anathema!

My mother also told me that another major obstacle for God's will to reign in her life was her pride and the obsession to be different. She believed that God brought her into marriage to teach her what it means to be humbled and the victory that is ours when we count ourselves of less account than others in God's service. So when she decided not to go to Kerala to start a lucrative career in private practice as her classmates did, and her parents desperately hoped, but chose a position in the government, her family was greatly outraged.

To my mind my mother in her youth is unmistakably Isabel Archer, the young American heroine of Henry James when she says: *"I am not in my first youth...I can do what I choose...I belong quite to the independent class. I've neither father nor mother; I'm poor and of a serious disposition; I am not pretty. I therefore am not bound to be timid and conventional; indeed I can't afford such luxuries. Besides, I try to judge things for myself; to judge wrong, I think, is more honorable than not to judge at all. I don't wish to be mere sheep in a flock; I wish to choose my fate and know something of human affairs beyond what other people think it compatible with propriety to tell me."*

*S*o it was that Dr. Miss. Kunjalia Antony arrived at Kodagu.

She started work at its capital city, Mercara (Medikeri) in Karnataka and became well known as a good doctor to the community and a wise trustworthy confidante and friend to many. My mother was in her late thirties when she met my father who had come to preach in the church at Mercara. One could say he was an itinerant preacher. A delicious pleasure invaded her as she listened to him, it was evident he was no scholar but – as with the early disciples – the words came from a deeper source than the human intellect and a fiery passion burning within. A passion sublimated and so focused on God that an overpowering love for all lost mankind emanated from the preacher and overwhelmed my mother. It was clear to my mother that no woman or wife could, or should lay claim to this overpowering zeal for God. Yet she instantly knew she had at last found the kindred spirit worthy of her love and the all-consuming cause to devote her entire life for which all these years had been but the prelude.

The lives of quiet desperation most people live is because few ever encounter the heady exhilaration of all consuming passion though they read and hear about it and know it exists. Passions surrogate for most people who then become the easy victims of lust, intermittently heating and cooling till their souls turn brittle and break.

But for my mother she had met the one she had waited for and the great adventure was only about to begin. But soon she realized the folly of her thinking, she was a doctor, and he, only an art teacher; she was 5 years older and plain looking while he, attractive and youthful. Also their respective mother tongues and cultural backgrounds were totally different. My mother knew that her already hurt family would never forgive her for her disdain on their every cherished dream. Indeed only after I, the long-awaited male grandchild was born, did my grandparents fully reconcile and forgive their daughter for the pain she had caused them. The story of how, over years, God led my mother to Udupi and the love blossomed into marriage is the story of this book and I shall not pre-empt.

My 35 years as a doctor, teacher, administrator and student of human nature has never brought to my experience another example of such love, friendship, commitment my parents possessed and their unalloyed love of God. There was not a wisp of hypocrisy or manipulation.

Their partnership provided the foundation for great Christian ministry in India and abroad that has blessed thousands; the sacrificial medical work of my mother continues to inspire and challenge me and so many. My parents' life and ministry is a great testimony to the fact that if you seek God and his righteousness, external compatibilities disappear and our life can truly be one of bliss and blessing.

Try Him.

CHAPTER ONE

“WHAT WILL WE DO WITH AUGUSTINE? HE IS USELESS...”

Is spiritual talk and persuasion just a con game? His doubts began to grow: 'Why am I a failure? Why is this happening to me? What have I done or not done? Will believing in a living God always include hurt and suffering and if the answer to this is 'Yes', then does God seriously expect human beings to opt to live for Him and please Him?' Questions and insecurities threatened to destroy his weakening faith.

Augustine remembered his mother – on her knees praying for him, in his room, near his bed when he was seven years old. He could feel her hands on his head anointing and blessing him. He could hear her gentle, sweet and melodious voice saying “Son, I want you to be a servant of the Lord Jesus.” The words of Augustine’s Moral Science teacher had also left a lasting impact on Augustine’s life -“...each one of you is precious to God”

Augustine experienced God's loving-kindness and grace– His loyal, steadfast, unconditional love based on His mercy and faithfulness – a voluntary act of extraordinary mercy and generosity in choosing the most unusual, unsuitable, weak, frail, sinful man. As Augustine stood in awe at the greatness, goodness and grace of God, he heard Him whisper “My Grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9

*N*o one could call it eavesdropping.

For in no way had he crept up to his parents’ room to secretly listen to their private conversation without their consent. He happened to be awake and that is the only reason why he overheard the late-evening conversation his parents were having about him in the next room. Couples usually do this; since the man works the whole day and his wife is equally preoccupied, it is only much later when they are alone and when they imagine their children to be sound asleep, they discuss problems relating to the household and the children. There would be nothing wrong with that if the children were indeed asleep; problems can arise if one happens to overhear their parents’ uncomplimentary remarks; as Augustine Salins did that fateful night.

Allen Roberts and Doris Fisher wrote a song ' You always hurt the one you love ' and it was a top 20 hit in 1961.

“ You always hurt the one you love, The one you shouldn't hurt at all,

You always break the kindest heart, With a hasty word you can't recall,

So, if I broke your heart last night, It's because I love you most of all."

All of us have been either guilty as the offending party and have hurt or wounded the ones we wish we hadn't or we have been on the receiving end of someone's false accusations and unkind words.

But back to Augustine - it actually followed as a sequence of events. Usually, Augustine was asleep at about that time. That night however, he was awake because he had already received one shock when he scoured the college notice board on which the examination results had been pinned. Three times he went through the list and only then did he accept the reality: he had failed the Senior Arts examination. All his hopes for the future had rested on his getting through the exam; he walked home devastated, dejected and utterly deflated. He had felt discouraged on other occasions too, but never before had the sense of desolate hopelessness enveloped him as it did that night. His eyes blurred with unshed tears, and for once, he could see no light at the end of the tunnel.

His parents said nothing when he told them in a flat voice about his failure. That was a worse punishment than if they had berated him or shouted at him. He could see the disappointment and silent anger in his father's eyes, but nothing was said. Augustine said he did not want dinner and he retreated to his room for an early night.

A couple of hours later, he was pulled back from the sleep he was drifting into at the sound of his name. The voice belonged to his father:

"Augustine is useless, he is good for nothing. Imagine, he could not even pass the Arts examination. His brothers have done so well, only *he* has shamed us – what can we do with him?"

To his mother's credit, she did try to defend him though her voice was sleepy and half-hearted as she said, "Poor Augustine, he has always been a weak child. Let us be patient with him; let us hope and pray that he will do better the next time around."

Bloodline test...

*L*azarus and Sanjeevi Salins lived close to the Basel mission church.

At the time of his son's failing the Arts exam, Lazarus held the position of headmaster of the Basel Mission Orphanage;

(Taken from the memoirs of Jocelin Salins, Lazarus's first grandson, now a retired pastor based in Australia)

"Lazarus Salins was a secondary school teacher at the Christian High School. His grandparents came from a Hindu background. The Swiss missionaries must have given the ' surname " SALINS ' when they baptised them for while travelling from Paris to Stuttgart, we came across a ' SALINS Chateau.'

He was an upright and a dignified man with a thick moustache and thick grey hair. He always wore a white 'kucha', crisp white shirt buttoned at the top, and a jacket which was always peculiarly buttoned in the middle! They were middle class people. He was an elder of the local Church and had a good singing voice. Whenever we went to Udupi as children, we found 'Ajer' (Ajja = Grandfather) leading the family in devotions every morning and evening without fail. The family would gather in the living room and Ajer would sit on a chair next to the table, under the old grandfather clock. He would read two lines of a Hymn and lead the singing as the family members join in. Then came the Bible reading followed by prayer. Soon after devotions, breakfast and in the evening dinner would be served. Their house in the Mission Compound had 3 bedrooms, a living room, a store room, a big kitchen, and a separate bathroom with a huge copper vessel to heat water for baths.

Then there was the cow shed with two large cows and two calves. The extra milk was sold to the neighbours. The compound was large with a lot of coconut trees, jack fruit and mango trees, one pomelo tree and a few araca nut trees entwined with pepper climbers. Vegetables for the family were grown in a well maintained vegetable patch."

Augustine's mother was the daughter of Sundara Muthu, well known in the Christian community. It is also worth noting that Augustine was the fifth son in a large family of twelve children. His mother was a very godly woman and they were brought up in the fear of the Lord. I remember my father telling me stories about how his mother would light a Kerosene lamp well before day break and invite all her children to sit round it for morning devotions. During these times, his father would read a passage from the Bible. His booming voice could be heard through the walls!

The family were regulars at the Sunday services, Sunday school and mid-week Bible studies. Other activities were discouraged on a Sunday so as to impress upon them the necessity of giving God the first place in their lives. At harvest time, the best produce from the Salins' garden – bananas, coconuts, mangoes, and even the healthiest chickens - were offered to the Lord during the church service, as was the custom.

The truth is - Lazarus Salins was a good man and tried to be fair to all his children. Recognizing that Augustine was differently gifted, the father had met every effort that it called for, to admit him into an Art School at Mangalore. From his meagre salary which barely provided for the large family, Lazarus extracted a considerable amount to see that his son got the opportunity to excel in the subject he loved.

Hearing his father groan about his inadequacy and his failure was more than the depressed child could bear. Augustine did not wait to hear what else his father was going to say. On tip-toe, he walked out of the house.

A damaged spirit ...

The greatest cause of hurt feelings in the world is criticism. Very few of us survive the damage done to our spirit by cruel words uttered by somebody else. When this 'somebody else' is a near and dear one, the wound goes deeper, has the potential to linger on for decades, and even then, it is only the grace of the Holy Spirit that can enact the healing to our inner man.

Of course, children need to be corrected and shepherded into realistic expectations from them, but the words used to do this have to be carefully chosen because wrong words after an event can cause greater harm than an event itself. Many children never come to grips with their problem, or get more withdrawn, isolated and depressed; criticism can seriously affect a person's mental health. Not only does it hurt our feelings but makes us feel terrible about ourselves, especially as it makes us feel powerless.

It takes the wind out of our sails.

A PRAYER by Wesley Duewel

“Lord, help us watch every careless word,
Let nothing e'er be spoken,
That could grieve others if they heard,
Or leave their spirits broken.
Lord, place a watch on our lips,
Our speech with grace, Lord, season,
Preserve us from unguarded slips,
And words without a reason.
Give us more quietness of heart,
And teach us meditation,
Help us to set our tongues apart in fullest consecration,
Saviour, guard our tongues.”

Okay life, let's talk ...

*A*ugustine walked rapidly away from his house.

He decided to find a secluded and lonely place where he could lick his wounds. To find a really isolated spot, he had to walk through dusty fields, their surface, dry and cracked ironically mirroring the harness of life's realities that he was struggling to come to terms with. After walking for what seemed like hours, he came to a stretch of jungle with low-lying scrubs and groves of stunted, twisted trees.

He found an isolated rock in the middle of one of the dark groves and sat on it. The trees towered over him; flying foxes and bats the size of large bandikoots were hanging upside down and though asleep, he noticed their constant restless and unsettling movements. Noise seemed to penetrate the cool air more deeply – every sound was magnified. It looked like an ancient theatrical setting for a Greek tragedy and it was on this 'stage' of self-awareness that Augustine spent hours thinking about his life. Questions, doubts and uncertainties filled his mind. Life seemed like a jungle on both the outside and inside!

Away from the house, he found he could see the situation objectively. For the most part, he had to acknowledge that his parents had done all they could to give him a good life. He knew few restrictions, he had been allowed to indulge many of his passions; he had a great love for music and a desire to watch movies (which in those days was frowned upon as "wicked") but these things didn't cause him to brand himself as bad. He told himself he was on the right path and to him this meant that he had tried – to the best of his ability anyway - to follow the laws of God as revealed in the Ten Commandments.

Considering that, what was God's problem? If God is at the root of what happens to every human being, why had God permitted him to fail, and then to overhear his father's biting remark?

At the particular time, most of his friends were Hindus and Muslims. As he sat on the hard rock, he scrutinized his friends' lifestyles too and they also seemed to be leading relatively "good" lives. They believed in Allah or as was the case with Hindus – in *kan kan mein bhagwan* (since god is in everything there are millions of gods)- they respected their parents, and they were pious people who believed in good deeds and love. A thought occurred to Augustine: Was religion a human invention to subjugate the minds of men? Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed and even Christ – were these men not deified and idealized by people? Was this deification justified?

The other side of midnight ...

*H*e then extended his mental investigation to other people in the world ...

... and noticed many leading a life of revelry and debauchery. Strangely, they seemed to be enjoying life more than those who tried to be good and steeped themselves in pious religion. They succeeded as they carried out their wicked ways and in appearance seemed happy and fulfilled. Now that he zoomed in on them, he discovered that secretly he had an envy of the prosperity of the wicked. They seemed to have no struggles. They were healthy and strong - carefree. Pride was their necklace and they clothed themselves with violence – yet they were carefree and the destruction he was experiencing now seemed far from them.

Is spiritual talk and persuasion just a con game? His doubts began to grow: *Why am I a failure? Why is this happening to me? What have I done or not done? Will believing in a living God always include hurt and suffering and if the answer to this is 'Yes', then does God seriously expect human beings to opt to live for Him and please Him?* Questions and insecurities threatened to destroy his weakening faith. His heart was like the troubled sea. The stormy waves seem to be as high as the heavens and he was overwhelmed by his life that seemed so utterly hopeless. Enough is enough, he told himself as his courage melted away. He found himself at his wits end. He did not want peace and joy any more; his real desire was for clarity and success.

So deep was his desire for what he now wanted that it left him with an aching pain; fear of the future, fear of failure and the fear of loneliness gripped and almost paralyzed him. He felt as though he had been abandoned by everyone, and his life was of no worth to anyone – not even to his own family! It seemed there were devils shrieking all around him in the air crying: "You are useless; your own blood father said you are useless. Your life is not worth living. It's a farce. Why don't you simply pack up and kill yourself. You are of no use to anyone." The echo was so loud that he had to put his hands on his ears to shut out the sound of them; he sobbed miserably for a long time.

When he had emptied himself of all his tears, he stood up and spoke words that reflected his deep despair: "Perhaps it is better to simply die. Look at me – I'm a failure. I'm not strong and smart like my brothers. I am weak in health and of only average intelligence in a competitive cut-throat world. I will always fail, there is no doubt about that."

His agony was echoed in the words of Henry Van Dyke: "My soul was weary and my pride was wounded deep. To Heaven I cried, 'God give me peace or I must die.'"

And God said ...

*T*here was complete silence after he had dared God.

It was as if eternity stood still as two worlds collided and all of creation waited with suspended breath to see what would happen next.

A still, small voice spoke clearly into the night: "Augustine, my son, I love you and care for you. I am the God who created you."

For decades after, whenever he narrated this event, friends and relatives would interrupt him with the question: "Tell us Augustine, how was God's voice? How exactly does He speak to human beings? Did he speak to you in English or Kannada?"

Augustine would answer them simply. He never ever tried to lower the tenor of his tone to accommodate public perception of God's voice which is usually to make it

sound like the voice of an old man, very deep and slow, almost incoherent. His answer would be: "Then and after that, I heard that voice often, directing me and leading me so I can describe it to you very clearly. God speaks in a still small voice - it is the voice of a Spirit God speaking to our spirit man. The Voice was audible within me, it was clear and unmistakably God. There was nothing unusual about it. It was the voice of the human spirit, and because of my emotional condition right then which was very anti-God, I knew without a shred of doubt that it was not just mind activity or my imagination. I knew **Someone** – *someone other than me* - had said something to me. And the words themselves *were love*"

The Voice, he clarified, was very different from the other internal voices that can interfere with our ability to hear divine guidance – the voices of our parents grandparents, peers, therapists, significant others, religion, society, as well as our emotions such as fear, guilt, pain, helplessness, despair. God's Voice, he explained, doesn't need to be loud, terrifying or overwhelming; many people miss it because they are looking for an awesome voice with modern-day sound effects applied!

Once on a train, Augustine was confronted by a Hindu man with the question: "Have you seen God?" Augustine replied: "God is a spirit. We can not see Him with our physical eyes. I can see Him with my spiritual eyes and I worship Him in Spirit and in truth."

But those who had similarly come to be acquainted with the way God uses to speak to us knew what he was talking about. One young listener testifies, "There were times, especially when I was young in faith, in the fellowship where people were given opportunities to say what God said in their heart; I was naïve and shy and there were times when God told me something very clearly but I did not talk. Do you know what happened then? God raised someone else who said exactly what God wanted me to say. Of course I felt disappointed and guilty that 'I disobeyed God' but the reality is, God was not angry with me, I was just learning. I became more confident with time but "never too bold".

The greatest evidence of the still small Voice, according to Augustine, is the kind of conversation that follows.

Earlier in this passage we have learnt the raging, tumultuous and bitter words that were being spewed out of Augustine's soul.

But after he heard God say, "Augustine, my son, I love you and care for you. I am the God who created you" all negative feeling was obliterated from him in a split second; this is something not humanly possible. He responded to the Voice with wonderment, "Yes, Lord, I know you love me. I know you loved the world so much that You gave Your only Son so that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Again, this confirmation of the heart of the gospel to one's own heart simply cannot happen without supernatural intervention.

The voice continued: "You are my precious child. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I took the punishment for your sins and failures, even died for you so that you may live. I am the Saviour of the world. I died, was buried and rose again. I am the

resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Augustine, I have come that you may have life and have it to the full. You will be blessed to be a blessing."

In Job 26 : 6 -14 , In V 4 Job says , "These are but the outer fringes of His works. How faint the whisper we hear of Him? Who then can understand the thunder of His power?"

"I was always there..."

*A*ugustine flashed-back to his formative years.

It was a 'secular school' and he recalled his moral science teacher (who had probably been a Christian) narrating stories of the Bible. He remembered the story of the crucifixion of Jesus and how his teacher had explained the great love of Jesus and how He had given his life for the ones he loved. The teacher used to call out their names individually: "Augustine... Vijayanath ... Shekar ... Manunath...Daniel ... Mamta ... Joyce ... Vasanthi, Sophia ... *each one* of you is precious to God."

The Hindu boys had jeered and mocked at him and other Christians, but nevertheless the words of the Moral Science teacher had left their indelible mark and impression on Augustine's life.

He also remembered his mother - on her knees praying for him; in his room, near his bed when he was seven years old. He could feel her hands on his head anointing and blessing him. He could hear her gentle, sweet and melodious voice saying, "Son, I want you to be a servant of the Lord Jesus." At that time, he kept quiet out of respect and due to not knowing what to say. Now he understood.

His father's booming voice during their daily morning devotions, replayed itself, full volume: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God , you will not despise. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."

Augustine moved away from the rock and fell prostrate on the ground. He wept uncontrollably, repeating again and again, "Wash me, Lord, cleanse me..."

When the storm of weeping passed, he got onto his knees and prayed: "Lord, I am weak. I am unworthy and I am sinful. I acknowledge that You are Almighty and powerful. Just as I am, I come to your presence and offer my life into Your hands. I acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God who suffered and died for me and rose from the dead conquering sin and death. Mould me, make me and use me. Please forgive me and accept me as your son and into Your Kingdom."

In that very instant, Augustine's burden and the load on his soul and emotions seemed to fall away. He stood up and was at first quite startled - his feet which always felt weak and uncertain of the next step had acquired a strange strength he had never experienced before.

He knew he was Augustine. Yet he felt like a complete stranger to the Augustine he had once been.

Something had changed.

The Interpreter...

Slowly, he started to walk ...

He had no idea where he was to go; he simply followed where his feet led him. At some point, he found himself approaching the bungalow of the German missionary, Rev. Arnold Weissman.

Rev Weissman, from Basel, in Switzerland had come to Udupi along with another German Missionary in 1934; these Godly men had come to bless the people in Udupi and surrounding areas by sharing the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They knew the Bible from cover to cover and were an inspiration because they practiced what they preached. They were prayer warriors and the local people – non-Christians included – considered them prophets. During their time, revival broke out in several churches.

What followed was rather strange. When Augustine arrived at the bungalow, the door opened and it appeared as though the Missionary was expecting him! It seemed God had woken up this humble servant in the middle of the night and led him to pray for Augustine Salins! He had gone through hours of spiritual battle for Augustine's soul. As he welcomed Augustine, Rev Weissman was swaying from side to side. "I can see that you have been swaying and struggling between the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God" he said. His warmth and gracious approach put Augustine at ease.

After a short silence, Rev Weissman confronted Augustine, with a rather unexpected question: "Son, have you ever committed adultery?"

Proudly, Augustine replied: "Of course not."

"What about murder?"

Augustine was flabbergasted: "Certainly not," he said.

"Have you ever stolen?"

"No"

The missionary smiled. "You must be an angel then"

They both laughed.

Augustine proceeded to explain to him that he came from a religious home and that he had been brought up in the fear of God. He assured the missionary that he had had no opportunities to commit the sins that had been listed.

It was at this point that Rev Weissman opened a Bible that lay on the table in front of him. He read from the fifth chapter of Mathew. Jesus says "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago: 'Do not murder' and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Anyone who says to his brother 'Raca' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. Anyone who says, you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell.' V 5: 27 'You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'"

The Missionary then – with a simple clarity - explained the plan of salvation to Augustine.

"My son, you could have lost your life tonight, you were in such grave danger. It is by grace you have been saved , through faith, and this not of yourself - it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast. Never forget, it is not you who saved yourself because of high thoughts; nor did God save you because of anything good or great in you. It is by grace alone that the Lord grabbed you from the jaws of death which were dragging you to the point of no return."

Augustine could only smile tremulously as the Rev. continued: "All who received Him, those who believed in his name - he gave the right to become the children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husbands will, but born of God."

For some reason, the missionary also told him the story of Zacchaeus: "Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, became wealthy by exploiting the people. His lifestyle reflected and earned him the name 'sinner' from a rancorous crowd. By throwing his power around, he would secure anything and everything through intimidation and force until his greed was satisfied. But one day, Zacchaeus was hid behind a Sycamore tree. He wanted to see Jesus who was passing by. Power and position had not been able to satisfy the emptiness and loneliness in his life. Prosperity and properties could not quiet the turmoil in his soul. Parties, pantomimes and parades could not pacify his conscience any more. The unquenchable hunger and thirst deep inside his heart and soul were daunting, disturbing and driving him mad! In that anxious and desperate moment, he heard his name called.

"Just beneath him, stood Jesus - the sinless Son of God, the one who came to seek and save the lost. It appeared he even knew Zacchaeus by name! Then there was the call and the promise. "Come down immediately, I must stay at your house today." Zacchaeus looked down and Jesus looked up. The love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness wrapped around that gaze of Jesus and

the call and promise to a sinner, a social outcast and a scum of society... melted the stony hard and callous heart of Zacchaeus. "At once, Zacchaeus came down and welcomed Jesus gladly." (2 Corinthians 5:17 "If anyone is in Christ , he is a new creation.")

"Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today, salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost."

Mandatory change...

*T*he Missionary had much to say.

He explained to Augustine that restitution has to follow repentance as a result of a radical change. The selfish man becomes a selfless man. The greedy man becomes a generous man; the thieving man becomes a thankful and honest man. It is the work of "Christ in you, the Hope of glory." When Christ comes into our lives, he transforms us from within and our lifestyle changes to one which is pleasing to the Lord.

Our speech, the music we play, the shows we watch, the books we read, the games we play comes under the control of our Saviour, Master and Lord. We die to the world and its approval, we say goodbye to our plans, our preferences, our will, our fleshly desires, even to the approval or blame of our brethren and friends. Our one desire is to show ourselves approved unto Jesus - the Lord of life.

Rev Weismann narrated his own testimony to Augustine. He was a son of a Pastor in Basel, Switzerland. He had been nurtured in the household of faith . He was also set apart for the service of the Lord - to study Theology and become a Pastor. At the age of thirty, there was great turmoil in his heart. Peace eluded him and depression was hovering round him like a mist. He did not want to preach what he did not believe in. He did not have the assurance of eternal life. A physical infirmity bothered him and this only made his pathetic spiritual condition worse.

Still, during these hard times, his sister persisted in prayer for him. She begged him to attend Dr. Bloomhart's Spiritual life centre in Moetingen, South Germany. It was there, that his eyes were opened and taking a step of faith he committed his life to the Lord.

In John 5:24, Jesus says: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life" These powerful words further strengthened and reinforced the assurance of salvation in Augustine's soul.

The Missionary and Augustine knelt down and prayed. Tears of repentance were followed by tears of joy as the peace and joy which passes all understanding filled Augustine's heart.

"Do you want to receive Jesus in your life as Lord and Saviour?" Rev. Weissman asked him.

Augustine just wept.

It was at this point that Augustine made a commitment to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and serve him all the days of his life. He experienced God's loving-kindness and grace – His loyal, steadfast, unconditional love based on His mercy and faithfulness – a voluntary act of extraordinary mercy and generosity in choosing the most unusual, unsuitable, weak, frail, sinful man even as he heard His Lord whisper ' "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." '2 Corinthians 12: 9. This was to become his life verse.

"What shall we do with Augustine? He is useless."

Now both Augustine and his father were going to see how God uses the "useless".

CHAPTER TWO

CHILD OF THE KING WELCOMED INTO MAHARAJA COLLEGE

Augustine? Could this really be Augustine? She had always seen her son slightly hunched up, looking downward rarely allowing eye contact with another person. The young man who was walking towards her now looked straight, tall and towering, his eyes were like shining stars, and he blazed with a radiance that filled his mother with awe and curiosity.

Augustine's whole hearted commitment to Christ meant that he had to completely give up visiting the cinema theatre; and ... he did! In those days and in the community they lived in, going to the cinema would have been a bad witness, and it was important, above all, to be a light. Augustine Salins discovers that commitment to Christ comes with both, cost and consequence.

*P*resumption can sometimes be the greatest shortcoming of a biographer.

There is a tendency to assume that because a scenario with all its ramifications is clear and precise in the writer's mind scape, everyone else is going to understand what happened without it being properly explained. Lest it be by-passed as spiritual mumbo-jumbo, and so that you may correctly comprehend the reason for the complete turnaround in my father's life and personality; also for the benefit of 'un-awakened Christians' or those who may have never heard of or understood the Gospel, I would like to explain in coherent everyday terms what happened to him on that fateful night.

Augustine Salins was "born again".

In case even those words (because of the numerous misdemeanours that have been credited to them) come with excess baggage, then we will not use them. Let me simply say my father had an encounter with God – the same kind which men like Sadhu Sundar Singhⁱ and Dr. Bamin Tadaⁱⁱ (they were not even Christians, nor were they in a church when God met directly with them) had, which drew them to Christ. Whatever had happened before, was wiped out as if it had never happened; he was given the divine opportunity to start afresh.

Let us take a small detour.

For a few moments, forget about Augustine. Think about yourself. By your very birth, you became the victim of a situation you had no control over. It does not matter that you had no choice about it or say in the matter. The situation is that you were born into the sinful human race wherein all of us are born; there are no exceptions, not the most elevated royal nor the lowest beggar. All are sinful and by nature fall short of the "glory of God", the image in which he created us because He wanted us to be like Him. The Bible informs us that our original parents, Adam and Eve, made a choice to disobey God and listen to Satan; that's how they bestowed on every human being born ever after, the legacy of sinfulness and disobedience.

If you are frowning, I can understand that, because this does not sound fair. But you have probably already experienced enough of life to learn that fairness just does not come with the package.

You had no say about where you were born or who your parents would be, but that still affected many things in your life, in some ways positively, in many others negatively. So if you had no choice about your birth, and feel trapped in many conditions because of it, and desire the opportunity to start over without any genetic scars or stars – that is what Jesus offers a human being, but his condition is recorded in the Gospel of John 3:7. "You must be born again to enter the kingdom of God." It means a fresh start, a new citizenship in the kingdom, an adoption as God's child with all the rights and privileges, and you will receive your part of the inheritance of everything God has. You now have the opportunity to be born again into a royal family! It is here that God initiates a new beginning, a new promise (covenant), a new name, a new life, a new creation, a new calling to set out on a new pilgrimage based on Faith.

*I*n the same paragraph of the Gospel referred to above ...

Nicodemus who probably was fairly old by then, asks Jesus a very sensible question, "How can a man be born again if he is old; does he have to enter his mother's womb and be born a second time?"

Jesus patient response to him was, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit." Translated, what Jesus said was that we are born of the flesh through biological parents; but when we accept him (Jesus) as Lord and Saviour, and our spirit comes alive, the Holy Spirit reveals to us our new identity as children of God who have been saved. Salvation is the process by which a person (through no effort of his own but through the grace of God) is gloriously transformed from being a child of disobedience into a child of God.

My father had done nothing to earn the grace God poured upon him that night; the previous chapter has shared with you how he was deriding his fate and faith and was more or less ready to throw in the towel. The prince of the power of the air (Satan) was standing by gleefully to draw him to the point of no return, when my father would have consigned himself to eternal damnation.

God intervened at that point and spoke to him through his inner man.

Augustine could have chosen to reject God's offer. God offers his elect opportunities to redeem themselves. He then leaves them with the free will to accept or spurn his offer. My father in his weakened faith and state still had the choice to turn his back on God. Instead, he opened his heart to the Lord, repented of his sins and became a slave to holiness and righteousness from that minute onward since the obstacle between him and God was removed.

Let's come back to that sinful condition you and I are born into. Our original parents, in the age of innocence, before they sinned, walked and talked with God. After their disobedience which led to the Fall, since God cannot be where sin is, they lost the connection with Him. We are born with the same handicap and unfortunately, that places a barrier between us and God. We cannot reach him on our own no matter how hard we try. Bail has to be paid to free a person from jail, otherwise that's where he remains. The same logic applies to the spiritual imprisonment into which we are born. That's why the Good News of Jesus Christ is so important. God took the initiative for us. Sin brings death; suicide which my father contemplated that night, would have brought him death and eternal separation from God.

This law of sin and death is as real as the law of gravity. If God wanted to spare this painful separation from the human race he had launched, he would have had to rewrite creation itself and change all the rules, something His fair and just nature would not allow Him to do.

What God could do, and did do, was to trap Satan in his own net. The devil, as he is also called, thought he had won after Adam and Eve fell since after that people had to die because of sin. He thought he had won again when he influenced those who led Jesus to being killed on the cross. He did not realize that he had been 'set up'; Jesus' death was not a miscalculation on God's part. Jesus came from heaven to earth to die for every sinner, to pay the 'bail' so to say, to give each one of us an opportunity to return to a relationship with God. When we accept Jesus as Saviour, we reconnect with God.

That was not the end of the story. God raised Jesus from the dead to demonstrate that he had conquered death; so that we too need never fear death. Whatever happened to Jesus (that's why he called himself "The Way the Truth and the Life), will happen to those who believe in Him. His resurrection is not just a biblical but a historical fact (check to all the non-Christian historical channels you may have access to). So even if we undergo an earthly death, we can with full assurance anticipate rising again when at the Second Coming, Jesus comes to take us with him to the place he is preparing for us, just as an excited bridegroom prepares a place for the woman he loves who will soon be his bride.

Over the centuries, there has been a lot of religion attached to Christianity, and a lot of harm been done to innocent persons in its name.

My purpose in this book is for you to better understand what the Gospel really is. Even if you choose to look at Christianity as a religion, do not miss out its unique

significance and difference. Among all religions, Christianity alone is based on God reaching out to mankind. It is about people having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

God reached out to my father that night, it was not the other way around.

After that, Augustine Salins could not get enough of God.

Being insatiable for the Word of God, he wanted to sit at Rev Weissman's feet for hours that day; but he knew, he had something to attend to without further delay.

Sanjeevi Salins was seated at the dining table.

She was drinking a second cup of tea rubbing her hands together in anxiety. The rest of the family had left for the day; there had been no sign of Augustine. When she went to wake him up, she found him missing. She had presumed he had gone for a morning walk and would return soon but that had not happened. Still sore with his son, Lazarus merely grunted when she informed him that Augustine was not around. Her maternal heart was restless as her mind started to imagine the worst.

Through the years, she knew instinctively that he struggled a lot because of his inability to keep up with his more vibrant and intelligent siblings; it was not his fault; he had been born frail and was constantly prone to illness which tended to slow down any progress he wanted to make. To add to the problem, he was ultra sensitive; if anyone made remarks about his 'trailing' tendencies, he would turn silent and be withdrawn for days. He was never aggressive or outspoken, and that made the internal agony greater. For the first time in years, she had seen him happy and enthusiastic as he set out each day for his art classes. He was aware of how much it had cost his father to be able to enroll him there. He had told her he had fared very well in the exams; no wonder he had looked so devastated when he returned home the day before to tell them he had failed.

A horrible thought struck her – what if Augustine had overheard his parents conversation about him the night before? What if it had crushed his spirit and he had decided to take his—

Her thoughts were interrupted by a sound at the gate. She ran to the front door and – sure enough, there was Augustine walking up the front path.

Augustine? Could this really be Augustine? She had always seen her son slightly hunched up, looking downward rarely allowing eye contact with another person. The young man who was walking towards her now looked straight, tall and towering, his eyes were like shining stars, and he blazed with a radiance that filled the mother with awe and curiosity.

"Where have you been, *Adara*ⁱⁱⁱ?" she asked reproachfully, "do you know how worried

we have been about you? Why did you go out without informing, you know how angry that makes *Taandhe*^v?"

Augustine simply hugged her without speaking. Over breakfast and a cup of tea, he proceeded to narrate everything that had happened from the moment he had heard his father talk about him. He had no accusation against Lazarus: "Tāyi^v, Amma it was not just Taandhe, Appa -I felt the same about myself; I hated myself for being born and being such a burden to all of you."

Without leaving out anything, he told her how he left the house and walked till he reached the rock; the desolation, self-hatred and then the Lord's intervention. When he came to the part of how the Spirit led him to Rev Weissman's bungalow, and all that had taken place there, Sanjeevi could control herself no longer. She began to cry copiously, punctuating the sobs with frequent exclamations of "Dēvaru dhan'yavāda^{vi}! Devarighe Sthothra"

How much she had waited for this day – she had always prayed that her children should commit their lives to Jesus Christ. In a family as large as theirs was, it used to be almost impossible to gauge where each child was at spiritually. Sometimes, they had to be dragged to the family devotion time, mostly because they wanted to continue sleeping. When she would tell her husband, "*Pṛīṭisuva nanna pati*^{vii}", Why force them to come if they don't want to? In any case, what will children this age understand about words like 'salvation' or 'redemption'?" – he would explain to her gently why it was necessary to have the morning prayer time: "A family that prays together will stay together. Whether they understand things in totality or not, they should at least imbibe it even if they do not understand the meaning of the big words; later in life, when and if the occasion presents itself, there will be the benefit of the words being summoned from their mental cupboards and the meaning will be felt more poignantly."

It had happened just as Lazarus had said. The occasion presented itself to Augustine at a crucial crossroad and the words 'salvation' and 'redemption' that were part of hymns and choruses he had sung from the time he was in playschool, now jumped into the floodlight of full understanding in her adult child.

She wondered if any woman in the world could have experienced the unmitigated joy that filled her entire being that day. All that she ever wanted for her children was that each should know God and walk in his ways.

In the days that followed, Augustine's actions surprised him as well as everyone around him:

He remembered a certain shopkeeper who had returned him his change after a purchase. When Augustine counted it, it turned out there were many extra coins than what were actually owed to him. He quickly pocketed the money, and silently walked away. Now, with the Holy Spirit sweeping clean his soul, Augustine lost no time in procuring the money and returning it to the shopkeeper.

In another incident, he recalled how he had said some rather mean things to an unsuspecting classmate. He could still remember the look of shocked disbelief on his friend's face; however, the latter said nothing; he simply walked away with a hurt look

and avoided Augustine after that. Augustine sought him and begged for his forgiveness. There were many such loose ends of the past that the Lord made him set right. In addition, without anyone saying anything to him, and only because of the voice of instruction from his inner man, he became aware that even his love for music and attraction to the cinema had to come under the control of the Holy Spirit. There was no debate within his soul; he knew that for the rest of his life, God had to come first and all other idols had to be destroyed.

He read many inspirational books and bathed his spirit daily with the Word of God.

In Judges 17, he read about what happened to Samson when he lost sight of his God-given goal. Samson had forgot what God's purpose for his life had been. Look at what happened to him! There are few sadder scenes than the one in which Samson is blinded and tortured.

The places to which we go, the kind of language we use, the friendships we make and embrace, the movies and the shows we watch, the kind of books we read, the thoughts we entertain and rehearse in our minds – all these must be aligned with the purpose to which God has called each and every one of us. We cannot lead parallel lives and if we imagine we can successfully do it, we are only fooling ourselves, not God who can see deep into our most closely-guarded secret sins.

He loved the way Susanna Wesley put it: "Whatever weakens your reasoning, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God or takes away your relish for spiritual things ... to you, it becomes sin - however good it is in itself."

Our priorities shape our destiny. James 4: 3 informs us bluntly, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

Esau had sought instant gratification and lost his birth right. Hebrews 12:16 & 17 "Afterwards when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears."

Augustine's whole hearted commitment to Christ meant that he had to completely give up visiting the cinema theatre; and he did. It had provided an escape from what had been the desolate reality of his life. The hours given to seeing films were now given to choir practices in his Church and during which he immersed himself completely in the indescribable joy of worship and praise. Prayer became his focus and the more he studied the Bible, every blood cell in his body came alive to what God was conveying through His Word. A passionate love for the Word of God enabled him to spend many hours in genuine meditation.

The ones most impacted by the change in Augustine were the members of his family. His attitude towards his mother, father and siblings changed. He began to respect honour and love them unconditionally. He asked forgiveness from his parents for the indifferent and rebellious attitude he'd harboured toward them in his heart in the past. To start with, his brothers would tease him; when his love and patience

endured, they realized that whatever had come into Augustine had come to stay, and they too began to desire what he obviously possessed.

God does not care only about the individual. God saves families.

Fruit of Obedience...

*I*t was not long before Augustine received the good news.

He had got admission into Maharaja's college of Arts in Trivandrum. It was to be his first venture away from home. The night after the cable was received, Augustine lay awake, tossing and turning on his bed. Was this God's will for him? Was he fleeing from God like Jonah? How could he be sure he was following God's guidance?

On closer analysis, we see that Jonah was not given any options! God gave him specific instructions saying: "Go, and preach against Nineveh" The city of Nineveh was founded by Nimrod – a wicked city located on the Tigris river (modern day Iraq). The wickedness of Nineveh is mentioned in Nahum 3:1- 4.

As the story goes, the ship was right there waiting for Jonah. He must have been pleased with his luck. But little did he know that a storm was waiting!

How easy it is for Christians to take a short cut or opt for an easier route. At times, it appears that fleeing from God rather than following God is the more attractive option. Even today, many Christians are en route a metaphorical Tarshish on what they imagine is a vacation cruise. Suddenly they find themselves in a far away country spending time and money on themselves rather than seeking to please God and do His will in their lives. Indeed, how easy it is to be led away from God's plan and purpose for our lives.

The following illustration from one of Max Lucaco's books comes to mind:

A Christian woman was on a flight reading her Bible. The passenger next to her said, 'You really don't believe all that stuff in there do you?'

The woman responded , "Of course I do. It is the Word of God."

The man said, ' Well, what about that guy who was swallowed by the whale?'

She replied, "Oh, you are talking about Jonah. I believe the story. It is in the Bible."

The man asked, 'How could Jonah have survived three days and three nights inside the fish?'

The woman said, "Well, I really don't know. I guess, when I get to Heaven, I will ask him."

The man responded, 'What if Jonah isn't in Heaven?'

The woman laughed to herself and said, "Then, you can ask him!"

As Campbell Morgan says, "Men have been looking so intently at the great fish, they have failed to see the Great God." Jonah repented and returned to Nineveh with the shortest eight word message! "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." In the end, 120,000 people turned to the Lord and were saved because one man obeyed God's voice and God's word.

Jonah 4:2 - Jonah's prayer – "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity." V 11: God says "Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

As for Augustine, a new dawn was beginning and with the light of daybreak came the affirmation from the inner voice that this was the Will of God; he made the decision to go to Trivandrum to study Arts. He had been given the peace and confirmation that it was right for him to complete what he had started. He decided, very wisely, to take one step at a time believing that God's plan and purpose would be made clear along the way.

The thought of travelling by train was both exhilarating and worrying. The journey was long and involved two stops! Once in the carriage however, he looked out the window, watching the world go by and he felt a great peace. The beauty of the evergreen rice fields, the delicately fronded palms and the splendid splashes of colour captivated him. At the second stop, heart beating with excitement, he stepped down into the throbbing heat of the station platform. He scanned the crowd and found no familiar figure. People, people, people! They were everywhere - walking, standing, leaning, sitting, squatting and lying. He had never seen such an ocean of humanity.

He enquired about the connecting train to Trivandrum. No one seemed to know about it. Disappointment gave way to anxiety and he began to panic. He had not planned on being stranded in a strange place where the people spoke an entirely (to him) foreign language! He paced up and down the platform silently praying "Help, Lord, your child is in trouble here..."

The train guard vigorously waved the green flag and the engine let out a shrill, high pitched whistle signalling impending departure. As Augustine looked on in alarm, a young man clad in white approached him and asked: "May I help you? You look a little lost ..."

Even as Augustine was explaining his difficulties, the train started to move. Fortunately, the man helped Augustine get on the train with his luggage and the pair managed to find two rather comfortable seats. As ever, Augustine took it as an opportunity to share the gospel with this Hindu gentleman. When they reached Madurai, both of them got off together. The connecting train was in the evening.

After treating him to a sumptuous meal, the stranger took Augustine all around Madurai and showed him the highlights of the city. Having made sure that Augustine was on the right train going to Trivandrum, they said their goodbyes.

Augustine was overwhelmed with thanks and gratitude for God's loving care. What a Great God! He knew that God would lead him every step of the way in this pilgrimage of Faith - even if it took a complete stranger to do so!

"The Lord is my Shepherd. I have everything I need. Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Augustine praised God with the words of the Psalmist and was soon sleeping peacefully in the Trivandrum-bound train.

He had learnt another important truth about the walk with God. Once one makes the decision to follow Christ, one is never alone. The Spirit of the Lord goes before us broadening the path beneath our feet, and ensuring that the foot will not strike a stone or be injured in any way.

THE FIRST REAL GLIMPSE OF HIS 'MISSION FIELD'...

*T*oday, the city is called Thiruvananthapuram.

At that time, it was Trivandrum, a peaceful attractive city built across seven hills, with old quarter clusters around the 'Tiru Ananta Puram' temple, the abode of the 'sacred serpent' serpent Ananta whose coils lie in the main temple.

It is an incredibly beautiful city, and all along the busy Mahatma Gandhi Road are colonial mansions and churches, red tiled roofs, narrow winding lanes and intimate corner cafes. The town enjoyed the reputation of supporting fine art and culture. The kings of Tiruvancore (Thirunals as they are known) not only promoted art but themselves became accomplished artists, the most famous of them was Swathi Thirunal, who is a well known composer in both Karnatak and Hindustani systems of music, and Raja Ravi Varma the internationally acclaimed painter, known for inventing paints using natural materials.

Augustine was fascinated with the place, and kept whispering to the Lord his impressions of buildings and people he came across. He got accommodation at the Syrian Christian Hostel and attended the Maharaja College of Arts. He was in a new place, a new state, and was surrounded by people who spoke their local language, Malayalam. It sounded terribly odd to him, but his colleagues insisted that this was the language of heaven!

Majority of the students at the college appeared to be Hindus. Augustine had a fair knowledge of Hinduism. It was one of the oldest of the world's living religions and not only included the worship of nature, brought into India by the Aryan Conquerors but also the religious beliefs of the Dravidian people who had occupied the Country before Aryan Invasion. Augustine was bewildered by the Hindu philosophy, shocked by its superstition, but intrigued by its colour and pageantry.

Not far from his hostel there was a shrine containing a host of gods and goddesses – to each was ascribed a unique purpose linked to prosperity, health and deliverance from some dreaded disease or misfortune. One morning, on his way to the college, he noticed the high caste Hindus – the lawyers, teachers, businessmen - prostrating themselves with deep devotion. In the evenings, the gods and goddesses were engulfed in lavish offerings of gold, silver and money, and wore expensive garlands!

The educated minority understood and followed some school of philosophy. There was *Karma* - the inexorable and unrelenting justice by which a man's action in one life determined his fate in the next. Then there was *Dharma* - the obligation and duty of man to follow the prescribed rules and traditions of the caste he was born in. Furthermore, he discovered that some Hindus worshipped something that resembled the trinity: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer.

In Trivandrum, *the pujaris* and priests were mostly sincere and genuinely devout as well as men of extreme power.

On their part, illiterate villagers clung to baseless superstitions and old traditions. All through the day there would be a line of simple people paying homage to a tiny deity placed under a 'holy' tree. Almost every house had a '*puja* room' in which the idols were placed, and a sacred Tulsi plant on a pedestal swayed about happily in the garden.

Until this point, Augustine had lived in a protected Christian 'green house'. For the first time in Trivandrum he got a glimpse of the real India. Disparities existed side-by-side - opulent wealth and appalling poverty. There were those who were very kind toward stray dogs, but mercilessly ill-treated their servants. There were also those that still practised the horrific tradition of Sati (throwing a new widow in flames of her dead husband as he was being cremated) yet claimed to love their daughters. Corruption was rampant and rearing its head on all sides. People cheating one another and bribing and stealing was to many, simply the norm.

As self-righteous citizens, claiming to be a nation rich in spiritual heritage, many Indians would condemn violations such as bribery and corruption. Yet –the very same people would defend their own infringements and misdemeanours as 'the only choice' forced upon them by a corrupt and immoral society! A subtle destructive force indeed!

The increasing - so called -'religiosity' in the country appeared to point to a definite and growing spiritual hunger and thirst among the people.

People wanted the truth and simply did not know where it could be found..

*A*ugustine wandered the narrow streets and lanes.

They teemed with picturesque life unhappily punctuated with dirt, disease and poverty. The crowded bazaars displayed more wares than you could have ever seen before, among them gleaming brass vessels, flamboyant textiles and marigold and

jasmine garlands. Looking around at the swarming crowds going about their daily business, he reflected: 'Dear Lord, I cannot see any who truly care! There are few who have a genuine burden for anything apart from his or her own needs. There are very few who shed tears for anyone other than themselves.'

As he searched his own heart in the light of the Word of God, the picture of a restless, wandering people became brighter and brighter. Indeed, the clarity was soon blinding. Before long, everything that Augustine saw was seeing in a celestial light - through the very eyes of God and it was when this happened that God's compassion and love grew even more in his heart.

The all-consuming burden to win lost souls for Christ became so acute that it hurt. He had asked for the 'eyes of Jesus' and they were given to him. He saw people around him who like a mad cow running towards an approaching train, were heading towards eternal death. They were like sheep who had gone astray, and were blinded and bound by Satan. He would spend hours on his knees in desperate prayer - crying out to God for the salvation of the lost, in the words of W. Gardiner-Hunter:

*Dear Lord, I ask for the eyes to see,
Deep down to the world's sore need,
I ask for a love that holds not back,
But pours out itself indeed.
I want the passionate power of prayer,
That yearns for the great crowd's soul,
I want to go 'mong the fainting sheep,
And tell them my Lord makes whole.
Let me look at the crowd as my Saviour did
Till my eyes with tears grow dim,
Let me look till I pity the wandering sheep,
And love them for love of Him.*

This burden led Augustine to discern God's purpose for his life and he embraced it whole heartedly. Such yearning comes from a deep pain in the awareness that the people around you are going to eternal damnation without Christ. The thirst for evangelism can only flow from such a conviction as it did in so many lives:

Evangelism was the heart cry of John Knox who famously prayed: "Give me Scotland or I die."

Evangelism was the desperate cry of Jesus as he wept – anguished - over Jerusalem, the doomed city.

It was cry of Apostle Paul when he wrote Romans 9: 3 "I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel."

Evangelism was the heart wrenching plea of Moses when he cried out to God, "Forgive their sin. If not, block me, I pray Thee, out of the book which you have written."

John Wesley's heartfelt passion for Evangelism was reflected in the words: "The world is my parish."

Yet, evangelism can also be a paradox. Consider these words of the Lord Jesus Christ:

"He who saves his life will lose it, but one who loses his life will save it."

Or Henry Martin who said "let me burn out for God"

The question many want to know is how Augustine acquired such a driving passion and desire to "burn out" for God.

How can this happen in our own lives?

Note in the gospels that the disciples left all and obeyed and followed Jesus. Obedience therefore, is the spark that lights the fire of passion. Take a step of faith in obedience to God's voice and His word today.

Dr Courtland Meyers in his book, 'How do we know?' writes of Robert Murray Mcshane, one of Scotland's greatest preachers who died at the age of 29. Everywhere Robert Mcshane stepped Scotland shook. Whenever he opened his mouth, a spiritual force swept in every direction. Thousands of people followed his leading to the feet of Christ .

A traveler eager to see where Mcshane had preached went to the Scottish town and found the old Church. An old grey haired janitor agreed to take him around. He led the way to Mcshane's study. The Janitor ordered him to sit in a chair. The traveller hesitated a moment and then sat. On the table before him was an open Bible. "Now, drop your head in that book and weep" said the old man "for that's what our Minister did before he preached". He then led the visitor to the pulpit before another open Bible. "Stand there" he said "and drop your head into your hands letting the tears flow. That's what our Minister always did before he began to preach!"

And so Meyer says "With such passion for souls lost and needy, is it any wonder that the Holy Spirit gave Mcshane a magnetic personality and the message to draw thousands to the Saviour?"

Praying for the lost requires a burden for them. You must have a passion for their salvation. This truth is illustrated in Romans 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." Paul states that his heart's desire was to see Israel saved. He longed for the Jewish people to turn to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. He yearned for them to turn from their self-righteousness to Jesus and Jesus alone. This was his heart's desire.

Augustine yearned for Indians to be saved. He yearned for them to turn from the myths and contradictions of their traditional beliefs to the simplicity and truth of Jesus and Jesus alone.

Every time he prayed for the nation, he found himself crying aloud. He could not stop himself; for hours on end, he implored and pleaded for the Lord to be merciful and compassionate.

The weeping prophet had come to stay.

CHAPTER THREE

“YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER...” –AND HE DID!

It was plain to see that all that had attended were touched – many were in tears. Augustine was overjoyed and humbled at what the almighty God had achieved through his weakness. The Professor stood in awe at the emotional and spiritual response of the congregation. God was greatly glorified that day!

In retrospect, God’s carefully woven tapestry of a new ministry can be clearly seen. However, at the time of divine sewing and weaving, there is a long process of seeking, listening, tailoring to fit, imbibing and identification as God slowly, almost imperceptibly leads his chosen ones down the path of discovering.

It called for several seasons of prayer, God-appointed mentors, much counsel and incredible incidences where the presence and guiding hand of the Lord was unmistakable.

Prophecies were made, and they carried Augustine along on the wings of a dove toward his chosen destiny.

*W*hen God appoints, He also anoints.

That is why there is no such thing as an “average” Christian who simply goes through the motions of serving God. God has made every believer fearfully and wonderfully; perfectly created for “greatness.”

“You stoop down to make me great.” “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.” (Psalm 23:5)

From the moment he give his life to God through Jesus, my father became a minister of the Gospel; he understood ministry was not just about being a pastor, evangelist, prophet etc, but allowing God to use a person whenever and wherever **He** chose to do so. Augustine also discovered that God will always equip us to carry out His will - He never calls us without equipping us. Initially when he got the vision to become an evangelist in India, he wondered how it could be accomplished since he did not have the necessary skills or training to even get started. But he discovered that as he took small steps of obedience towards doing it, God began to equip and empower him, to accomplish what was pleasing in His sight. He placed godly men who helped in re-moulding and shaping Augustine’s life.

That first message...

HH Maharaja’s College of Arts is an offshoot of His Highness Maharaja’s University College, Trivandrum, founded in 1834 during the reign of his highness Swathi

Thirunal Rama Varma, one of the most illustrious rulers of the former State of Travancore, celebrated for his devotion and great contributions to art and culture.

As he went through the paces of his curriculum, Augustine experienced much exhilaration when a Professor Enoch, took him under his wing. They were connected by the Spirit of God and the Professor immediately sensed the Hand of God on this student's life. He mentored Augustine, explained Scripture to him during hours they kept aside for Bible study, and prayed. After every meeting Augustine felt spiritually refreshed, revived and enriched by the Professor's special interest in his life.

The psalmist says in Psalm 133: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity." When people pray with one mind, one spirit and one purpose, they receive the blessing of unity and harmony as described in this psalm. Verse 2 goes on to say "it is like the precious oil poured on the head" – a special anointing, soothing and comforting; verse 3 promises, "It is like the dew" - which refreshes, revives and renews." Verse 3b, "There the Lord bestows his blessing, even life evermore."

One evening, out of the blue, Prof Enoch invited Augustine to speak at a young people's group. Augustine's heart was filled with terror. He could not imagine being able to speak to a large group of people; he was convinced he would not be able to utter a coherent word, that he would make a fool of himself and let the Professor down. To make matters worse, he was told an interpreter would be standing by, to translate all he said into the local language.

On the evening, the room was packed to capacity as youth group meetings usually were. Professor Enoch gave a brief opening message followed by a short prayer. He then called Augustine Salins to the stage to share his life testimony for the glory of God.

Augustine wondered how to move since his legs had turned to jelly. He found that his knees were literally knocking together in fear and that sweat was pouring down his face. As he walked up to the podium, he wondered if he would be able to say a single word, since he could think of nothing to say and all he had memorised seemed to have simply gone out of his head! He felt himself walking in the kind of "slow motion" one only witnessed in movies.

Despite this dramatic seizure of stage fright, he found himself centre-stage, and since he could think of nothing else to say, he prayed a simple opening prayer in a voice that was shaky and embarrassingly unsteady.

By the time he reached the Amen, something amazing happened. His nervousness vanished as the Holy Spirit descended upon him. The anointing of God was so real and in such great measure that he knew without a shadow of a doubt that it was God speaking *through* him. He was a mere instrument – the weakest of all – in God's powerful hands.

As he began to speak, there was pin drop silence in the heated room. Filled with his new found confidence, he began to speak boldly and without hindrance. Together

with the intermittent interpretation of his equally enthusiastic interpreter, he was able to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that many had never heard before.

His words were simple and he narrated his testimony in short sentences. "I was no good. I was a sinner. Oh, a terrible failure" Did he hear a weak "Amen"? As he spoke he began to walk up and down the stage. His words were as loud and clear as a resounding church bell and before long he could hear "Amens" roll out after every sentence he spoke. It was impossible to know for how long he had talked, but finally, exhausted from the effort, he stopped. As he stood in silence before the congregation he found he was trembling and quivering in a state of joy he had never experienced before.

It was plain to see that all that had attended were touched – many were in tears – some crying uncontrollably. Augustine was overjoyed and humbled at what the almighty God had achieved through his weakness. The Professor stood in awe at the emotional and spiritual response of the congregation. God was greatly glorified that day!

Early the next morning, two individuals who had attended the meeting had managed to track Augustine down and came knocking at his door! They had been deeply moved and convicted of sin and desperately wanted to be saved. Both wanted to talk things through and hear more about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That very day, one of them committed himself wholeheartedly to the Lord – although the other one said that he was *not yet* ready. Two days later however, the other came too with a written list of all the sins he had committed and thrust it in front of an amazed Augustine.

He said he had been moved by this Scripture quoted by Augustine the night before. It was the verse from Colossians:

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive in Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross" (2:13-14)

The man explained that he had read it again but could not quite understand what it meant. Augustine explained to him the mystery and the marvellous truth of the Cross of Calvary where his burdens could simply be left. The man knelt down, accepted the Lord, and went back with the joyous assurance that he was indeed a Child of God.

After this first event, word spread and a number of other Churches and Assemblies invited Augustine to share the Word of God. Although he stayed in Trivandrum for a short period of 8 months (with the main focus at the time being his studies), his spiritual life advanced in leaps and bounds. More importantly, God used him greatly during this time to bless many others.

In the sanctuary of the forest...

 Conservator of Forests ...

... is the highest authority at the circle level in the forest department responsible for the administration of forests in several districts. M.O. Oommen, the District Conservator of Forests in Kerala, along with another servant of God remembered as 'dear Mr. Fenn' – (both these men were mature Christians) befriended young Augustine and even invited him for a retreat to Kanyakumari, the southern tip of India, famed for its great natural beauty – from the blue seas of the Kanyakumari town to the blue hills of the Western Ghats in the interior. They say, the forests in Kanyakumari are about 75 million years old and have 14 types in all from the luxuriant tropical wet evergreen to tropical thorn forests. Even a casual look at them is awe-inspiring.

In those breathtaking surroundings, the three servants of God lost count of the precious hours they spent in prayer and meditation. Augustine felt his spirit being bathed tenderly from the inside and he knew from then on, there was no dilly dallying; he would now simply look upward and onward. On the last day, Mr Oommen placed his hands on Augustine's head and said with closed eyes, "Son, you are standing at one end of the world. God is going to make you a witness to all the ends of the earth."

The prophecy did not take very long to come to pass.

 n the bus journey from Kanyakumari to Ernakulum ...

... Augustine - filled with the Spirit - talked zealously about Jesus Christ to the stately looking gentleman sitting next to him. His joy doubled as the listener took in all he said, often punctuating the discussion with curious and intelligent questions. The evangelical endeavour continued as the two men checked into the same hotel for an overnight stay before the next lap of their journey.

It seemed natural that they decided to – after refreshing themselves – meet once again in the dining hall. That's when the surprise unfolded. The gentleman bowed his head to say the "grace" before a meal, and it became evident he himself was an ardent follower of Christ. Augustine's delight was immeasurable, especially when his dining companion smiled and gave him a big hug and introduced himself as P.V. George, the editor of the magazine *Malayalam Manorama*, and also the author of a book titled, *The Unique Christ and the Mystic Gandhi*.

PVG did not allow Augustine to feel abashed or embarrassed; instead he commented on his fervour for the cause of the Gospel and encouraged him to move on with

power and vigour. He presented the budding evangelist with an autographed copy of his book which Augustine cherished.

This was another 'influencing relationship' which the Lord poured into Augustine's spirit to equip him for what lay ahead.

He could feel his spirit bubbling with anticipation as he whispered, "What next, Lord?"

n the International Mission Photography Archives ...

...there is a 'kodak moment' captured by a 'box camera' photographer, clicked in the Panchama School in Puttur-Robaka set up by the Basel Mission in India. The moment recorded for posterity shows faith worker George Soans in the year 1928, surrounded by village children and adults. Soans was the first layman among those missionaries who took a leap in faith and became a full-time worker for the work of the Gospel. He was an itinerant preacher who encountered Augustine and immediately, as if by divine appointment, took on the role of being a spiritual father to him.

Until this point, Augustine had found himself floating on Cloud Nine with the faith that had been bestowed on him. Now, his new mentor introduced him to the discipline of the Christian faith which enables a believer to cultivate character in a life infused in and by Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit and the Fruit; above all, the knowledge of the Word through devotional and quiet time with the Lord. This, he explained to his eager young friend, would be an effective and effectual tool for his Christian formation as well as for his spiritual and relational growth. He also encouraged Augustine to keep a prayer journal and record his insights as well as the revelations he received from God.

From Soans personal collection of books, Augustine also received the biographies of men who had given their all to God, like D L Moody, Billy Sunday, Hudson Taylor, William Carey and others.

He marvelled at how Moody, within a 4-year period won a million souls for Christ, founded three Christian schools, launched a great publishing business, established a world-renowned Christian conference centre, and inspired thousands of preachers to win souls and conduct revivals. Augustine realized that God used Moody so mightily because he was a "fully surrendered man" and every ounce of his two-hundred-and-eighty-pound body belonged wholly to God. Dr R.A Torrey, called Moody, the humblest person he ever knew.

" There are better men coming after me " Moody preached. " The beginning of greatness is to be little, the increase of greatness is to be less, and the perfection of greatness is to be nothing."

Despite realizing how God has turned his own life around, Augustine could not help marvelling at how William Ashley "Billy" Sunday – despite being a popular outfielder in American baseball's National League during the 1802 – abandoned baseball for

Christian ministry. He went on to become the nation's most famous evangelist with colloquial sermons and frenetic delivery; in fact, his speed was his outstanding quality.

Augustine read over and over again what J. Hudson Taylor called the "foundational qualities" imperative for anyone who wants to serve God as a missionary: "Humble men of sound, sterling talents (not necessarily brilliant); quiet, persevering men of decent accomplishments and some natural aptitude to acquire language; men of amiable yielding temper, willing to take the lowest place, to be least of all and the servant of all; men who enjoy much closet religion, who live near to God and are willing to suffer all things for His sake, without being proud of it, these are the men we need to look for. One strong-headed, contentious, obstinate man would ruin us!"

Augustine learnt much from the humility of William Carey. When people referred to him as a 'shoemaker', Carey would correct them and inform that he was a cobbler, one who only *repaired* shoes.

They were not just inspirational books; Augustine felt the Lord was outlining for him the path that he was to tread.

One morning, long before the sun arose out of its slumber, George Soans led Augustine to an area of seclusion up a neighbouring hill. With large leaves from the trees, they made two individual prayer booths and spent the whole day in prayer and meditation. It was the first time Augustine prayed with heart-searing passion for the peoples of his country. He felt their despair, their helplessness as they struggled in the darkness and yearned for the light, and he wept out to a compassionate God to have mercy on them.

At dusk, when the two prayer warriors emerged from their make-shift prayer booths, George shared a revelation he'd had about Udupi becoming a centre for Evangelism which would send out evangelists to opposite corners of the world. Once more, a man of God placed his hands on Augustine and prophesied that Augustine would be used mightily by God in other countries. He spoke especially about Basel in Switzerland where the Basel Mission Church was founded. Augustine listened with incredulity as Soans informed him that God would give him the opportunity to speak to the Swiss people, thereby blessing those who had initially blessed them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

That was when he learnt that God is debtor to no man.

THE BEGINNING OF FULFILLMENT...

Coastal Karnataka is the stronghold of Hindu and Jain pilgrimage spots with Udupi and its many temples being the centre of Dvaita philosophy. Dvaita is the school of

Vedanta founded by Madhvacharya, and stresses a strict distinction between God and individual souls. According to him, the individual beings are not 'created' by God, but depend on Him for their existence. The distinguishing factor of this philosophy as opposed to Advaita Vedanta is that God takes on a personal role and is seen as a real eternal entity that governs and controls the Universe.

Even today, Udupi is the stronghold of Hindu fundamentalists like the BJP. So to have come up with the thought of a Christian Prayer Hall in Udupi was audacious in itself.

The fact of the matter is that the idea of the Prayer Hall was the fruit of united prayer of Augustine and his prayer partners S.T.Clare, Hazeal Kunder and Shanthappa Karkada who were the founder members of the Udupi Prayer Hall.

On Christmas day in the year 1935 twenty-five persons attended the first meeting held at the new Prayer Hall. It signalled the beginning of a powerful spiritual meeting that spread like wildfire right across the districts of South Canara. Open air crusades became the order of the day and door to door visits with Gospel tract distribution were organized in a systematic way.

Of course persecution was never far away. Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha groups often disrupted the open air meetings and used various tactics to draw the crowds away. The resistance caused the crowds to swell in numbers.

Soon, there were regular Sunday evening meetings; Tuesday prayer meetings and a prayer chain collated on Saturdays. Young men and women flocked to the Prayer Hall. The sermons were dynamic, admittedly loud at times and most importantly – very convincing. Augustine, together with his great humility and love for people, was relentless in his attack on sin. Shyness and nervousness were now history; he was fearless and bold in his presentation of the Gospel. During this time, many accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and the 50s and 60s saw the fulfilment of George Soans prophecy that Udupi would be the centre for evangelism and Augustine would be an important part of it.

During the movement, Dr O.V. Jathanna (born and brought up in Udupi who subsequently became the Principal of the United Theological College in Bangalore) was greatly impacted. He writes: "It helped me to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour. One of the characteristics of this movement was its missionary concern – sharing the good news with others. It helped me to see Christianity as a living reality and enabled me to understand it primarily in terms of a personal relationship with the Lord. Though the emphasis on the 'prophetic' and 'social' aspects of the Gospels were not stressed and sometimes even ignored, the teaching given by Mr Salins in particular, or the Prayer Hall in general, was neither extreme nor sectarian. The motto 'Revival in the Church and Evangelism through the Church' (the motto of Ambassadors For Christ, with which Mr Salins was closely associated; later on, he became the organization's Director) is a good example of the 'modus operandi' of this movement and shows the positive way in which it networked the established or mainline churches."

Can anyone reign in the movement of the Holy Spirit?

THE BROADENING OF HORIZONS...

A year of fervent prayer and careful planning resulted in the birth of an Annual Retreat, organised and led by Augustine and his prayer partners at the Prayer Hall. Opportunities from various places began to knock frequently at his door. His passion for souls and the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit over his ministry was evidenced by all.

The Annual Retreat, which lasted between 3 to 5 days, became an important Annual event in the life of the Prayer Hall. Furthermore, Udupi was his birth place. Augustine conducted evangelistic meetings there at least twice a year. The Prayer Hall next to his house was the place where Augustine and a few of his friends wrestled with God in prayer for the salvation of souls. He referred to it as his "powerhouse" where he was endowed with power and strength for his tireless ministry in the service of the Lord. It was here that he knelt down for hours in the presence of the Lord, crying out to God, weeping with an almost tangible longing for the salvation of souls.

Later on, as his vision extended to Karnataka and beyond to the other states of India, Augustine started another Evangelistic retreat in and around the Prayer Hall in Udupi. Approximately 100 to 150 delegates used to attend the retreat from different parts of the state and stay for 5 days. Lively music, games and inspiring messages from great evangelists were part of the package and the Marquee around the prayer hall was always packed to capacity. Augustine often led the choruses. I remember one of his personal favourites was:

"I'm on the upward trail – I'm on the upward trail - singing, singing - everybody singing - Homeward bound!"

Sung in rounds, it sounded heavenly!

All who knew Augustine were drawn to his warm, pleasing and almost magnetic personality. Rarely was he seen without that big, endearing smile on his face. He was loved and respected in the community and was able to live as a great witness for God. His simple zeal influenced the community around him and it was the little things like these lively choruses sung in rounds that brought people together in one mind and one Spirit so as to worship the Lord.

The Retreat became a much looked forward to event – especially for children and teenagers and it was usually held during the summer months. Almost every night the alter call was given and many would surrender their lives to the Lord. Over the years, hundreds upon hundreds came to know Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. A number of these converts were further inspired and called for full time Evangelistic Service thus spiralling a network of blessings.

Dr O V Jathanna writes: "There was a sense of shared responsibility and all felt that they should contribute something towards this ministry. The whole enterprise was an adventure of Faith, and all participants were given free board and lodging. Even poor Christians used to bring their mite, often in kind, to show their appreciation and love for the Lord. This is a good example of genuine lay movement, and is an indication of what the laity can do for the Church, with regard to the renewal of the "spiritual life" of the Community."

TENT-MAKER

Even though evangelism took most of his time and energy, Augustine knew he had to earn his living. After completing his studies at the MahaRaja College of Arts at Trivandrum, Augustine worked as an Art teacher at a local Christian High School, Udupi, for about six years. What he delighted in most was that he was put in charge of "Biblical Studies" which was then a compulsory subject, on the Academic curriculum. During these years the Prayer Hall activities continued unabated.

Augustine considered it a privilege to imbue and pass on to his Christian and non Christian students the faith that had become such an integral part of his own life. He energized, inspired and motivated them. Art, music and Bible study were the tools God had given him to draw these young boys and girls to the Lord. Even as they created little works of art, he impressed upon them the fact about God, the Master creator, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. The students often commented on the radiance on his face.

The Head Master of the Christian High School was a godly man who encouraged and supported spiritual activities. As a result, Vacation Bible Schools and student camps were held regularly. Year after year, Augustine was invited to deliver the valedictory address to outgoing Christian and non Christian students and each one was presented with a New Testament as a school leaving gift.

After one such event, a young Brahmin boy came up to Augustine and expressed his desire to become a Christian. He accepted Jesus and started sharing his new found faith and joy with others with a great zeal and passion. As a result, one of his aunts came to know the Lord. This however, created a big stir and disturbance in the rest of his community. His parents were furious as this resulted in a black spot on their orthodox Brahmin household. Promptly, the boy was taken away from Udupi and it was arranged for him to marry a rich Brahmin girl. For many years, no one knew his whereabouts. Several years later he re-emerged from the wood work to tell Augustine that he still deeply loved the Lord. Family constraints, restrictions and other circumstances had not stopped the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in his life. He is one of the students who went on to commit themselves to full time ministry.

After every event or incident, one line would repeat itself in Augustine's mind:

"With God, all things are possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARALLEL TRACK: 'LITTLE ELIZABETH' GROWS TO BLOOM

Tears of pain, anger and frustration flowed in the solitary cell in which she was surrounded by white walls. All sorts of questions were beginning to surface in her mind too. We are born amid tears and cries of pain bathed in blood and bodily fluids. We die in like manner. Why?

She felt like 'Job' in the Bible, covered in sores (of small pox), weak, and helpless.

Marriages, they say, are made in heaven. In which case, from the time a man is sent to earth from the secret place, God will also be preparing a unique helpmate for him. The two do not meet one another immediately; their lives run on parallel tracks until our On-time God brings them together. Till that moment, everything else that takes place in their respective lives is simply to prepare them for the journey together that is meant to fulfil a perfect divine plan and purpose.

While Augustine was being melted, moulded and re-shaped for the spectacular ministry God had ordained for him, a young girl in another corner of India was being prepared by the Lord to be the kind of wife an itinerant preacher needs to win souls for the Kingdom.

*T*he year was 1929, and she was the first and only lady doctor in Coorg. Dr.

Kunjalia would be over the moon when each month her salary of Rs 75/- was handed over to her. She sent most of it to her father in thanksgiving for all his support and encouragement through the years.

After working for a few years, Kunjalia decided to apply for LGO (Licentiate in Gynaecology and Obstetrics) It was only after she paid the fees that she realized that she had to go to Ooty to appear for her Senior Cambridge examination in 8 subjects before her application for LGO would be considered!

This caused her considerable alarm and anxiety as there was hardly any time to study following each day's relentless work at the hospital. To crown it all, a terrible plague broke out in Mercara (also known as Madikeri) and she had to take on extra duties. As she continued to work and study, she kept praying to God to still the panic within her. As she prayed, she could breathe in confidence and joy. She believed with all her heart that she served a God who was able to do exceedingly more and above anything she could ask for. She would recite Psalm 20, often personalizing it to derive great power and comfort from it:

*I know the LORD answers me when I am in distress;
 I know the name of the God of Jacob protects me.
 He always sends me help from the sanctuary
 and grants me support from Zion.
 May he remember all my sacrifices
 and accept my offerings.
 I know he will give me the desire of my heart
 and make all my plans succeed.
 I will shout for joy when he gives me victory
 and lift up my banner in the name of my God.
 I know the LORD will grant all my requests.
 Now this I know:
 The LORD gives victory to his anointed.
 He answers them from his heavenly sanctuary
 with the victorious power of his right hand.
 Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
 but I trust in the name of the LORD my God.
 They are brought to their knees and fall,
 but we rise up and stand firm.
 LORD, give victory to your child
 Answer me when I call.*

Almost like an answer to prayer, her devoted earthly father did all the preliminary work, research and copying of notes of the curriculum that would enable Kunjali to take the examination. Her brother came down from Trichur to escort her to Ooty. Truly, her family treated her like a princess!

After the examination, when it was time to receive results, she found that her expectations had not only been met but surpassed! She had cleared all 5 subjects with a special merit two and a Distinction in the last! It was a miracle indeed.

God had been faithful; as always.

From the Chaldean crib...



On 5th September, 1909 history took a little shudder. Tsar Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias would have turned into toast if one lady had gotten to the railroad station in time to get to Sevastopol where the Tsar was arriving. Julia Merzheevskaia was going to throw a bomb at the ruler of all the Russias but she missed her train!

While the security guards were breathing sighs relief, a 2,272 gross ton cargo ship Eduard Bohlen, with a length of 310 feet, struggled unsuccessfully with the fog and ran aground off the coast of Namibia's skeleton Coast and wrecked at Conception

Bay. Till today, the wreck lies in the sand a quarter mile from the shoreline symbolizing the loneliness of Namibia's coast.

On the same day, in a peaceful corner of the world, a girl child was born to a government employee and his dedicated wife in Varandarappilly, a panchayat in the Thrissur district of Kerala. The child had a majestic bearing from the start and was instantly christened Kunjalia which means "little Elizabeth". The parents who were members of the Chaldean Syrian church, bore five children in all but only a son Antony, and Kunjalia, survived.

Kunjalia lived in her small world of giant Coconut palms, with the Indian Ocean and its sprawling blue lagoons plus the lazy backwaters just outside her backdoor. She loved the lavish green foliage, the dust, the heat as well as the drenching monsoons. She was also grateful for the abundance of fish, shrimps, mangoes, coconut and spicy curries. Her father and mother as well as most of the neighbours were simple people – but loving and generous. They were mostly clad in white saris and dhotis. Appan, her father, was particularly religious but both mother and father narrated Bible stories and brought her up in the faith.

To understand the factors that contributed to Kunjalia's mental make-up in the early years, it is important to know the origin of the backdrop in her life - the Chaldean Syrian Church. The Assyrian Church of the East in India is known as the Chaldean Syrian Church. The head, at the time of writing, is Patriarch Raphael Bidawid who resides in Baghdad. The Chaldean Syrian Church in India is based in Thrissur – the place in Kerala where my mother was born.

Kerala is often viewed as the cradle of Christianity in India. (Malankara is another name for Kerala). According to tradition, it was here, in AD 52, that St Thomas, the Apostle visited and preached the Gospel with great success. Not much is known about the St. Thomas Christians but two facts stand out clearly. Between the 3rd and 9th centuries there were waves of immigrants from Mesopotamia to Kerala. The Church with its liturgical centre in Edessa based in Mesopotamia has claimed its origin from St. Thomas. Thus the East Syrian or Chaldean liturgy was used in Kerala until the 17th century.

Several ancient writers mention India as the Mission Field of Apostle Thomas. Ephrem the Syrian, (300 – 378), Gregory Nazianzen (329 – 389) and Ambrose (340 – 397) make reference to the mission work of Apostle Thomas in India in their writings.

The lure of spices attracted traders from the Middle East and Europe to trading ports in Kerala. St Thomas, it is assumed, arrived in one of the trading ships. In the year 72, Apostle Thomas was martyred at little Mount, and was buried in San Thome near the modern city of Chennai in India. A monastery was later built there by Portuguese Missionaries in the 16th century. The body of the Apostle was taken to Edessa in Iraq. It is now believed to be in Ortona, Italy. The relics of the Apostle however, were preserved in San Thome Cathedral, St Thomas Church in Palayur, in Trichur District.

The presence of Jews among the early Christians influenced the community and the Church services. They maintained some Jewish customs and rituals. The ritualistic services are called Qurbana (spelled Kurban) which is derived from the Aramaic and Hebrew term "Korban" meaning sacrifice. Qurbana was sung in Syriac. One of the surviving Jewish customs among them is Pasaha Appam (breaking of unleavened Passover bread) on Passover night.

(My mother used to take us to Trichur almost every year to visit our grandparents. I remember the Qurbana and especially the grand costume worn by the Priest and the incense that filled the hall.)

*T*he Indian Postal Service and the Government of India ...

... brought out two commemorative stamps, in 1964 and 1973, in honour of the historic arrival of St. Thomas on Indian shores in 52 AD; and then another one on the 19th death centenary of St Thomas. The Saint Thomas Cross represented on the Stamp is based on the Jewish Menorah. The interpretation based on the local culture states that Cross with the flowery arms depicts joy pointing to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit on the top represents the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection. The Lotus symbolises Buddhism but interestingly, the Cross over it shows that Christianity was established in the Land of Buddha. The 3 steps indicate, Calvary, the rivulets and the channels of grace flowing from the Cross.

In early 16th century, the Portuguese set up their headquarters in Goa and extended their domain to Kerala. The Portuguese clergy imposed their customs and Latin rites on St. Thomas Christians. A protest took place against latinization and a defiant plea for the Syriac rite. They took the Coonan Cross Oath in 1653. As a result of this during the next 12 years, 84 Syrian congregations returned in communion with Rome while 32 congregations remained with the Bishop Thomas. 84 Churches were claimed by the Roman Catholic and the rest 32 churches were the body from which Jacobites and Orthodox, Thozhiyur (1772) and Mar Thoma , Reformed (1874) originated.

The Church in Trichur was built in 1814.

Mar Abimalek Timotheus metropolitan arrived in Trichur on 27th Feb, 1908. He was an Assyrian from the Mar Bisho village in Turkey. Later, Vyakulamathavin Church known as Puthanpally now known as the Basilica was built which is the biggest Church in India. On November 1951, the statues including the Madonna were burned.

In 1952, Mar Thoma Darmo Metropolitan took over and the Church made significant progress. Differences of opinion developed on the issue of hereditary succession in the Patriarchal and Episcopal families. The Church was split into 2 groups, Patriarchal group and Metropolitan Group. Mar Aprem Mookan was ordained as the Head of the Church in 1968. Marth Mariyam Cathedral is the seat of the Metropolitan.

At present, there are only about 50,000 Chaldean Syrian Christians who are scattered all over the world.

POSITIVE POWER OF PARENTS...

Thildren tend to idealize their parents.

From birth to around 8 or 9 years old children usually admire or even worship and emulate their parents for what they can do and the power they possess.

Kunjalia's world was made of home, family and church. 'Home' was a two storey house with white washed walls and red-tiled roofs. They had a simple but beautiful verandah and windows with quaint wooden shutters laced with red, orange, yellow and green Crotons scattered all along the courtyard. Home was surrounded by a compound with mango, jackfruit, tamarind, and plantain trees and towering, swaying coconut palms; the delectable whiff of simmering coconut-based curries and spices that filled the air; a never-ending stream of visitors dropping by casually to exchange the latest news tid-bits. Kunjalia was taught to greet and respect elders from the time she began to first speak.

Her mother called *Amma* by all, wore the typical Syrian Christian woman's attire: a white *dhoti* (draped loincloth) with a bulky fan at the back, under a longish white blouse with a half sari wrapped once around. Her gold earrings were so heavy that her ear lobes had actually stretched to twice the size! Amma needed no second invitation when her children would hug her ample frame and say: "Amma, tell us a story."

Amma's one story told to my mother in the musical language called Malayalam was repeated over and over again: from the chronicles of Saint Thomas and his arrival in India.

Kunjalia devoured every detail of the tale that followed:

There was a King who had given large amounts of money to Apostle Thomas to construct a palace. The apostle spent all the money for the poor and needy and all his time preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. When the King heard that the money had been wasted and washed away in the service of the poor, he was wild with anger. The apostle was brought before the King.

"Where is my palace?" his majesty demanded to know.

"I have built a beautiful palace," Thomas replied.

"Well, I want to see this palace at once!" the king shouted.

Calmly and gently, the apostle explained, "Hear O King, the palace that I have built is not on earth. It is in Heaven"

The King was furious. Thomas was put in prison to await death by hanging.

On one of the restless nights the King spent, he had a dream. In that dream, he saw the beautiful and majestic palace prepared for him in Heaven. Only then, he understood the explanation given by the apostle. He repented and asked forgiveness from God. The next morning, Thomas was released.

The King and his family believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and became Christians.

The apostle later came to Malabar and built seven churches. He then travelled to Madras. The high caste Brahmins were angry with Apostle Thomas. Because of the conversions taking place mainly among the Brahmins, they felt threatened. They decided to kill him. On a rocky hill cave in Madras, he used to spend hours in prayer. One day, his enemies found him praying and took this opportunity to kill him.

Amma explained to her children that Apostle Thomas brought the blessing of the good news of Jesus Christ to Kerala and India. As a result of that they were blessed to be Christians. Although he was killed for his faith, she re-iterated the truth that he was now reigning with King Jesus in Heaven.

These legends and stories passed on from generation to generations were the beginnings of their life of blessing and a foundation for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Kunjalia was too young to understand what faith was, but she looked with awe at her *Amma's* radiant face as she took the name of the Lord.

Precious excerpts:

In her Memoirs, Kunjalia writes:

My father taught me the Lord's prayer and told me stories from the Bible. My mother described to me the beauty and magnificence of God. Later on in life, when I read about the appearance of Jesus to Apostle John in Chapter 1 of the book of Revelation, I remembered the description my mother had given me when I was only 5 or 6 years old. She had explained to me about a God who is the Creator of this beautiful world. Psalm19:1,2 "The Heavens declare the glory of God , the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech. Night after night they display knowledge." She had described to me the glory of the Lord and impressed upon my heart the fact that He does indeed love and care for me. My

father also taught me the Lord's prayer in Malayalam. I repeated the prayer everyday especially when I was afraid.

One night, I could hear an owl shrieking, and as I was afraid, I hid behind my mother. My father gently led me to the veranda, left me alone after asking me to pray. He closed the door behind me and I was in the dark. I closed my eyes tight and prayed the Lord's prayer as loudly as possible trying to drown the owl's screeching. Before the prayer was over, the owl had stopped!

Although I was very young, I can say that my understanding of faith began that day. In the simplest way possible, I had learnt that God answers prayer. I would recite with wonder Psalm 121: "Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip. He who watches over you will not slumber or sleep."

Later on in life, when I faced trials and tests, fears and anxieties, problems and troubles, it was prayer that sustained me. When the pressures of life beat upon me, when I found myself harassed unfairly and emotionally tossed like a tempest, these verses would keep me calm, serene and positive. In the end, victory would be won for the glory of God."

IN THE STUDY STREAM

When Kunjalia was just three and a half years old ...

... she was sent to her neighbour's house to study under a Panikkar teacher. Panikkar (sometimes Panicker) is an Indian title or last name used by members of various communities in Kerala. The Panikkars of central and northern Kerala, by virtue of their traditional occupation as teachers or a martial art (Kalari) are commonly known as Panikkar. Some members of the Nair and Exhava castes in the Hindu religion and also Christians from the Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox and Mar Thoma churches also hold this last name.

The Panikar teacher my mother went to was an educationalist. Children were made to sit on mats on the ground. The sand was the writing board. They were taught to write Malayalam alphabets and numbers from 1 to 20 on the sand with their little fingers. They learnt in record time.

New admissions were celebrated. Parents would accompany the little girl or boy dressed in smart new clothes. They would bring jaggery, boiled rice, pieces of coconut, and a few other eatables for the whole class. The children used to look forward to such celebrations and so were most happy to welcome new students.

When Kunjalia was six, she was admitted to the Government Primary school. She had many Hindu and Christian classmates. Even as a child she loved school and was keenly academic. Her father, Appan, took a great interest in her studies and took even the smallest details of her life into account. ("How much more my Heavenly Father must be caring", Amma mused in her jottings). Appan inspected her report cards with rigour. His strict daily regimen had to be followed. Every day he

supervised her books and her homework. He also bound all her books with brown paper and ensured that she kept them clean and tidy.

Every day, she had to write one page in English and one page of Malayalam to improve her handwriting. He insisted that the English had to be written in Vere Foster's looped cursive style – very slightly slanting toward the right, with complex capitals and unusual letterforms like the open 'p' and knotted 'f'.

In retrospect, Kunjalia acknowledged, "My dear father taught me the importance of values in early childhood and later on in life enriched me with sound and good advice:

1. Be humble always. Do not be proud. The first sin ever committed by Lucifer (Satan) was a sin associated with pride. He wanted to be above God. 1 Peter 5: v 6: "Humble yourselves , therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may lift you up in due time."
2. Be obedient to parents, teachers and elders. Never disobey. Adam disobeyed God and he had to face the consequences of sin. Ephesians 6: 1 – 3 " Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right"
3. Honour your Father and Mother – which is the first commandment with a promise – that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.
4. Always speak the Truth. Avoid the temptation to even tell a white lie. This temptation is very common. I can still hear my father's words loud and clear: "even if someone threatens to kill you, never tell a lie. Always speak the Truth."
5. In every situation – good or bad – don't forget to pray. My father gave me practical lessons on what it meant to pray. I still remember how when the rats destroyed the crops of corn and vegetables, my father would send me to the field to pray. He taught me that Faith, when exercised, becomes strong.
6. Keep away from things belonging to someone else. Do not take anything belonging to the other unless they give it to you. We lived in a rented house situated in a huge compound. There were all kinds of trees - Mangoes, Jack fruit , cashew nut and others. We children were instructed not to touch even the fruit fallen on the ground!

As she looked back over her childhood, Kunjalia remembered being quiet and obedient, never rebellious; she was focused on trying to obey her father in every way, to win a smile from him – that she considered the greatest reward.

When she learnt to read, my mother found herself in a magical new and breath-taking world of boundless delight. She found books magical...they took her to faraway places, and introduced her to wonderful characters. The books she read

shaped her mind and taught her to believe that through the gift of imagination, anything was possible. Even apart from novels and story books, she surprised many by loving her study books. Rather than play hide and seek, she found it more exciting to rack her brains for answers to Maths problems! Her steadily expanding mind kept pace with her growing body.

When she was seven, two Roman Catholic classmates made a huge impression on her life. These two girls expressed their desire to become "saints". It was not so much through their words as through their sedate life, serene talk and gentle behaviour others could see they were set apart and different. Kunjalia decided on the spot that she wanted to be a saint too. She did all she could to imitate them; that was until she joined her group of friends and joined them in all their mischief. She was desolate. "I will never become a saint," she said sadly to her father who secretly smiled but outwardly comforted her.

She sailed through middle school and as she stepped into High School, her father, her teachers and she herself discovered that she had an impressive aptitude for "the Science subjects". She fared brilliantly right through and her father's careful supervision and encouragement played no small role in the many scholastic accolades that came her way. She constantly strove to excel and be at the top, more to win Appan's smile than for herself. Being the eldest daughter, she longed for him to be proud of her; in her simple way she prayed soundlessly that her success would bring a blessing on the family.

Her prayer reached the throne in Zion.

A startling incident that inspired decision...

*I*t is always terrible to see a grown man cry.

The coolie (manual labourer) who knelt before her mother and wept aloud in despair, begged for money so that he could buy chicken and fruit demanded by a doctor who was treating his wife. Her mother immediately helped him; since God had blessed her family with provision and a few luxuries, she always extended help to ease the terrible poverty that lurked just outside their snug and cozy compound. Kunjalia would watch *Amma* send baskets of food with the cook to the hard-working coconut pickers, who never had enough to eat (or anything other than coconuts to consume). On certain days, she would walk with her parents outside the compound where she would see women in ragged, threadbare saris living in thatched hovels, not able to pay much attention to their naked and neglected children who ran around aimlessly the whole day. This glimpse of their lives filled her with immeasurable sadness.

To the sadness came a flood of anger when the coolie returned to thank her mother saying that his wife was better since the doctor gave injections and the required medicine immediately, on receipt of the 'bribe'.

Kunjalia was shocked and confused. She was incredulous as to how someone could be as heartless as to expect a bribe from a poor man before treating his ill wife. Her mother patiently explained to her that that was the sad reality of medical care. Kunjalia understood that greed was a grievous and evil sin which held others to ransom. In fact, she was beginning to see sin in the light of its negative and destructive impact on others.

Kunjalia made a solemn decision to never take or give a bribe ever in life. That was also the point at which she decided to become a doctor and work with integrity and honesty to specially help poor people in need, regardless of their caste, colour, creed or ability to pay. She was determined to be a self-sacrificing, utterly dedicated doctor.

Her parents were surprised when she shared her decision with them. In those days, it was incredibly rare and very prestigious for anyone - let alone a woman! - to study Medicine. But Kunjalia, with her childlike faith believed that God would make a way for her to pursue this discipline with a view to fulfilling her vision. Appan – at a time where many father’s simply tried to get their daughters “married off” - gave her his full support.

(Clara Swain (1834 -1910) was Asia's first woman Medical Missionary. At her birth in 1834, not a single American woman had graduated from Medical School. The first American school to admit women was the Women's Medical college of Pennsylvania which was influenced by the Quakers. Clara Swain sailed to India in 1869 and started a nursing school in Bareilly.

Later on, Dr Ida Scudder, founded the path for women and built the Vellore women's Medical College. Dr Ida Scudder started the Medical School in 1918, long before Indian women in any numbers had left their seclusion to seek careers, and when Medicine especially had been considered for women a degrading profession. It took several years for Vellore to be registered under Madras University.)

This was the backdrop as my mother began to fulfil her destiny in Christ.

Madras, here she comes -

*I*n 1927, when Kunjalia was 17 ...

... she applied and amazingly got admission into the highly competitive Lady Willingdon Medical School in Madras. She knew that it was a clear calling from God. She was ready for the new adventure which she saw as a “pilgrimage”. Of course, she was terrified and rather sad to leave Kerala, with its lush greens of grass, the jades of palms and plantains, to move away from the place that she had always – until then – called *home*. More than that however, she was distraught at leaving *Amma*. It was heartbreaking to witness her mother crying. Yet she took strength in

her Appan's advice that she should focus on her calling with determination and single-mindedness. She knew that the decision to study medicine was the right one – and ordained by God.

Appan and Kunjalia soon found themselves on the overnight train to Madras. It took only one Coolie's head to balance the sum of her belongings, steel trunks, baskets and handbags. The third class compartment was crammed with young and old, barely furnishing space to sit upright, much less lying down! It was a long and tiring journey.

Once in Madras, Kunjalia found herself surrounded by the confusion of traffic, winding streets and bazaars buzzing with people speaking a strange language called Tamil. (In due course she learnt that there is a lot of relationship between Tamil and Malayalam. Tamil is a Dravidian language whereas her own Malayalam was more toward the Arya language. Tamil is one of the oldest languages and has only 12 vowels and 18 consonants. Malayalam on the other hand, kept updating itself and has 31 consonants and more than 20 vowels!)

When Appan left her in the hostel she cried her eyes out and even Appan's eyes – she recalls -were suspiciously moist despite his display of exterior strength. There was no time however, to be homesick. Immediately she was engulfed in tours of classrooms, exploration of the vast campus, and hundreds of bewildering introductions. Academically, she was rearing to go; her logical and scientific mind was ready for almost any challenge. Kunjalia adjusted quickly to the new schedule, surroundings and friends without any difficulty. Her friends were from diverse backgrounds and temperaments, but she recalls fondly how they were a gift and a blessing from God. With no family close by, she cultivated dozens of precious friendships during that first year of medical school.

The first year drew to a close without any problem. The following year, Kunjalia received the gold "Good Character Cup" from the college. It was a prestigious and much coveted award given to the best student each year.

Appan smiled when she showed it to him. She hugged the memory of that smile close to her heart.

A MAGNIFICENT INVITATION

John 3:16 I remember reading about the "majestic model of generosity: For God – the greatest giver - so loved – the greatest motive - the world – the greatest need - that He gave – the greatest act..... His Son – the greatest gift - that whosoever – the greatest invitation - believes in Him – the greatest opportunity should not perish – the greatest deliverance - but have eternal life – greatest JOY."

It was the turning point in a life that believed it was treading a straight course. April 4, 1928 was a memorable and significant day in young Kunjalia' life. She attended a

Brethren Assembly at 17A Broadway with a girl called Grace Thomas -a senior student. The message was on John 3:3 and centred on the theme: *"You must be born again..."*

Kunjalia had had no problems with being a Syrian Christian. Religion had provided a rich, satisfying culture, security as well as a certain status in society. Yet, it occurred to her that God had been somewhat of an impersonal being. Sometimes He seemed benevolent but vague. The bearded Achans and the sonorous and long prayers from the prayer book had appealed to her and was a kind of comfort and solace in times of need. She loved God and she definitely had the sense that He had answered most of her desperate prayers.

Nevertheless, though she was brought up in a God-fearing Christian family, and had led what she imagined was a "good" life she had not experienced what it was to be "born again". Jesus said: "...Unless you are born again, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God" Even as the Preacher opened up God's word, the Holy Spirit convicted Kunjalia. She came under a deep sense of spiritual awareness. At that moment, her heart was the fertile soil for the seed of the Word of God – that took root and grew.

She came to the realization that good works are like filthy rags in Gods sight. It is only by Grace we are saved, through faith, and not by works. The words from the Gospel of John the preacher had read were ringing in her ears. *"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh and Spirit gives birth to Spirit...' 'You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again...'"*

Even as she walked back to the hostel, she felt something new surging within her . She wanted to be part of this new creation. She prayed a childlike prayer which was one of her great strengths (because the Lord delights in childlike prayers and trust"). "Lord, I want to be born again. Please help me."

The battle was raging within her. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, *"If anyone could come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me."* To say No to self and to the world and Yes to Jesus was not easy. She realized that her adversary in this conflict was her own strong will which was not willing to surrender all to Jesus.

(The great preacher DL Moody once said: " I have more trouble with D L Moody than with any man I ever met." And so it was with Kunjalia who was having trouble with Kunjalia !)

For three weeks, she struggled, doubted and questioned. In the hostel, she went up to the terrace daily – and prayed: "Lord, food or no food, study or no study, sleep or no sleep, I want to be born again. Please help me."

Just then some of her Christian friends invited her to come along to a prayer meeting. At first she was a little intimidated and unsure, but her desire to earnestly seek the Lord (and what it meant to be born again) took priority. The girls that had invited her actually seemed to believe that Jesus was part of the group and she

remembered thinking this somewhat strange. She could feel that they had a personal relationship with Jesus and they trusted and rested in Him. She could really see the difference and it was wonderful to witness this in those the same age as she was. The girls said they loved to worship Him "in Spirit and in truth."

As she continued to battle with questions and doubts, her friend Grace invited her for another meeting. A foreign missionary was the speaker and the same passage of scripture was being expounded on John 3:3 "You must be born again."

She had so many questions. Will I experience fiery tongues on my head? Will there be a rushing wind? Will I speak in tongues (a new language)? Her thoughts on the matter were somewhat apprehensive. The speaker gave two illustrations that struck a chord with Kunjalia.

1. *There was a Squire who owned a vast property. He had many servants working for him. Many of them had taken loans, some owed small and others large amounts. One fine day, the Squire became a Christian. Far from being greedy, he wanted to be generous and he sent out a notice to all his servants. 'On such and such a day, I will sit at my Office between 8 and 10 a.m. Anyone who owes money to me, is invited to come with his documents to prove it and he will be pardoned. The door will shut at 10 a.m.'*

On the appointed day, many people gathered outside the door. Some were discussing their debts, others were wondering whether it could be true. Some ridiculed and others mocked. Only one man had the courage and the faith to go rushing in just before the door closed at 10 a.m. As promised, his debt was cancelled. He was pardoned and his document was sealed. Others lost the opportunity.

2. *Satish, a rich man's son and Suresh, a poor man's son were great friends. They walked to school together, studied together and played together. In spite of their close friendship, the rich man's son, Satish, used to wonder why his friend was morose and sad at times. One day, his dad disclosed the secret. The poor boy's father had taken a big loan and was not able to pay it back. Satish literally begged his father and was willing to do anything to pay off the debt. When he collected the required amount, he went to the bank and paid it off and presented the document to Suresh. His debt was paid. Suresh was overjoyed, and Suresh and Satish remained the best of friends forever.*

The Preacher tried to expound and explain the Word of God with illustrations and exemplifications. The Holy Spirit was convicting Kunjalia. The debt is paid. Jesus died on the Cross to take away the sins of the world. His work is finished. Surrender your life in His hands.

*S*he walked back to the hostel.

Once again, she went to the usual place on the terrace and knelt down. As the Holy Spirit convicted her of her sin, she repented, confessed her sins and believed that her sins were washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. By faith, she then truly accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Saviour. She surrendered and consecrated her life to the Lord. She knew that the truth had set her free. She was full of praise and thanks.

She says in her hand-written autobiography that she could not believe or express the unspeakable joy and peace that flooded and filled her soul, mind and being. A transformation that took place within her and she knew her life would never be the same again. Everything around her - ordinary things and common sights - seemed different as they were clothed in and seen with Celestial Light, through the eyes of God.

God's love was shed abroad into her heart through the Holy Spirit. She was full of thanks and praise to the Lord for choosing her even before the foundation of the world; for adopting her into Gods family; for the forgiveness of sins; for redeeming her; for lavishing His grace upon her and for sealing her through the Holy Spirit.

Her non-Christian friends and others in the hostel noticed a transformational change in her life. They often came to her and asked her to pray for them . She was able to pray for and with them as she told them about the love of Jesus Christ. From then on, her only desire was to please God and do his will.

Her heart was filled with even more compassion and she began to see even the patients in a different light, as hurting human beings who Jesus died for so that they could be healed by his stripes. The clinical studies delighted and challenged her by the constant variety of problems and the solutions. In her memoirs she recalls how those were among the most satisfying years of her life.

OUT-FOXING THE POX...

*S*o here we are, back to where this chapter began –

- the only lady doctor in Coorg, working to qualify herself further to fulfill God's plan for her life and repay her parents for the great sacrifices they had made to get her where she was.

In 1930, LMP (Licentiate Medical practitioner) exams were fast approaching and loomed formidably. She had no fear of failure. She wanted to excel for the sake of Appan who had sacrificed so much for her sake! That itself was motivation enough. Success would be a matter of pride for her family as well as the whole community.

She had always done well in most of the tests during the year. This was the final examination and she studied for the ordeal with fierce intensity. Fifteen days before the examinations however, she developed Small Pox.

She had a raging fever and was covered in vesicles and pustules. Night after night she could not sleep. Her world rotated round the recurrent rhythm of the beat of her pulses, the throbbing of her hands and legs, the echo of steps along the corridor. As the days went on she found herself simply unable to focus long enough to study. Sadly – even her friends were not allowed to visit her given the nature of the disease; she was kept for weeks in an isolation ward.

Tears of pain, anger and frustration flowed in the solitary cell in which she was surrounded by white walls. All sorts of questions were beginning to surface in her mind too. We are born amid tears and cries of pain bathed in blood and bodily fluids. We die in like manner. Why?

She felt like 'Job' in the Bible, covered in sores, weak, and helpless.

Job had no knowledge of what might be going on behind the scenes. He did not know that the personal drama on earth involving him had its origin in a cosmic drama in Heaven! It was a contest over Job's faithWould Job hold on to God or would he deny God? Would he trust in God when everything is going wrong in his life?

The supernatural activity was hidden from the human eye as it was concealed from Kunjalia.

One thing that kept her going was her unceasing recitation of Psalm 20 which she had never forgotten.

Two days prior to the exam, Kunjalia's temperature came down. She was able to take some fluids. The matron who used to pay her daily visits was glad to see her sitting up and smiling.

Kunjalia was surprised to see the Matron appear again that evening. The kind soul had taken the trouble to go to the higher authorities to get permission for Kunjalia to write the exam under special supervision in an isolated section of the examination hall.

It was indeed a miracle that the permission was granted.

After her initial incredulity and uncertainty, there sprang wild hope. She realized that she was not alone and God had not abandoned her. She knew the Lord's right hand

would sustain her even as she wrote the examination. With dogged determination, Kunjalia sat in the isolated section of the examination hall every day.

Philip Yancey writes:

"Success, not failure, is the greatest danger facing any follower of God, as Moses knew very well. He had traipsed around the desert for forty years as a penalty for the Hebrews inability to handle the success of the Exodus. Every significant downfall in his own life came when he seized power for himself – killing an Egyptian, smashing a rock in the desert – rather than relying on God. In contrast, perhaps his greatest military victory came when he played an almost slapstick role. No general at the head of his troops, Moses stood apart, atop a nearby hill, raising his hands high like a religious Zealot. As long as he reached out towards God, the Israelites won. Whenever his hands sank down, the Amalekites won. By the end of the day, an exhausted Moses was sitting on a rock with each up- stretched arm supported by a helper.

God's strength is perfected in weakness

When the results were declared, Kunjalia was not only successful, but got the third position in the University. She knew how weak she had been at the time as well as her inability to study –and she was only able to give glory to God for lavishing His grace upon her at a time where failure seemed imminent and would have even been justifiable.

For a year, she worked as a House Surgeon in Lady Goschen Government Hospital, Madras. Although there were many opportunities in Kerala, her hometown, she accepted the call from God and went to Mercara (Coorg) to work in the Government Hospital there.

Following on from this great success, she joined the LGO Course in Madras and was able to complete the course successfully. A condensed MBBS course was offered to those who had passed L.M.P. Kunjalia promptly applied and was offered a seat. Unfortunately when it was time for her to join, her financial situation, other circumstances, and her job in Mercara all seemed to stack the odds against her. She wrote a letter to the Principal of Madras Medical College explaining her situation. The seat - which had been terribly difficult to obtain in the first place - had to be cancelled.

At the time, she was staying at the YMCA. One day, she bumped into a friend of hers in the corridor quite by accident. Her name was Leela and they had studied LMP together. When Leela heard that Kunjalia had rejected her seat, she was furious. She did all she could to persuade Kunjalia to change her mind and beg for them to revert

their decision. She knew that such an opportunity was unlikely to ever come around again.

Leela took a reluctant Kunjalia to the Vice Principals Office on three consecutive days but the pair were only disappointed at the news that all the seats were taken and there were none to spare.

In her memoirs, Kunjalia writes: "Leela and I prayed. Prayer was my only solace and comfort in spite of my carelessness and mistake" She found the strength to believe that God was able to turn even mistakes into Blessings – and they held to this promise. She also thanked God for friends like Leela – who supported and encouraged her during what was a difficult and uncertain time.

It was the day after they had spent the night in prayer that Kunjalia was waiting outside the Medical School Office. Once again, Leela went in to plead and after what seemed like ages, came out with a triumphant look on her face. The seat which was rejected by Kunjalia was given to a boy from North India and they had just received a letter from him saying that he could not join that year!

Another miracle!

After all that, the MBBS seat for Kunjalia was hers indeed. Both Kunjalia and Leela were ecstatic at this dramatic answer to prayer and gave thanks to the Lord for His mercies which were indeed new every morning. Kunjalia was beginning to see that God was faithful – even when she deserved it least.

The next challenge however was the payment of fees. She refused to let anxiety into the door. If God had seen her this far, He would hardly pull out near the finish line!

As it happened, a peculiar clause relating to her family history (her father and grandfather had once belonged to a British Province) came to light, which resulted in the College waived most of the fees. Kunjalia knew in her heart that God had a definite purpose for her life and this medical training was ordained by God. She was there against all odds and believed that she was being led and blessed every step of the way to be what God wanted her to be – a great blessing to countless people.

Kunjalia passed her MBBS exams in 1940.

She was led by the Holy Spirit back to Mercara Hospital.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A CHOICE ...

In Lewis Carroll's classic children's tale, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, young Alice comes to a fork in the road and asks the Cheshire Cat which direction she should take. "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

'I don't much care where-' said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you walk," said the Cat.

Every morning we wake up to fresh day of making a series of decisions. What clothes to wear today? What to have for breakfast? Should I cut my hair today or can I get by for one more week? All these sound like silly and insignificant, but woven together, they form the tapestry of our lives.

The ones that sound neither silly nor insignificant are the life-altering decisions that cause us to struggle: Should I leave home? Which career path to take? Should I marry or remain single? Which profession will allow me the best opportunity to grow and minister to others? The question is: how to choose wisely? How are we to discern the best course of action? We have a desperate need of wisdom and clarity to make a prudent decision based upon the facts at hand and our understanding of God's will.

We make mistakes when we arrive at decisions on the basis of emotions or 'gut feelings'. We could also err when we go to the opposite extreme and rule out any emotional factor in our decision-making.

The only basis for making sound decisions is to avail of the wisdom from above which comes to us through God's Word, God's Spirit, God's Providence and God's people. We need to be consistently renewed by God's Word, people who walk in step with the Spirit of God, paying attention to his prompting and leading.

This little story of how Kunjalia made what would turn out to be the most significant decision of her life:

In 1944, Dr. Miss Eva Lombard who was the founder and Medical superintendent of the Basel Mission Hospital in Udupi, halted for a day in Mercara. At the time, she was on her way to Mysore for treatment.

Kunjalia recalls: "Dr Lombard sent for me and told me that they, at the Basel Mission Hospital, were very much in need of a Christian lady doctor. Dr. Lombard seemed too ill even to walk at the time ...but I took her request on board and started to pray about it"

Kunjalia remembered her calling as a little girl at the age of seven, to serve the poor and needy. The opportunity to leave affluent Coorg and serve in a needy place wasn't the most appealing thing in the world, but she felt her burden and calling in this area only grow as she committed her decisions and future to the Lord. Eva Lombard was in a rather desperate situation and wanted an immediate answer.

Kunjalia told Dr. Lombard that she would consider going to Udupi after placing the matter before the Lord. She also added that she was somewhat afraid to work with foreign missionaries – as it would be an entirely new experience. Dr. Lombard reassured her saying: "Do not be afraid. We will all be very good to you. (Kunjalia recalls later: "Of course, it turned out later that I experienced both good and bad but I cannot complain. As this definitely was the path that God had called me to walk").

As she contemplated leaving, her colleagues at the government Hospital did their best to dissuade her. She had now worked in Government service for 13 years. As a financial consideration she knew that if she continued in service for two more years, she would be eligible for a pension of at least a quarter of her last salary. This was a substantial incentive to stay!

At the same time, her classmates who were only LMPs, were minting money in Kerala. There was so many options and Kunjalia knew that she had to make a decision – soon – and hold fast to it!

"Udupi" was a strange sounding town and she had only heard of the place from an evangelist – Augustine - who had once visited their local Church. Interestingly, she had signed up to be his prayer partner.

After doing a little research on the town she was told that Udupi was a somewhat insignificant little village where nothing much ever happened. She had also heard that Udupi didn't have much to boast about in terms of good schools, hospitals, medical colleges or shopping complexes.

Another factor was also at play – Kunjalia was of marriageable age. Friends discouraged her to move to Udupi with the threat that she would never find a suitable husband there! Truth was that Kunjalia was a Malayalee (from Kerala) and for reasons only known to them Kannada people (especially those in Udupi at the time) were quite open about their dislike of Malayalees!

Moreover, the language in Udupi was alien to her – there people spoke Kannada and Tulu. Compared to where she was in Coorg - where food was less expensive and abundant, she had also begun hearing rumours that food was being rationed in Udupi!

As a last consideration, the financial offer from the Mission hospital was not particularly attractive. The salary would be not even half of what she was earning at Coorg. The decision seemed obvious! Stay in Coorg!

Yet Kunjalia – as always – took this decision, along with her own feelings on the matter, to God. She fasted and prayed about this one and her deepest desire was to do his will – regardless of convenience, wealth, status or worldly security.

She prayed along the lines of: "Lord, lead me in the right path. Please show me in your word and my daily Bible reading that you are speaking clearly to me about my future."

God did. She clearly heard what He had to say through His Word.

The Only Voice that counts...

*I*n the book of *Ezekiel* ...

... is a verse that jumped out of the page and spoke to my mother in direct confirmation! *"Arise and go into the plain and I shall speak with you."* In the same passage there was also a warning about briars and thorns but the command not to be afraid. The passage also spoke about food being weighed (which at the time was being rationed). It was a personal experience where only Kunjalia knew what had transpired in her spirit, and one thing was clear: God had spoken to her and the decision to go to Udupi – despite all the worldly and material reasons not to go – was absolutely clear. Despite the obstacles and the many deterrents, not least the frowns of her friends and family, Kunjalia was determined to obey the call of God on her life.

She was still on her knees when she wrote out the resignation letter for her job in Mercara. As the news spread to all the nurses, doctors and patients, many started urging and compelling her to withdraw her resignation and change her mind.

By then however, God had given her a consummate clarity that her future lay in Udupi Hospital. The only thing she could do was to take a step of faith and obey God knowing that He would be faithful and she was best off in His will.

Antony, Kunjalia's brother came to her rescue once again. They set out on their journey to Udupi with few of her belongings. In those days, the route was Mercara, Mangalore, Moodabidri, Karkala, Manipal and Udupi.... 72 miles by bus. After a long and tedious and tiresome journey, they reached Udupi.

It was the town in which Augustine Salins lived.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LOVE STORY: "WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN?"

A big test was just round the corner. It was unexpected. There were parental protests from both sides. Kunjalia wondered,– "Can I commit myself to be the 'Virtuous woman' as in Proverbs 31?"

It is possible that a man makes heaven or hell on earth depending on the one he or she marries. A marriage can be either a most powerful union or a most misunderstood relationship. A marriage can be a mockery without a 'will' (commitment) or drudgery without ' emotion'. A marriage can be either a garden where you are refreshed, renewed and revived or a wilderness where you are burdened , oppressed and bogged down. A marriage can be either get, get , get and forget or give , give , give and forgive.

It is only natural that each of us has a heart that beats and yearns for love and romance. Max Lucado writes: "The deepest love is not built on passion and romance but on a common mission and sacrifice."

When the reality of God and His word becomes the foundation of our very lives, everything falls into place. God instituted the first marriage, the first home and the first family and it runs from generation to generation to form history. God designed marriage for union and communion. Genesis 2 : 24 " A man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and be united – they become one flesh."

God's purpose was not just love. It was procreation ... to create Godly offspring.
(Malachi 2 : 15)

It is a commitment and a covenant configured by God for the man and woman. Jesus said in Mark 10 : 5 – 12 , therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Now it can be told – when and how God put together the lives of Augustine Salins and Kunjalia for His glory and the extension of the Kingdom of heaven.

Everybody who was anybody turned up for the inauguration.

The important men wore gilt-edged turbans while the women outdid one another in resplendent saris. It was 25 June, 1923, when Eva Lombard prayed and opened a 6-bedded cottage hospital that was going to minister to the needs of women from all sections of society. This was on the west coast of India, in the temple town of Udupi (famous for the Krishna Temple and the eight mutts), where stood a seminary for Brahmin boys. Into this stronghold of Brahmin orthodoxy, this petite and winsome Swiss maiden, with a strong spirit and the tireless capacity to serve, came and conquered many in the cautious province of Karnataka. Most of her work was domiciliary. Dr. Eva Lombard of the Basel Mission Hospital, travelled to the homes of patients on foot or by bullock cart or boat. Cars were not yet invented for popular use.

The general mood was upbeat. Maternal and infant mortality was rather alarming in the region as doctors were few, and female doctors were unheard of. Though opposition to missionaries was strident, the town welcomed Eva Lombard. Everyone exulted over the fact that at last, medical help would be available to the women and children of the area. Before Eva appeared on the scene, deliveries used to be conducted in outhouses or cattle sheds as women were considered unclean for forty days after child birth.

Sharing the gospel was at the heart of Eva's mission and she learnt the local language in record time as she plunged herself to meeting the medical needs in Udupi. Women grew to love her and depend on her. She appeared to be an angel who had been dropped into their midst from heaven itself.

Looking at her selfless love and service, patients were curious to know more about the Saviour who she said inspired her every effort.

Eva Lombard was born in 1890 to an aristocratic family in Geneva, Switzerland.

Her father a Bank Manager had given up a successful career in banking to become an evangelist. Her mother worked among female prisoners. From the age of fourteen, when she received the call of God to be a Missionary doctor, Eva was sure that she wanted to pursue a career in Medicine. She graduated from the University of Geneva in 1918, and worked for a couple of years in Basel and Geneva. But her burden was for India, and though she had no inkling of her actual place of work, she set out like Abraham 'not knowing wither.'

She was the first lady Missionary doctor to Udupi.

In 1921, Eva travelled to Mysore, and spent a year at the Mission Hospital there, getting acquainted with various tropical diseases and learning the local customs and language. Following the inauguration of the new hospital for women and children in Udupi in 1923, more and more people got drawn to her gentle personality and heart of service. Under her care and guidance, the hospital grew over the years into a multi-specialty hospital with 200 beds, and an A-grade nursing school. The Maternity ward was constructed in 1925; and a children's ward in 1932. (An X-ray machine was installed only in 1945) Today, the achievement can be written about in a line; but at the time of setting up, it was a Herculean task as money was always in short supply, and most of the patients were too poor to pay. The hospital had to rely on subsidies from the Basel Mission in Switzerland.

After World War II and when India became independent, things became tougher. Sometimes there was no money to buy medicines or pay the local staff. It made the good doctor more dependent on God.

TB patients were a sadly neglected lot. So in 1952, a sanatorium was built where patients were cared for with much love and dedication. Outreach work was started simultaneously with the opening of the hospital.

This remarkable woman devoted the best years of her life to service of the poor. They were her friends. Women and children were her special concern, but prayer was her forte. She worked hard and expected the same from her colleagues. How would "little Elizabeth" respond to her?

Instruments of healing...

The early morning bus entry to Udupi ...

...through coastal Karnataka was a pleasant experience. Kunjalia loved the slight chill in the air. The greenery, passing over the River Gangolli and its estuaries, the sea, all added to the beauty. The sun was coming up reluctantly, reflecting the crimson ball in the sky.

It was with a combination of anticipation tinged with anxiety that she alighted at Udupi depot and climbed into the local transportation to get to Dr. Eva's Basel Mission Hospital. Riding through the streets in a tonga (a two-wheeled vehicle with large wooden wheels led by a horse) gave her an intimate glimpse of the little town. Having forced his way through a medley of handcarts, rickshaws, bicycles and

bullock carts, the tonga-walla or horseman of the intriguing contraption soon steered the animal into the hospital.

When they were unloading her sparse luggage, she heard a warm and familiar voice: "Welcome Dr Kunjalia!".

It was Dr Eva Lombard in the flesh, outdoing her role as Medical Superintendent of the hospital. Along with her a host of other staff stepped forward with excited smiles and offers to carry her bags.

Within minutes, Kunjalia's anxieties melted away. Their warmth did not decrease in the days that followed and she settled in sooner than she had imagined she would.

Dr Lombard, as promised, was extremely good to Kunjalia. They went for evening walks together during which the doctor discussed and shared financial and other problems she faced in running the hospital. They even became prayer partners. The verse from the Bible that Eva quoted frequently was from Psalm 68:19 – "Blessed be the Lord who daily leadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." (This was one of the promises Kunjalia clung to, long after Dr Lombard departed from India.)

Kunjalia's faith grew into maturity as she found that the Doctor ("call me Eva") was a genuine follower of Christ, whose deepest desire was to please God in everything. Eva encouraged holistic medicine;

Sickness destroys the body but sin is the greater disease as it destroys body, mind and soul: she encouraged Evangelistic ministry at the hospital; so that people may be healed not only physically but spiritually as well. She set an example through her words and through her sacrificial and exemplary life.

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Mathew 16:26

Eva sacrificed her life for the Indian people in the service of God. She was an inspiration, encouragement and a blessing to Kunjalia and a host of others by her sheer lifestyle and behaviour, for her convictions were her credentials.

Once Kunjalia started working, she had to learn many new procedures regarding patient cards, hospital charges and many other things which were new to her. She was given a brief tour of the hospital by one of the doctors, and every day was a new learning experience.

She was very happy to learn that compared to the Government Hospital, the service given at the Mission Hospital was way above standard. Most of the doctors and nurses were from Switzerland and Germany. She was the first Indian doctor. Their dedicated service and hard work brought out the best in her and set very high standards of service.

They had to cope with some amusing anomalies. The Swiss are obsessive about punctuality; India, on the other hand, may have been asleep when God was distributing the virtue! No matter what they said or did, Dr. Lombard and her team could not get rural India to be punctual and meticulous in their medical practices. A simple medical consultation brought much stress; interruptions were frequent and the care-keepers of the patients were rather laid back. They also waited till an ordinary malady became an emergency and only then did they rush to the doctor. The mission hospital thus learned that emergency cases could be expected at all times; so they ensured that all kinds of treatment were available at all times.

Unforgettable imprints on the sands of time...

In her memoirs, Kunjalia remembers Mary, who used to be at the counter collecting money from the patients. She was the one in charge of the Patient charts and her memory was so good that she could recall the histories of patients who were treated several years ago! She was a great help to Kunjalia especially during the first few months of her time in Udupi Hospital.

Then there was Sister Trudy Hunziker (Karkada) who Kunjalia often spoke of very fondly. She used to sit by Kunjalia's side and take down notes by shorthand in the Out Patient Department. She'd then go on to painstakingly type out the letters and bring them back for signature. She was a great help and friend too.

Mrs Ezekiel Ayya, known as the Bible woman, spoke to the patients about Jesus and distributed tracts and copies of the New Testament. Ayya went round explaining to the patients that Jesus was the only way, the Truth and the life. She was also a great comfort to them, encouraging, loving and listening to them with the grace and great patience of God.

There were many others, like Dora and Dheena , who remained as invaluable friends of the family and prayer partners for life.

The Isolation ward was often full with TB (Tuberculosis), Leprosy and Cancer patients. It was large, spacious and situated away from the main hospital.

In 1947, Dr Pflugfelder, an Ophthalmologist, arrived from Switzerland. She took over the Eye work and was a huge asset to the hospital.

While Kunjalia was quick to notice that Expatriate doctors were very efficient and dedicated in their work, she also noted that they were somewhat reluctant to share

their knowledge and expertise with their Indian colleagues. Either there was an element of distrust and feeling that no one could possibly carry out the work better than them! As a result, most of the surgery and even obstetrical procedures were mainly done by the foreign doctors. At times, Kunjalia found this difficult to swallow.

She found her strength however, in the Lord and was able to submit with grace and humility to the authorities at the time.

The essence of being a Christian doctor

Kunjalia realized that she could bear all things because instead of thinking "who I am" her attitude was rather shaped by the thought of "whose I am." That is the difference between a disciple of Christ and a secular medical practitioner. It involves being part of a transformed humanity whose reference point is the living God. It means accepting all things in the light of the relationship with God, offering all things up to the Lord and believing that expertise and promotions come from the Lord. Like Eva, Kunjalia too stepped into the hospital every morning as a soldier and servant of the King with a vision for His Kingdom fully aware of the spiritual war and equipped with spiritual weapons: the Word and the Spirit of God, faith, prayer and righteousness.

Kunjalia hugged humility close to her heart through those days; her example was always her Saviour and Lord who was in nature God , but humbled himself and took on the role of a servant.

" Man's standard of greatness is to be served but God's standard is to serve.

Man's standard is to receive but God's standard is to give,

...Man's standard is to humble others but God's standard is to humble oneself."

She had to learn that (as in Ephesians 6:5–8) servants serve in singleness of heart, not with eye service, as men pleasers but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heartwith good will do service unto the Lord, not to men.

Doctor Luke,mentioned in the Bible is the prototype for Christian men and women who care for the sufferings of people and have laboured and served to alleviate their pain by imitating Christ, the Great physician. We know Luke by name only because Apostle Paul mentions him three times in his letters. We know that Luke was a doctor because Paul says so, but we might have guessed as his writings reveal an interest in medical details !. Paul was badly mauled in his journey's and consequently, must have been in need of medical attention. It is fitting that God should have provided the great Evangelist with his own private doctor !

The Gospel would not have gone forward as well as it did if its principal bearer had not been able to continue his task. Luke was fiercely loyal to Paul, remaining with him through his captivity and trials. At times, Luke was the only one who remained

faithful to Paul. Interestingly, his medical ethic may have been at the root of his faithfulness.

If Christianity takes a compassionate view towards the sick, and if Christian doctors share a common attitude, Luke helped foster both. His testimony to Christ continues to resound wherever and whenever the Scriptures are read, and his ideals are remembered. Luke had the love of Christ, evangelistic zeal, concern for truth, humility and compassion, loyalty and professional skill. We need seek no better model of the Christian doctor.

As for Kunjalia, she had to learn to follow the example of Jesus who submitted to God's will and became obedient even unto death. She had to learn "to let everyday be a day of humility, to be able to serve the Living God and the valuable lesson learnt sustained her throughout her life,..... one could say even as a private physician to her own husband who happened to be an Evangelist!

The Lord was surely pleased with her spirit of submission for not only was she entrusted with more and more responsibility as well as opportunity to gain skills in the OT (Operation Theatre) but in 1955, when Dr Eva Lombard returned to Switzerland, Kunjalia was asked to take over the position of Medical Superintendent as she was the only registered and qualified doctor who'd graduated from the Madras University.

It was a huge privilege as well as a Herculean task to manage a 220 bed Hospital with a thriving A grade Nursing school. To make matters worse, when she took over, the hospital was facing serious financial difficulties. Yet, God's steadfast love surrounded her and His right hand sustained her for 26 years as doctor, 16 years as Medical Superintendent in the Basel Mission Hospital. There were plenty of ups and downs and it was certainly an adventure with many surprises and suspense's, changes and challenges, for the glory of God.

And then came Augustine.

There is a time for everything...

We all like to hear or read a story like that of Isaac and Rebekah in the Bible. A simple love story! A trusted servant sent by his master to look for a bride for his only son. Plenty of suspense too – just imagine a beautiful girl who is bold enough to say "I will", without even looking at her prospective husband! (Gen 24:58) Rebekah's family did of course allow her to make the final choice.

Ravi Zacharias writes: "Rebekah may seem impulsive here. Yet, the preparation for her decision was already underway, long before this moment. It was instinctive, the legitimate bequest of her habits"

In the 1940s, the vast majority of Indian marriages were fundamentally arranged. The so called "love marriage" were frowned upon as unwise and untraditional. In Kerala in particular, many marriages were little more than contractual arrangements. The parents involved would discuss and work out all the details! Often, the bride and bridegroom were just pawns in the brokering of a 'deal'. Uppermost in the topic of their [the parent's] discussion would be things like: dowry, property, money, and jewellery. And yes, this was operational even in the Christian community!

While there are drawbacks to this approach and obvious flaws in the development of the system, there are certainly advantages that parents play a pivotal role in fixing a marriage. Yet, parental wisdom, love and interference – even with the best of intentions – was often abused and many daughters ended up becoming unfortunate victims.

For Augustine however, it was definitely what we sometimes refer to as "Love at first sight"! God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

The chapter had actually started before she came to Udipi.

When Kunjalia was working as a doctor in Mercara, she had regularly conducted prayer meetings at her home. She and a friend would also make house visits to pray for people in need.

Spiritual Life meetings were going on in the Basel Mission Church in Mercara. Kunjalia found some free time in the evening and rushed to the Church from the hospital. The fiery Evangelist, who was bouncing around the pulpit, shedding tears and pleading with the people to give their lives to Christ, caught her attention and she found it difficult to get him out of her mind!

The next day, she was surprised to see Augustine seated with Pastor G B Maben at her Prayer meeting! After the meeting, just as Augustine was leaving, he turned round and asked Kunjalia: "Will I see you again?"

Kunjalia was a little taken aback but promptly replied: "If not in this world, in the next!"

They had a brief conversation after the meeting after which Augustine promised to send her prayer requests. He kept his word and before long they had become prayer partners!

In her memoirs, Kunjalia writes, "*We wrote to each other quite often – I'd often tell him about my life and ask for prayer for myself and matters relating to the hospital and work.*"

And now here she was – in Augustine's birth place.

NO PROMISE OF A ROSE GARDEN...

At the time when Kunjalia arrived to first take up her post of service ...

... in the Udupi-based Basel Mission Hospital, Augustine was away on a preaching tour. Behind the scenes and in his absence, his extended family in Udupi was going through a series of crisis. Tragedy struck again and again. Augustine's brothers were in and out of the hospital several times.

Those were the circumstances which allowed Kunjalia to get rather well acquainted with his family. She was able to arrange for special care for them at hospital when needed and of course continued to uphold them in prayer.

When Augustine returned from his tour, he was thrilled and excited to see Kunjalia in Udupi! She was equally delighted to see him and hear about all the wonderful things God had been doing in his life and through his ministry.

Their relationship continued to grow and there was no doubt about God being at the very centre of it all. Even as individuals, the reality of God and His Word was the undeniable foundation of their very lives.

As they got closer and considered the possibility of marriage, they sought to see it God's way. One might even say Augustine was rather black and white on the issue. He had an idea of what marriage should be like (based on his Biblical understanding) and it was that he would be the head of the family and his (future) wife would have to simply and implicitly trust and follow him! Although Augustine was four years younger than Kunjalia, (She was 37 and he was 33!), he certainly didn't hold back on expressing his views and opinions. In Kunjalia's memoirs she recalls some of the (rather straightforward) conditions he put forward as part of the consideration of marriage:

1. God should be first in their family and private lives.

2. If God called him to the end of the world to preach the Gospel, he expected her full support and encouragement.

3.Regular Tithe giving should be observed.

4.Any old friendships (with men) should be curtailed (unless it was clear that these were okay to maintain in God's will).

After much prayer and fasting, Augustine's mind was set, having received a promise from God that Kunjalia would be the virtuous wife as described in Proverbs chapter 31.

For Kunjalia however, it was not that simple. 'Lord, give me wisdom and humility. Show me your will,' she prayed. She had difficult questions to ask herself. 'Can I make this commitment for life? After having been in leadership position for so long, will I be able to submit myself and take second place?'

As they prayed on the matter, there were many factors to consider. Augustine was a faith worker. He had hardly any money. His large family was facing all kinds of problems. (Kunjalia on the other hand was a successful doctor with huge potential) Yet, he was so focused. His one desire was to please the Lord and preach the Gospel. Kunjalia being more logical and practical was more rooted in reality. She trusted Augustine and knew he was a man of God but needed to be sure that it was right for her to commit to him for the rest of her life.

For days she wrestled in prayer. She also studied the lives of women in the Bible who were entrusted with great spiritual responsibilities. Mary, mother of Jesus, Ruth, Elizabeth, Hannah and others. They had gladly surrendered to God's will although the task ahead was not necessarily set out to be a bed of roses.

The more she submerged herself into the Word of God, the greater was the clarity with which God spoke to her. Confusion dissolved and she knew she had heard from the Lord. There was going to be no "rose garden" or a path strewn with daisies. There would be much sacrifice and even greater hardship, but there it was, and there was no doubt about it: Augustine was the man God had chosen for her.

And He would equip her with the grace she needed to be a suitable helpmate and the "best wife in the universe" for God's own humble servant.

The acid test...

A

big test was just round the corner.

It was unexpected. There were parental protests from both sides.

Kunjalia's parents were not happy about her decision. Her Chaldean Syrian family didn't see the visual of her marrying a poor evangelist from Karnataka as particularly appealing. They had high hopes for their only daughter, a well-established doctor, and had always been over-protective of her.

The most unexpected response however, came from Augustine's mother. When she heard her son's decision, she just blurted out: "Augustine - you are dedicated and anointed to be a servant of the Lord. Surely it is not right for you to marry!" She even pointed him to the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:1 "It is good for a man not to marry. I wish that all men were as I am."

The parental frowns presented a dilemma as both Augustine and Kunjalia were unwilling to go ahead without the whole-hearted consent and blessing of their beloved parents. The struggle to honour this commitment was a deep one. How could they violate an authority that has been put in place by God? They were reminded of the verse in Ephesians 6:2 "Honour your Father and Mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth."

They made it a matter of passionate prayer. As they wrestled in prayer, they agreed that they would *only* proceed if their parents consented. God honoured their faithfulness. It was Augustine's father who gave his consent first. His mother followed with her blessing soon after.

Although they were both Indians, there was also a rather peculiar and specific cultural barrier to overcome. Kunjalia had learnt Kannada (Augustine's native language) to be able to understand the patients. Augustine however, knew just a few words of Malayalam (Kunjalia's native tongue). To throw a little more variety in the mix, Augustine's relatives spoke Tulu and Kunjalia didn't know Tulu at all! They did of course both speak English, and for the most part that was the language they communicated in.

In time, Kunjalia's parents also joined hands to bless the couple. The thrill of receiving the blessing of both the parents made their joy complete and they felt emotionally ready to plan their marriage.

The future looked wonderfully bright.

A Wedding to remember...

In 1946, there was strict rationing in Udupi. Augustine and Kunjalia decided to have a simple wedding. Kunjalia decided she would wear an ordinary white cotton sari.

At that time, Augustine had gone to preach to a place near Mysore. Usually, he received only his fare and sometimes a very small gift. This time however, he

received a generous a gift of Rs 100. He blessed the givers in his heart even as he could not stop thanking and praising God for the unexpected gesture.

He stopped at Mysore on his return journey and Mrs Sathydas took him shopping. He bought a beautiful Mysore silk white sari for Rs 86 and a blouse for Rs 14.

Augustine's little sister Eileen was overjoyed at the sari and very pleased to hand it to the prospective bride the next day. Kunjalia, who had wistfully reconciled with the idea of wearing her lowly cotton sari, could not believe her eyes. She closed herself in her room and cried before the Lord, so moved was she.

December 2, 1946, was selected as the wedding day. Kunjalia was working hard at the hospital right until her wedding eve. Her friends Dora, Dheena, Rajivi and Dorca *akka* - were the ones who attended to the task of decorating the house and getting it ready for the guests. Kunjalia's old saris were used as curtains! A few colourful streamers, balloons and flowers brightened up the place and by the time they were done, the place looked splendid!

On the day before the wedding, Manorama Stevens (Kakaden) came and gave Kunjalia the traditional bath. A paste made of coconut milk and turmeric was smeared all over her body. Everyone joined in and had great fun.

Finally the wedding morning dawned and soon she was all dressed and ready to go to Church. That was when she realized with a pang that she had forgotten to buy the (bridal) white Bible to match with her sari and that she didn't even have a purse! Just then, her friend Leela Ammanna arrived from Parpale, and was most willing to donate her own purse and Bible to Kunjalia for the special occasion!

As Kunjalia walked up the aisle, escorted by her beloved father, her heart was full of thanks and praise to God who had made his guidance at every step of the way clear.

Rev. G.B. Maben conducted the service and Rev. Dr. P.E. Burckhardt gave the sermon. The theme was: "My son, give me your heart."

As they embarked in this exciting and enjoyable new adventure with one mind , one Spirit and one purpose, hand in hand, the organ played and the congregation sang the Hymn

" The voice that breathed over Eden, the earliest wedding day,

The primal marriage blessing, it hath not passed away,

Be present Heavenly Father, to give away this bride,

As Eve Thou gav'st to Adam, Out of his own pierced side,

Be present gracious Saviour, to join their loving hands,

As Thou didst bind two natures, in Thine eternal bands,

Be present Holy Spirit, To bless them as they kneel,
As Thou, for Christ the bridegroom, The heavenly spouse dost seal,
O spread Thy pure wings over them, Let no ill power find place,
When onward through life's journey, The hallowed path they trace,
To cast their crowns before Thee, in perfect sacrifice,
Till to the home of gladness, With Christ's own bride they rise."

After the service, the Bride and Bridegroom were covered in garlands. The wedding procession marched to the Bridegroom's house.

At the entrance of the house stood a little boy and girl with pots filled with water to wash their feet (as was the custom); in return they expected that silver coins would be put in their pots. Their expectations were met.

The bride and the bridegroom were then made to sit on a decorated sofa. The open air tent was beautifully decorated and the courtyard was full of guests. Dr and Mrs Burkhardt, the staff from the hospital, relatives and friends were served tea and snacks.

Later, dinner was served for about 100 people.

In Kunjalia's hand-written autobiography there is no mention of a honeymoon! I don't recall her talking about one either. My assumption is that they both returned to work immediately after their wedding.

That God had given them their hearts desire by way of their parents' approval to the marriage was a gift enough for them.

To have sought anything more would have spelt greed.

Blessings unlimited...

The next year, on 6th September, 1947, I, Monica Jayakumari, was born at the Basel Mission Hospital. I was 5 pounds and 8 ozs. My mother recalled that her mother-in-law was a great help and encouragement during that time. She handled most of the initial care of the child; later, a helper called "Mariakka" took care of the baby.

Kunjalia writes:

"Little Monica was breast fed and later osterr milk was given as supplementary feed. Gradually, solid food was added. It was a great joy for us to have our daughter with us and it was a great pleasure to see her slowly crawling, trying to sit up, then holding on to the edge of the cot taking a few steps when she was just 11 months old.

"On the 6th of February, 1949, our second daughter Dorothy Jaya Christine was born. She was 4 pounds and 12 ozs. She cried a lot at night and I remember having to get up several times – she was a weak infant and needed plenty of attention. Gradually, she started crawling, sitting up and walking, but was much slower than Monica to pick up on some of the fundamentals! After the 2 children were born, we moved to what was called the "Big Bungalow" and occupied 6 of the 12 huge rooms. We had 2 helpers, one to cook and the other to look after the children."

BATTLING FOES SEEN AND UNSEEN...

In July, 1950, after a long and strenuous preaching tour in and around North India, Augustine came home exhausted and worn out. Kunjalia noted with dismay the stoop of his powerful shoulders and the thin drawn line of exhaustion that became apparent from his face.

Kunjalia was worried at the lack of sparkle in his eyes and the sudden dullness in his attitude. He had even lost his appetite (he otherwise truly enjoyed food!) and was complaining of frequent severe headaches. Sometimes he felt too weak to even get up and he appeared to be experiencing extreme fatigue and tiredness. His strength and health certainly seemed to be declining.

Yet, the symptoms were vague and the diagnosis was ambiguous.

Mood swings with difficulty in sleeping along with a poor appetite and lack of strength pointed to stress. The suggestion was also made that he was depressed. Statistics say that at some point in all our lives 40% have severe feelings of depression and disappointment. Only 20 % however, suffer from Clinical depression which has to be treated.

The other possibility was that Augustine was having a nervous breakdown with real physical symptoms. The doctors advised rest for six months. Other medical colleagues thought that it could be *Anxiety Neurosis*.

Other than rest and relaxation, the doctors weren't really able to prescribe any treatment. One of Augustine's sisters was facing a similar problem (depression and anxiety) so they also blamed it on the genes!

In those days, the option to consult a Psychiatrist was not seriously considered. First of all, they were few and far between in those days, and there was also the stigma attached to any kind of mental breakdown that prevented patients from seeking help in that quarter.

They faced a real dilemma, and cried to the Lord for help.

We need to keep track of the fact that Kunjalia had not yet given up her job at the hospital.

She was struggling to cope with hospital work, attending to the needs of her ailing husband as well as taking care of my sister and me. That's when our grandparents came to her rescue - I was sent to my mother's parents in Trichur and Christine was cared for by my father's parents at Udupi.

Kunjalia was nearly heartbroken as the circumstances forced her to send away her two girls. Yet, at the time it was clear that Augustine needed all her attention and care.

Long hours of exertion at the hospital and sleepless nights were weighing Kunjalia down until one day she discovered that she had *Infective Hepatitis* – which quickly culminated into severe jaundice. My mother was released from hospital duties with immediate effect. And now, both Augustine and Kunjalia were bedridden and alone.

It was a bleak, bleak time.

Augustine's growing concern was that he could not preach. Still – he had hundreds of visitors dropping in to see him and offer encouragement. Some gave their opinion with obvious concern but there were others of course that were not so considerate or understanding.

Some gave up hope altogether and wondered whether he could ever go back to the pulpit. Pain, anxiety and disappointment were the order of the day. Kunjalia relied on friends who were prayerful, sympathetic, caring and concerned in their approach and she valued them and their support. In addition to that, both of them valued visits from his family.

Kunjalia was slowly recovering but the weakness and weariness was still lurking behind the scenes. It seemed as though Augustine too was improving but it was a slow process. He had begun to attend the Choir practice in the Basel Mission Church nearby. He seemed excited as the German Missionaries were training the choir to sing Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus"

One day, hearing the commotion outside the house, Kunjalia rushed to the door only to find Augustine being carried in on a stretcher! It transpired that during choir practice, he had fallen down and started having convulsions.

The news spread like wildfire and she was surrounded by relatives, friends and the hospital staff on all sides. She was so thankful for all their concern and help. Kunjalia was a prayer warrior, her eyes were fixed on Jesus and her strength was in the Lord. In any situation, she managed never to lose her cool. She could be going through the most dire and dreadful circumstance, but her stoic composure did not reveal a jot of what was going on inside her. Strong will power and a stable head were her strong points.

Augustine was rushed to Vellore Medical College Hospital. They travelled all night and day to get there. A family friend, Mr E B Soans accompanied Kunjalia and was a great comfort and help. Kunjalia was soon lost among the courtyards, sprawling wings, verandas crowded with patients and wards with the ceaseless buzz of hospital activity. As it happened, Augustine's cousins, Dr Prabhavathy Kunders, and Dr Gertrude Joshua were among the staff of Vellore and they were able to help greatly.

Despite all that was taking place, the white dome of the Chapel stood out as a place of solace and comfort for Kunjalia and she spent several hours there, her eyes closed and her lips moving in silent prayer.

Wrestling with God...

*A*ll kinds of investigations followed.

Kunjalia waited anxiously for the results. The Neurosurgeon who came to see Augustine was brusque and blunt; he'd forgotten to bring his 'bedside manners' to work that day. The prognosis, when it came, was devastating: Augustine had a tumour in his brain. The doctors advised immediate surgery.

Kunjalia went into shock and her movements after that were mechanical. The touch of her hand and a mask of reassurance on her face were all she could offer Augustine at that time. She had not been able to shed tears. Her stunned sorrow and grief was hidden away like a dry hard core dulling her senses and choking her throat.

Hour after hour she sat by his bed, gently stroking his restless, listless hands. Whenever Augustine opened his eyes, it was Kunjalia's face he saw. He continued to go under and then emerge from periods of sharp pain. Once he reflected how he felt Kunjalia's face – on looking at it – appeared to have merged into the outlines of

another face - marked even more deeply with suffering - brow rimmed and with a crown of thorns!

The Oncologist who arrived after two days was most sympathetic and caring. He was a specialist in the field and yet had the humility of a saint. He gave his opinion with obvious concern but yet again the news was not particularly encouraging. He did however assure Kunjalia that he would request that they repeated the X-rays and electroencephalogram (EEG) to measure and record the electrical activity of the brain before surgery was scheduled.

Kunjalia spent much time in prayer and meditation and every spare minute was taken up by looking after Augustine in hospital. She took great comfort in verses 19-20 from Psalm 34: *"A righteous man may have many troubles but the Lord delivers him from them all. He protects all his bones. Not one of them will be broken."*

One night, after Augustine slept under heavy medication, she closed her eyes and let her heart break open; Kunjalia cried out to the Lord; it was as if a dam had burst open, the tears stored away began to flow like a flood as she interceded:

Lord, have mercy on us. For the sake of your great name have mercy on us. I hold on to your promise Lord. Psalm 71:1 – 3 "In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge. Let me never be put to shame. Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me and save me. Be my Rock of refuge, to which I can always go. Give the command to save me, for you are my Rock and my fortress."

She repented for her sins and confessed her sins of pride, self-sufficiency, selfish desires, selfish ambitions and anything that was not pleasing to the Lord. In your mercy and love, give the command to save my husband, she prayed.

Night after night she stayed awake begging God to heal him. One time, as she was praying, she dropped off to sleep. When she awakened with a start, she saw Augustine sitting up and smiling at her. His face was radiant and his eyes appeared to be sparkling again. Just the smile in itself was reassuring!

In her weakest moment, spiritually and physically, when she felt hopeless, helpless, and powerless, God in His mercy had intervened.

She felt that her heart was filled with the joy and peace which passed all understanding. When all hope was gone, when she had surrendered everything as well as her beloved Augustine in to God's hands; when she came to the stage that she could do *nothing*, God took over and gave her the rest she desperately needed. God became everything, her all in all.

Her heart was overflowing with praise and thanks. Augustine was able to join her in this celebration of Praise and worship. Both of them lifted their eyes to Heaven and said, " Lord, let your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

The next day, Augustine had to undergo a series of x rays and tests. The peace of God rested on both of them during the procedures.

The Neurosurgeon walked in with a nurse. He looked rather relaxed.

"The tests have shown that there is no tumour in the brain. It now appears that there is only a peculiar depression! In light of these new results, we have decided there is no need to operate ..."

Augustine and Kunjalia looked at each other and smiled. The Neurosurgeon walked away.

They were both filled with songs of praise.

Psalm 145:13b " The Lord is faithful to all His Promises."

Psalm 34:19 and 20 had come true in Augustine's life.

They firmly believed that a miracle from God had saved his life so that he could continue to serve and preach the gospel.

"O Lord, we'd love to – it's all we want to do!" their spirits sang in unison.

Part of God's plan...

Kunjalia realized that Augustine's illness and miraculous recovery had been part of the Lord's design – to strengthen her husband's testimony and preaching of the Gospel. They believed with all their hearts that *"we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works (share the Gospel, lead others to healing and salvation), which God prepared in advance for us to do"*(Ephesians 2:1).

In the power struggle between Good and Evil, that is exactly what the evil one does not want us to do. Sickness, decay and death are the result of human rebellion and Satan's rule. Healing (spiritual as well as physical) and miracles are signs of salvation – *wholeness*- Christ's rule in the heart of man.

Pain and suffering in this world inevitably stirs up varied questions in the sceptical human mind. Where is God when things go wrong, and our hearts are wrenched with pain? Did God single out 'Haiti' to be levelled and destroyed by an earthquake? Does he withhold rain from the African countries as a sign of His displeasure; difficult questions with no easy answers!

Daniel Defoe's 'A journal of the plague year' described the bubonic plague which afflicted London in 1665. He walks around the Ghost city. Sorrow and sadness sat upon every face. 1500 -1700 people died each day. The bodies were buried in cavernous open pits.

"There were gruesome scenes everywhere. Children locked in the grip of their parents rigor mortis.

A half-alive baby sucking in vain at the breast of his dead mother.

In those days, around 200,000 fled London and the rest barricaded themselves indoors. It looked as though God's wrath was being poured out on the entire planet.

Wild eyed prophets roamed the streets of London preaching God's judgment."

Even AIDS poses similar questions.

There are those who say, 'They are getting what they deserve.' Others wonder what innocent babies did to get infected ...

In Luke 13 : 1- 5 We read the response of Jesus to such questions.

The victim and the bystander in such circumstances are called to simply *repent*.

Let us remain humble and thankful if we are not the victims and let us be compassionate and generous and show extraordinary acts of kindness to those who *are* afflicted by sorrow and suffering.

Augustine was given treatment for Epilepsy and eventually discharged from Vellore Medical College. Sr Hannah Ashermann was sent by God to show extra ordinary kindness to the Salins's. She came herself to collect the couple and both of them

were allowed to recover and recuperate in the Christa Sevakee Ashram (as described in an earlier chapter) at Parpale in Karkala of Udupi; it is a missionary institute of the Church of South India.

How accurately Lamentations 3:22 soothes: *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness."*

On their return to Udupi, Kunjalia joined the Hospital and Augustine began his preaching tours once again.

On 11th May 1953, when Kunjalia was forty-three, the long-awaited son Paul Christadas was born to them. Holding one another's hands they looked at the newborn gift from the secret place and whispered: "How many ways can we praise you, O Lord? Language seems so limited when we are addressing the God who created vocabulary."

Take our lives as a living sacrifice and let every breath that we take be consecrated for Your work and Your purpose. We will go where you send us, we will do whatever you command."

(When we trust and obey Him, we are rest assured that the one who promised is faithful.

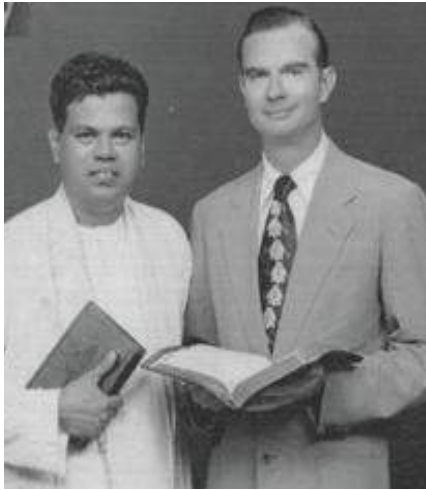
(So also, let us be faithful to each other at all times)

He will carry you and keep you till the end and will present you blameless on that glorious day.

God certainly took them at their word.

A SELECTION OF FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS





CHAPTER SIX

SERVING INDIA

Leaving behind a secular job and financial security was by no means an easy decision to make. No one had promised him financial support. Further, he could not simply by-pass the factor that his brothers and sisters depended on him for their education as his father had already retired.

Let us pause and look around for a minute. Who can deny that today the harvest is great, but the labourers are few? God is calling each one of us to full-time service in him. The question or controversy arises as to what is full-time service? Or are we simply being asked to release the gifts that he has planted in us in ordinary as well as extra-ordinary ways for God's glory ?

In 'Know and tell the Gospel' author John Chapman writes, 'Evangelism should be a way of life. It is God's will for all His people.' In Mathew 28:18 Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations.....And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." The command is referred to as the Great Commission and was given to all disciples till "the end of age."

Further, there is the promise of Acts 1:8 - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." These words were spoken by Jesus to His disciples. It is interesting that Jesus did not say to them, 'Ye shall be Apostles, or evangelists or Church builders, but 'You shall be my witnesses.' For every follower of Christ is essentially a witness, regardless of who he is or what his profession is; whether pastor, missionary or layman, a man's primary task is to witness for Christ and to bring the lost to Him. Someone asked William Carey one day before he ever became a missionary, what his business was. "Sir," he replied, "My business is to proclaim Christ, but I cobble shoes to pay expenses."

"Would that every Christian could say with equal conviction: My business is to proclaim Christ, but I teach at school, - or run a farm, or practise medicine, or work on the railway - to pay expenses! Not every follower of Christ can be a pastor or an evangelist, but everyone can be a witness. If a man, once devil possessed, could be a witness (Mark 5 : 19 & 20) and a man once blind could be a witness (John 9:25) and a woman, once a harlot, could be a witness (John Chapter 4), and the early Christians, persecuted and dispersed, could be witnesses, (Acts 8 : 4) , then surely, you and I can be witnesses for Christ." (An excerpt from The More

Excellent Way – an article which appeared in a magazine published by Rev. J. T. Seamands, Methodist Mission, Belgaum, December, 1957.)

Augustine Salins received his call. The head master said "Who can stand in the way of God's call. Go in the liberty of the Spirit of God to serve Him for His glory."

After he resigned from his job, one of his colleagues after a time of prayer encouraged him saying ' Augustine, people are hankering after power, position and popularity. Money is on the top of their agenda. You are giving up everything to be able to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember that this is the highest calling and it merits an eternal reward.'

Read on.....about the faith that anticipates, dares, persists and acts.

Brother Shathananda from Chintamani, " Augustine, Praise God for the ten minutes."

The crisis – Some predicted that his ministry was over.

The victory - God enlarges his vision from his own pathetic and unfortunate circumstances to the entire world.

"The seed which multiplies is the seed that dies."

Evangelist points the way!

We owe the most challenging picture ever verbally sketched of an evangelist to John Bunyan, the author of the book *Pilgrim's Progress*. In the story, the lead character Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall. And this was the fashion of it. He had eyes lifted up to Heaven. The best of books was in his hand. The law of truth was written upon his lips and the world was behind his back. He stood as if he pleaded with men and a crown of gold did hang over his head.

Later on in *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian comes to the house of the Interpreter. There, he was shown a picture of the evangelist. "The man in the picture," said the Interpreter, "is one in a thousand. He can beget children, travail in birth with children and nurse them himself when they are born."

How did evangelists and missionaries progress in India?

Unofficial statistics reveal more, but even the official statistics showing 24 million Christians in the country sound impressive (after all that is more than the population of Sri Lanka or Australia) until you realize that it is a bare 2.3 percent of India's total population.

In the years preceding the rise of Mahatma Gandhi, India as a country was ripe for evangelism. The reason was the caste system. Around 17 percent of the population belonged to the 'untouchable' low caste; Hindus did not consider them as belonging to their faith. In addition were the tribes from which sanitary workers hailed who constituted 7% of the population that existed even below the 'untouchables'.

It was in 1944, three years before India won her independence, that Augustine Salins heard the call from God to be a full time evangelist. The call was clear and unequivocal – during his quiet time with the Lord, the words of Isaiah 6:8 jumped out of the pages of the Bible as the *Logos* turned into a *Rhema* ('Logos' gives general knowledge, understanding and wisdom about God; whereas the Word of God turns into 'Rhema' when God uses it to impart his supernatural, post-Resurrection faith into a believer's heart so that the person knows the instruction pertains to his specific circumstances):

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

In the passage he was reading, the conversation is between the Lord and Prophet Isaiah.

Who will go? Isaiah had answered: 'Here am I, Send me Lord.' God sends Isaiah to foretell the ruin of His people if they persisted in their disobedience.

In his heart, Augustine knew that the Lord was sending him for the harvesting of millions of hungry and needy souls in India.

He bent his head in joyful obedience.

The ironical truth...

Yet – leaving behind a secular job and financial security was by no means an easy decision to make. No one had promised him financial support. Further, he could not simply by-pass the factor that his brothers and sisters depended on him for their education as his father had already retired.

Still – the compulsion, the calling, the irresistible impulse was like fire in his bones. He knew that God who had called, would also make a way!

Augustine talked his decision over with his aged father. It must have come as a shock to him and as the story goes he was silent for two full days! Then he called his

son aside and said, "Son, your mother and I have decided to gladly send you for God's service. Whatever our difficulties, and our financial burdens – we believe they will be taken care of. I believe that God will take care of you and our family."

Augustine praised God for His faithfulness and found courage to hand in his resignation in his workplace.

The Headmaster said "Who can stand in the way of God's call. Go, in the liberty of the Spirit of God to serve Him for His glory." One of his colleagues spent some time with Augustine in prayer after hearing about his resignation. He encouraged Augustine: "People are hankering after power, position and popularity. Money is on the top of their agenda. You are giving up everything to be able to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember always that this is the highest calling and it merits an eternal reward" He took out a silver coin and pressed it into Augustine's hand, and said: "Thus the Lord will provide."

Augustine has testified time and again, that the silver coin was never exhausted. God's grace was more than sufficient at all times and his needs were met providentially under all circumstances for the glory of God.

In preparation for his ministry as an Evangelist, he spent a week in prayer and fasting with his friends and mentors. They laid hands on him and dedicated him and he received a fresh anointing from the Lord. Another follower of Christ, Rev. Sundar Tholar was one of the people who also gave up a flourishing property business - and stepped out on a limb to serve the Lord.

Rev Hollis Abbot, Principal of the South India Bible School at Kolar, offered Augustine a special invitation to attend a Bible Course free of charge. Promptly, Augustine went to Kolar and joined. Augustine drank in their lectures. He participated in the informal discussions and absorbed as much knowledge of the scriptures as he could. He enjoyed the fellowship, the encouragement as well as the spiritual atmosphere at the Bible College.

After ten days of study however, Augustine was surprised to find his spirit restless, and uncertain as to whether he should continue the course. He sought God regarding His will and direction. It occurred to him that he had jumped at the first opening (this Bible course) without waiting on God for definite guidance.

In the quietness of his room, once again he was involved in a spiritual battle and the Word of the Lord came to him crystal clear from the Book of Job 22:21,22. *"Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace. Thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive I pray thee the law from His mouth and lay up His words in thine heart."*

Then with further clarity came the call of Jeremiah 1:5: *"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart"* -5:9. *"Then the Lord*

reached out His hand and touched my mouth and said to me 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.'"

It was through much prayer and fasting that Augustine understood that God wanted him to go out to the field and learn from Him directly through the University of Creation, rather than spend time in lectures and discussions at a Bible School.

This is not to say that God disregards Bible Colleges; they were simply not going to be part of God's plan for Augustine Salins, who like the apostle Paul, was going to be personally instructed by the Lord.

Divine affirmation...

When John and Andrew met Jesus, they asked 'Where are you staying ?' Jesus replied 'Come and see.' They wanted to follow Jesus and learn from Him. They wanted to know what made his head turn, his heart burn and his soul yearn! By following in His footsteps they learnt how Jesus handled Power. Jesus did not use power to impress others or to enrich himself. They learnt how to handle people. When he saw the multitudes, Jesus was moved with compassion. He did not view them as interruptions, irritations or obstacles. They also learnt how to handle priorities. When vast crowds came to hear Him and be healed, Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

Richard Exley says, "If we've come often to God in the sunshine, our anxious feet will find the familiar pathway in the darkest night, because going to Him has become second nature to us."

The greater the time a believer spends in the presence of the Lord, the more familiar he gets with the voice of God; and even after that, there is divine confirmation.

The morning after his week of fasting and prayer, Augustine received two letters. One was from his father and the other from Rev. Dr Bruckhardt, Principal of the Mangalore Theological Seminary who was also one of Augustine's spiritual mentors.

Dr. Burckhardt's wrote, "Augustine, we definitely feel that you need no theological training in a Seminary. Go out into the field in the liberty of the Holy Spirit, and listen for the Lord's instructions and guidance."

Dr Abbot and the students were sad to let Augustine go, but they sent him out with the words: "Let God's will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

And as it was in the life of this faithful servant of God.

Two years later, Augustine was invited to speak at the inaugural meeting of the Bible School and the following years regularly for revival meetings on the premises. On almost every occasion, Dr Abbot introduced Augustine as "the graduate, who completed Bible College in ten days"!

The ministry that faith built...

Augustine was led to go to a Christian Ashram in Chintamani, started by Shathananda, a devout Christian and a man of God. He was gloriously converted and transformed from a sinful life. The Ashram was a beehive of spiritual activity where a life of faith was taught and practiced. Shathananda was a visionary who depended on God alone for all his needs. The simplicity of his lifestyle was inspirational and it endeared him to Augustine. Through his life, he showed that Faith in God, anticipates, dares, persists and acts believing that everything is possible in Christ.

As a matter of fact, when Augustine arrived at Chintamani, the wedding celebrations of Shathananda ("Brother S") were just rounding up. In spite of that, the bridegroom and his new bride extended a warm welcome to Augustine.

Augustine had an invitation to visit Kollegal, sixty miles away from Mysore. Being a stranger to these parts of Karnataka, he impulsively asked Brother S whether he would come along with him. Brother S said he would pray about it and respond soon. The train to Kollegal was to leave at 1 p.m. And there was no word as yet from Brother S.

As Augustine was deciding the best course of action, the postman arrived with a money order for Rs. 5 for Bro. S. "Praise the Lord. Let us go!" said Bro. Shathananda, who entered the room breezily, "...and here is the money for the travel!"

The newly-wed wife was magnanimous enough to let her husband go in the service of the Lord. They reached Kollegal on time and settled into the Bretheren Mission Bungalow. Elders and the others in Administration and Ministry were discussing the programme for the next week. At first, Augustine and Shathananda encountered a frosty reception. To Augustine's dismay and despair, they flatly denied him permission to speak at the meeting! Mr Lynn – one of the Missionaries there -almost begged the committee to give Augustine ten minutes in the morning Gospel Service. After much discussion and discourse, they yielded to his persistence and agreed. Ten minutes, and not a second more, they stated.

Back in his room, Augustine was downhearted. They had to beg in order to even speak at all and the time allotted to him was a mere ten minutes. Had they travelled all this way – leaving family including a newly-wedded wife - to preach for only ten minutes? Brother Shathananda's kind and encouraging words lifted him: **"Augustine, Praise God for the ten minutes"** He reminded Augustine of the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings Chapter 18.

V 41 - Elijah said to Ahab, Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.

V42 - Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel , bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. V 42 – 45 Go and look towards the sea, he told his servant . He went up and looked. 'There's nothing there' he said. Seven

times, Elijah said, go back. The seventh time, the servant reported 'a cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea.' V 45 - The sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came.

"Augustine ..." said Brother Shathananda, "...when you take what's given, praise and pray, God will multiply it and pour out His blessings, and use it for His glory."

Augustine thanked God in gratitude for sending this humble man with him; He also implored to God to forgive him for his unbelief and praised God in great expectation for the showers of blessings that were to come.

At the morning service, the Church was packed to capacity and overflowing. What was meant to be ten minutes extended until people flocked around Augustine saying that they were immensely blessed. The elders had no other option but invite them for the 'Breaking of Bread' which followed. The entire programme for the week had to be rescheduled to accommodate them. Village meetings were held in the morning and Evangelistic meetings were held at the Church in the evenings. Augustine spoke in the evening meetings and Brother Shathananda concluded in prayer.

On the final evening, a young missionary came forward, testified and said, "...these two young men have been casting their nets for the last week and I am caught in their net. I am sure many of you have been touched by the Word of God. As an indication of your full commitment to Christ, I request you to stand up if this is the case..."

In a matter of minutes, seventy five percent of the crowd were on their feet. Even as the tears were rolling down Augustine's cheeks, Brother Shathananda shouted at the top of his voice: "Praise God for this great harvest of souls."

God had just given Augustine a glimpse of what He was going to perform in the future for the glory of His name.

Mr Lynn, the old missionary, accompanied them on their village preaching tours in a bullock cart! Coming from a foreign country, he was willing to sacrifice everything in the service of the Lord – his life was exemplary.

After a week of meetings, Augustine and his friend were on their way back to Chintamani. They were seated on the bus en route to Mysore wondering why there was such a long wait for the driver to arrive. They could see a man from the Church cycling furiously toward them. The man handed over an envelope which contained a gift from the Church. Thanking the gentleman, Brother Shathananda later reflected how at the time they had only enough money to buy a ticket up to Mysore. They now – miraculously – had enough to reach Chintamani and more to cover their immediate future needs.

Augustine could barely hold back his tears at this evidence of God's faithfulness.

This was a practical demonstration – and one of many to follow – of God's grace and provision in Augustine's ministry. The whole experience at Kollegal was one of the first lessons Augustine learned in the School of following Jesus.

It was about a faith which anticipates, dares, persists and acts.

IF YOU REMAIN IN THE VINE...

The road of Christian ministry can be bumpy but because Augustine ensured that every step he took was soaked in prayer, intercession and seeking the will and purpose of God in any event and encounter, the Holy Spirit in the gentle hold of a dove carried this faithful servant of God through great strides of progress that was pleasing to the Lord.

Inner growth at Nilgiris:

Rev Dr Burckhardt was the first one to invite Augustine to the Spiritual life convention at Kotagiri, Nilgiris. This is a panchayat town in Tamil Nadu, situated at an elevation of around 1793 m above sea level and is one of the three popular hill stations bounded by verdant green tea estates which offer a number of trekking options.

Memorable meeting at Mysore:

From there, Augustine proceeded to Mysore. The Wesleyan missionary, Rev. Tomlinson had arranged a three day meeting at Hardwick Church. Mr Satyadas, the head master of Hardwick High School presided over the meeting. He surrendered his life to the Lord in those meetings and two years later left his job and became a full time preacher. Along with Augustine, he was able to reach many remote villages in Karnataka with the Gospel.

HEART ECHO AT ANDHRA PRADESH:

Dr E.A. Seamands - Methodist missionary from USA - was a great blessing to Augustine. Augustine met him in a convention of the Oriental Missionary Society. After the service, with shouts of "Praise the Lord", Dr Seamands came and embraced Augustine and said' "Brother, the same Lord Jesus who saved you saved me 10,000 miles away in USA."

He introduced Augustine to the Methodist Mission and also his sons, J.T and David Seamands who served in India – at Andhra Pradesh - for several years. During one of the campaigns, God worked extra-ordinarily. J T Seamands recalls, "In 1947 Augustine and I went to Gadag for the O M S Convention. I brought some of my village preachers along. Most of them received a real conversion experience there. One layman, Elia Ampergatti, came along and was wonderfully converted after which he became a village preacher."

During the meetings held in Belgaum, they visited the village, Devarashigahalli. One old man came right up, fell at their feet and cried, "I am a sinner - pray for me" Ten other men followed and they experienced great victory. They were able to visit 25 homes the next day and the people brought their idols, magic charms, cigarettes and burnt them. When they were at the top of the hill, they could hear the people shouting "Thank you for bringing Jesus to live in our village."

An oasis in the jungle:

The Dharur Jathra was an annual retreat organised by Dr. E A Seamands and Rev. M D Ross. The retreat was held in a jungle called Bondlabhavi., near the Dharur railway station. For the duration of the Jathra, people lived in tents and cooking was done on site. The meetings were held in a huge Shamiana. Thousands of people used to attend these meetings and many came to know Christ. Year after year Augustine attended these Jathras and had the privilege of hearing great preachers like Mr. Silas Fox, Mr Mallappa, Mr. Agrippa and others.

A word about Mr. Agrippa: He had been a notorious gangster in Telengana. After his dramatic conversion, he became a full time preacher and worked with Mr. Silas Fox. His presentation of the Word of God was full of power and authoritative. He used to tell the crowd: "I am not one who beseeches you like Augustine, I believe that you should come forward and weep for your own sins"

MADHYA PRADESH

Scottish missionaries were the pioneers of Churches and educational institutions in Madhya Pradesh. Augustine and his colleague Rodric Roberts were invited to speak in Seoni. The missionary, who was the organiser of the meetings was at the station to welcome them. During the short time they spent with him, they noticed that he was irritable and short tempered. They were looking forward to a time of prayer. Instead the missionary told them:"The people in this congregation are a wicked lot, as hard as rock. Many have laboured and served in this area with no result. I wonder what the outcome of *these* meetings will be ..."

Augustine and Rodrick were dumbfounded hearing such words from the very organiser of the Revival meetings! For the first meeting, hundreds of people had gathered except the missionary. He stayed back at home to baby sit! Augustine and Rodrick spent the nights wrestling in prayer for the congregation.

The next day, the message was on a passage from the Biblical book of *Daniel*. The Spirit of God was moving and the preaching was soul-stirring. Augustine was running across the platform, arms flailing, punching the air, pointing the finger at the "hell

bound sinners”(as described earlier by the missionary). As he was pointing the finger, he was surprised to hear himself say (not knowing who he was pointing to): “You are a ruffian. You have to break down and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Only then, all the others in the congregation will be converted and this church transformed.”

The alter call was given. No one moved. It felt as though the seed had fallen on the wayside.

Back at the missionary’s bungalow, Augustine and Rodrick were having dinner when out of the blue, the missionary demanded to know: “Augustine, were you deliberately pointing accusingly at me during the meeting?”

“If the Holy Spirit has been convicting you and if the cap fits, wear it ...” Augustine replied. An uncomfortable silence followed. Back in his room, the wrestling in prayer continued. Augustine knew he had not spoken out on his own; in fact, he himself had been astonished as the words came out of his mouth at the meeting; it was only then he understood what the psalmist meant about God using man’s lips to speak words from His heart. He felt sad that the missionary had taken offence; then he reminded himself he was assigned to do God’s will, and not to win a popularity poll.

The next day, there was a breakthrough. After the meeting, the Missionary broke down, asked pardon from his wife and elders and truly surrendered his life to the Lord. Many others followed and a great revival broke out in that congregation.

For years after that episode Augustine received the occasional letter from the missionary which said: “I thank God for every memory of our time together.”

I remember my father telling us how, as leaders, how easily we can fall into the temptation of self-righteousness and self-centeredness. This attitude can lead to a lack of consideration and concern towards the needs of others with whom we are working. How easy to be judgemental! or to become irritable and intolerant. When we search our own hearts, we may find volcanoes lurking behind a calm and placid exterior. Like the words of John Wesley, we may find “hell in our own selfish, self-serving, self-seeking hearts!” How important it is to crucify self, humble ourselves and be involved in the washing of feet in a way appropriate for any situation taking Christ as our example. Phil 2:5 – 9

ENDURANCE IN SERVICE:

Rev Dr. Dewell invited Augustine Salins to speak at several conventions organised by the Oriental Missionary Society in Allahabad and surrounding areas.

WHEN OPPOSITION GREW FIERCE...

Augustine was moving from place to place, speaking in local churches, witnessing to individuals whenever the opportunity presented itself. He experienced fierce opposition from some of the church pastors and leaders. Having spent years studying theology, the clergy felt that they had the sole monopoly over the truths of the Bible and its explanations. With a letter of commendation, Augustine arrived at the largest Kannada Church in Bangalore, in the late hours of the day. He was a stranger in Bangalore and it was his first visit. Torrential downpour was beating down with thunderstorms. Augustine, with his bedroll and bag, half drenched in the rain, must have looked like a homeless man looking for shelter.

Later, Augustine found himself at a door - a Pastor opened it! Augustine was looking straight into his bright dark eyes deep set beneath bushy brows. He handed the pastor the commendation letter and Augustine was alarmed when he noticed his face visibly contort in what he imagined was anger. Then before he knew what was happening the door was slammed shut on his face with a loud bang.

Augustine was left outside - standing in the rain in hopeless bewilderment. A desperate plea to the One who promised He would be a refuge and an ever present help in trouble was the only thing Augustine could think of to do.

Quite suddenly, adjacent to where he was standing, he heard another door open. In the dim light he could see a lady beckoning him. Augustine walked towards what he realised was a kitchen entrance and thanked God with every step! The Pastor's wife was kind enough to call him in. She gave him a plate of rice and curry; prepared a bed for him and later showed him into the guest room. Augustine was full of thanks to God for His faithfulness and to the lady for her extravagant goodness.

A famous author once wrote: "Avoidance of sin on its own is safe but sterile. Where it is accompanied or made possible by extravagant goodness, it can change the world."

Of course, the story didn't end there. At sunrise, Augustine woke to find the Pastor at his door. In what was a rather humiliating and confusing experience he was asked to leave. It was just then however, that a friend who was passing by noticed Augustine through the window and came in to the house. "You are in the wrong place. Come with me," he said and proceeded to carry Augustine's bed roll and luggage. He accompanied Augustine to another house where he was allowed to settle and the matter of his accommodation was at last suitably resolved. During his time here, meetings were arranged in various churches and there was great blessing.

Years later, Augustine was invited to speak at the Revival meetings in a local Church which resulted in a great harvest of souls. Augustine remembered the kindness of the Pastor's wife and sent her a little gift in appreciation.

Jesus had said: "A prophet is not honoured in his own home town." That had not stopped Jesus with proceeding with divine assignment he had been sent by the Father on.

Likewise, Augustine Salins withstood all as he stood firm in what he had been called to do in the mission-field.

Injury and then insult...

A young Pastor in his twenties was appointed by the Basel Mission to assist the Senior Pastor. He had received intensive theological training from one of the Liberal Theological Seminaries. His doctrines were contrary to what was in the Scripture. Moreover it was clear that he had not yet gone through the salvation experience.

After one of his sermons on a Sunday, Augustine confronted and challenged him. The young Pastor seemed to think that Augustine was committing "intellectual suicide" by confronting him. He immediately went on the offensive. Being a liberal theologian, he tried to stump Augustine and befuddle him. His attack on the Bible was so dazzling and Augustine found that he could not argue with him. He could not answer the other's harsh criticisms of the Bible. Furthermore the young pastor ridiculed Augustine's pulpit theology, saying that it was too literal and simplistic. His audacious statement that he wondered if there were anything true in the Bible shook and shattered Augustine. If the resurrection wasn't true, Christians were to be pitied more than all men, Augustine mused, remembering the words of the Apostle Paul in Corinthians.

The young pastor was irate and angry. He questioned the audacity of Augustine as a lay preacher to confront him – a theologically trained appointee from the Basel Mission. At this stage, the Senior Pastor was informed and the result was what appeared to be a huge setback: For more than two years Augustine was not allowed to preach in Udupi.

Augustine however, continued to keep this young pastor as well as the situation in prayer. Yet, with all the odds seemingly against him, it was natural that Augustine stumbled into the forest of doubt. He prayed. He fasted. He wrestled. He meditated on God's word day and night. He knelt down and surrendered himself to the Lord. "Oh God, why is it I could not answer some of the questions that young man raised. I cannot prove certain things both the pastors spoke about. But one thing I do know. By faith, I accept the Bible as the Word of God." Tears poured down his cheeks but in that instant the joy and peace of the Lord filled his soul.

It dawned on him that liberal theologians and critics of the Bible did not apply the same rigorous scan to the ways of the secular world. Very few knew about the law of aerodynamics or how airplanes stayed in the air. How did electricity really work? No one had seen electrons or witnessed the process of how turning on a switch resulted in a light coming on! No one questioned it. They accepted it by faith. On the other hand, Jesus quoted the Scriptures and condemned the hypocrites. They were to be pitied.

Around this time, Rev Dr Burckhardt invited Augustine to interpret for him at the Pastors Conference in Parpale at the Christa Sevake Ashram founded by Sister Hannah Aeschimen of Switzerland. With her dedication and sacrifice she had converted Parpale into a beautiful haven of rest and peace.

It was here that Rev Burckhardt spoke on the Assurance of Salvation. He quoted many verses from the Bible to prove his point. Seated among the others, was the young pastor that Augustine was still praying for. Augustine noticed that he was listening with rapt attention.

Later on in the day a simple but delicious meal was served Indian style. All sat on the ground eating the light fluffy rice and curry served in banana leaves. Augustine came late and as God would have it, the only seat remaining was beside – yes – the young pastor! Gently, and with some trepidation, Augustine told the young Pastor that he would like to speak to him after the meal. The pastor nodded and they later met to talk.

Before Augustine could say anything, the young Pastor confessed that he had harboured animosity towards Augustine for two years. He was also angry and envious on that very day as Rev Burckhardt had chosen Augustine to interpret instead of one of the theologically trained scholars – one such as himself.

It was as though God had opened the eyes of his heart to understand the Word of God. He was humble enough to listen to Augustine explain the meaning of verses in 1John 1:7-9 and 12 regarding the forgiveness of sins. With a humble and contrite spirit, the young pastor repented and begged prayer for a change of heart.

That evening, as all prayed together, the young Pastor stood up to give his testimony. All eyes turned to him wondering what he was going to say. In simple words, he said this: "I have had four years of Theological training and I have served in different churches for 10 years. But all these years I did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. My pride, my rebellious spirit, and my selfish ambitions were big stumbling blocks along the way. Today, I thank God for opening my eyes. I have repented for my sins and have accepted Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. Unbelievably I was a Bible scholar, but only today I was born again. Praise be to His name." It is amazing how far one can progress into religious knowledge without experiencing regeneration of the spirit.

There was a look of stark surprise on every face gathered there. Some encouraged and prayed for him. But sadly, there were others who ridiculed him. Yet, he never wavered in his faith till the end and was a witness to the saving faith of Jesus Christ which transforms lives.

John 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." Augustine was glad he had not returned offence for offense, so that ultimately God could make a way where there had apparently been no way.

Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:9-11, "I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. For some say, 'His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person, he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing'" Apostle Paul reiterates in chapter 11:5 and 6. "But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those 'Super Apostles'. I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge." In verse 13 -15 he writes, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen,

masquerading as Apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND AMAZING VICTORY...

Poets have a way of condensing vast realities into a single sentence. William Shakespeare’s oft-quoted words “sorrows never come singly but in battalions” best describes what happened next in Augustine's life. He returned from his long evangelistic tour of North India in a state of terrible exhaustion and fatigue. When he started getting convulsions, he was rushed to Vellore Christian Medical College Hospital. We have already gone through the ordeal in Chapter 5; about how my mother prayed and nursed my father through those days where survival itself was an uncertainty.

Now here are details of simultaneous mishaps and tragedies. Two of Augustine’s brothers went to be with the Lord within the space of forty two days. His eldest brother, Theodore, contracted Typhoid and died leaving his wife and four children. Ignatius, his younger brother followed soon after. This was a severe blow to the whole family.

At about the same time, my mother Kunjalia’s one and only brother passed away in Trichore, also leaving his wife and four children to fend for themselves. Kunjalia had to bear the brunt of it all and to make things worse she fell ill with Infective Hepatitis.

Without health, strength, job security or indeed any money, they were at their wit's end. With great sorrow they had to send me – their eldest daughter- to Trichur to be cared for by Kunjalia's parents. My sister Christine was also sent away – and was looked after by our Grandparents in Udupi. It was a fearful, unnerving and unsettling time for each one of us.

Where was God when all this was happening to us?

Augustine and Kunjalia found themselves in a terrible Job (character from the Old Testament) like situation. Had God abandoned them? It certainly seemed that way. They had lost everything - family members, health, possessions, and security. They tried hard to prevent it from affecting their faith.

As Philip Yancey explains:

The root of Job's crisis was a crisis of faith and not of suffering. Towards the end, God's speech does not deal with the issue of suffering at all. Will a man trust a sovereign, Almighty God even when everything around him confutes and contradicts that trust? Will a Human Being cling to Faith when every self-interested reason for doing so is whisked away? Satan mocked God, “He will curse you to your face” Job's character holds up and says “Though He slay me” God takes Job on a tour of God's wonderful creation. God enlarges

Job's vision from his own unfortunate and pathetic circumstances to the entire world.

How we respond matters. God has given ordinary men and women the dignity of participating in the redemption of the Cosmos. He is allowing us through our obedience to Him, to help reverse the pain and unfairness of this world that Job described so eloquently. God's plan to reverse the Fall depends on the faith of those who follow Him.

At this terrible time – when Augustine was at his lowest - many predicted that his ministry was over. Some questioned why such mishaps should surround a man of God but hundreds prayed that his faith would stand the test and that he – with God's help – would come through this trial victorious. Aaah, this is what Jesus wanted the family of God and body of Christ to be – upholding and building up one another.

I am once again reminded of a passage from *Pilgrim's Progress*:

When the character "Christian" was not paying attention to the road ahead of him, he fell into the slough of despond. When he slept, he found himself in the grounds of the Giant Despair who locked him up in a dark dungeon. Both Giant Despair and his wife Diffidence ill treated him, beat him up and even suggested that he commit suicide. At last, Christian remembered that all along, he'd had the KEY to every door in the doubting castle.

The Key: The Promises of God

1 Peter 2:21 reminds: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps."

"Pain is God's megaphone to a deaf world," said C.S.Lewis.

You cry: *Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.* (Psalm 73:25-26)

You hope and pray with all your heart: *Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning.* (Psalm 30:5)

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. (Psalm 46:1-2) *You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth.* (Psalm 71:20) *When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.* (Isaiah 43:2)

Augustine and Kunjalia Salins held on to the promises of God. Apostle Paul's optimism and joy through his prison experience (the book of Philippians) provided endless encouragement to them. 2Corinthians 4:7-10, Paul wrote:*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed. We are perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus , that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

Rev. John Stott commented: "Apostle Paul's perspective was adjusted, his horizon was extended, his vision was clarified and his witness was enriched by his prison experience. Thousands of years later, Paul's letters inspire, encourage and motivate many all around the world.

In the end, the same was true for Augustine and Kunjalia's. It is mentioned in passing in the previous chapter how help came through a good friend Sister Hannah Aeschimen of Christa Sevake Ashram in Parpale.

As I write this, I can't help reflecting with amazement how Sister Hannah was blessed by God and sent all the way from Switzerland to be a blessing to hundreds of Indians. She sacrificed her whole life in the service of the Lord in India. She learnt the language, dressed like an Indian in a sari, adapted herself to the Indian customs and lived a simple life in order to be able to bless others in need. As mentioned, it was through her that an Ashram and a wonderful community where the Holy Spirit was free to work was born in Parpale. It became a spiritual shelter for anyone who was in need of spiritual help. Old men and women, the disabled as well as the mentally challenged found solace there. In addition to the very vulnerable, the place was very popular with young college medical and theological students. Hundreds attended retreats and conferences in Parpale Ashram including me. Many committed themselves to the Lord and in turn have blessed many others in different parts of the world. The network of blessing continues to many nations and many generations.

It was Sister Hannah that came and took my family to the Ashram. The congenial atmosphere of quietness and prayer, the loving and sacrificial service of the dedicated sisters of the Ashram was just the right medicine at just the right time. Both of them recuperated and recovered fully and regained their health and strength.

Restoration...Augustine was given small assignments to begin with until he was emboldened to take on bigger responsibilities and ministry assignments. "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or imagine" -Ephesians 3:20

Nothing proves the sincerity, earnestness and authenticity of our beliefs and faith like our willingness to suffer for them.

'The seed which multiplies is the seed that dies.'

John 12:24 "Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds'"

THE UNABATING PASSION FOR SOULS CONTINUED...

RECONNECTING AT TAMIL NADU THE FIRST PREACHING ASSIGNMENT AFTER AUGUSTINE'S ILLNESS WAS AT AT ZION CHURCH, MADRAS (CHENNAI). THE CHURCH WAS OF AN ANGLICAN ORIENTATION, BUT THE PASTOR FELT THE NEED FOR REVIVAL MEETINGS. MANY WERE BLESSED THROUGH AUGUSTINE'S MINISTRY HERE. MR I JOSEPH, THE SECRETARY OF THE MADRAS BIBLE LEAGUE AND MR D SAMUEL, SECRETARY OF THE 'ONE BY ONE BAND' PLAYED A GREAT PART IN ENCOURAGING AUGUSTINE DURING THIS TIME. IN 1960, AUGUSTINE WAS INVITED TO THE ANNUAL CONVENTION AT THE WESLEY CHURCH, ROYPETTAH, MADRAS.

His message on 'Prayer' inspired and blessed Mrs A. Joseph to start a Prayer and intercessory fellowship 24 hours a day for 365 days of the year. As it grew steadily, the movement was called Madras Chain of Prayer Fellowship. Through this prayer ministry, Praise, worship, and supplication were lifted up to the Heavenly Father by the praying saints. As the prayer requests poured in, they were able to intercede for churches, pastors, revival meetings, individuals with specific needs and countless unsaved millions in the world. Thousands were blessed through this ministry.

A prayer network in all the cities in India will bring about a great harvest of souls. ' History belongs to the intercessors.'

Blessed to bless Bidar:

The Methodist Mission in Bidar owned a Hospital, a High School and a student Home. Augustine conducted a series of meetings in Bidar. The Principal of the School, Miss Luke, permitted a holiday so that all the children could participate in the spiritual activities. Many young souls as well as a number of teachers came to know the Lord. The Spirit of Revival spread to the neighbouring villages too and as a result about 3000 people became members of the Methodist Church.

Schools can be a tremendous place to witness.

POWER REVEALED IN KERALA: AUGUSTINE WAS INVITED YEAR AFTER YEAR TO SPEAK AT BIG CONVENTIONS IN TRAVANCORE. TWICE, HE SPOKE AT THE MARAMMON CONVENTION WHERE 75 – 100 THOUSAND PEOPLE GATHER EVERY YEAR TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. MR. K.V.CHERIAN, THE EDITOR OF 'NAVAJEEVODHAYA' WAS A CO-SPEAKER WITH HIM IN MANY OF THESE MEETINGS.

Rev. P.J. Thomas of the Christa Mitra Ashram, Ankola writes: 'Augustines' words were clothed with power. His tears of sincerity captured many a heart. His words flowed refreshingly clear and smooth as from a hidden spring.'

DIVINE MAGNIFICENCE AT MAHARASHTRA:

Kollapur, Panhala, Ratnagiri, Venguria and other places were visited with Rev and Mrs Howard. Months of preparation with prayer and intercession brought about a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After one week's meetings in Kadoli, 20 right-wing Hindus were converted and asked to be baptized.

In Wanlesswadi, Augustine conducted meetings in the TB Sanatorium.

Rev Chavan of the Christian Alliance Mission travelled with Augustine to several Churches in Central India and Gujarat.

There were many who helped to open doors so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ could be preached. There were many who were blessed to be a blessings to others in various ways. There were many professionals who were transformed to be good stewards. There were many who received the call of God to be full time evangelists.

SIGNIFICANT TRIP TO NAGALAND, MEGHALAYA AND MANIPUR:

Augustine had the privilege of attending the Second Annual convention of the Evangelical Fellowship of India at Ramapatnam. It was there that he met Dr Ben Wati, who was the Executive director of EFI. Augustine became a member of the Evangelists of EFI and was invited as speaker on several occasions.

It was through Ben Wati, who was a native Naga, Augustine was introduced to Nagaland - a rather mysterious mountain state - along the North Eastern border of India. Ben Wati's grandfather had been a Naga head hunter - converted by American Baptist Missionaries. Pastor's conferences were arranged at Impur – Ben's birth place. Over a hundred pastors from all over attended and the blessing of the Lord fell

powerfully upon them. They went away refreshed and revived to serve the Lord with a new vision.

Ben Wati took Augustine to Nagaland a few years later. Augustine was inspired and blessed tremendously through the friendship and fellowship of this dear man of God. His humility, his life of prayer and devotion, study and work, and his complete dedication to the work of translating the Bible into the Naga language during his leisure hours was a wonderful lesson and blessing to Augustine. Today, a conservative estimate would suggest that approximately 60% of the population of Nagaland is Christian.

Seen in retrospect, Augustine Salins' ministry in India was packed with grace and glory, where thousands witnessed the power of the Gospel change lives. He soon lost count of the number of people who'd received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and the increasing number of believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Often my father would put his head in his hands and bow before the Lord in awesome wonder. When he had consecrated his time, energy and skills to his Saviour, he had never dreamt that God would lead him to minister to such a vast number of people in different parts of the country.

"I feel so unworthy **Lord, what has thy servant ever done to deserve so great a privilege of serving thee?" he would say with tears.**

What he did not realize then was that it was only the beginning.

God had much, *much* more in store for him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JOURNEYS: SEVEN FOR SALINS

Augustine did not even know who had invited him for the World Congress of the *Youth for Christ* in Tokyo. It was his first experience of being abroad in a foreign country! God had planned and worked out even the smallest details for Him. For starters, his passport and visa arrived on time and in India this in itself was a bit of a miracle!

As far as Augustine Salins was concerned, when God called, there was neither regret nor hesitation. He had only one desire imprinted on his goals – to draw everyone he could, to the Gospel of Christ. Much as he had a heart for India, somewhere along the way he realized he was not called to a place, he was called to Him. To obey was his imperative, to suffer was his anticipation, and His glory was the only reward he sought. The Salins reflected the typical missionary heart which: cared more than some considered it wise; risked more than many thought it safe; dreamt more than the average believer thought it practical, and; expected more than most thought it reasonable (this has been put so beautifully by that remarkable soldier of God, Karen Watson, in the letter received by her pastor in Valley Baptist Church, Bakersfield, California after she was persecuted for being a Christian) Result: the Kingdom of God extended in leaps and bounds.

Travel to the ends of the world with Augustine and intercede for each and every country.

Brother R Stanley writes, "Soul winning means reproduction. It is giving birth to children into the Kingdom of God."

Sharing the Gospel is called "sowing in tears" (Psalm 126:5,6)

Lamentations 2:18,19 - " The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord - Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord"

On the train to Helsinki, a young man came and sat next to Augustine. He wanted to know whether he had any hope at all . He wondered ' can one man on a speck of a planet in a speck of a solar system really mean anything to the Creator of the Universe? Surely it was more plausible to believe that life was meaningless!'

Jesus said in Luke 15:10 -"I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

*M*y father rarely saw things in terms of nuances or numbers.

He simply did all he believed God called him to do and for him, the series of his worldwide evangelistic endeavours would have been an uninterrupted life of total service. The Lord Jesus said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*(Matthew 28: 19-20. Mark16:15 – and *"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."*Through twenty centuries of Church history, Christian people have heard the clarion call of the Great Commission. My father was one of this faithful and inspired charmed circle for Christ. The following record of his journeys to the nations is simply a convenient classification to rightfully assess the ground covered.

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

Route: India>>>>Tokyo>>>>>Taiwan>>>>>Hongkong>>>>>India.

Gospel Message to the Japanese, Taiwanese and Chinese people.

In fulfillment of God's promise and the blessings and prophecies of Godly men that Augustine would go to the ends of the world, Augustine's desire was to go to Ceylon! Ceylon – Sri Lanka – is India's southern neighbour – hardly an across-the-world journey!

But God had wider plans and a wider worldwide vision and ministry chalked out for Augustine. 1 Corinthians 1:27 *"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth."* Also: *"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is*

because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus. who has become for us wisdom from God - that is our righteousness , holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written ' Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'"

Japan is an archipelago of 6,852 islands. The four largest islands, Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku together comprise 97 % of Japan's land area. Population is 127 million and the Capital of Japan is Tokyo. 84 to 96 % of Japanese subscribe to Buddhism or Shinto. Fewer than 1 % of Japanese are Christians. Today, Taiwan has a population of 24,033,000. Taipei is the Capital of Taiwan. Literacy 94%. Most of them are Chinese and Buddhist. 0.35 % are Muslims and 6 % Christians.

Augustine did not even know who had invited him for the World Congress of the *Youth for Christ* in Tokyo. It was his first experience of being abroad in a foreign country! God had planned and worked out even the smallest details for Him. For starters, his passport and visa arrived on time and in India this in itself was a bit of a miracle! A Mr. Patial from Allahabad joined him in Calcutta and accompanied him throughout the journey. The World Congress was a great blessing and Augustine was thrilled to meet people from all over the world and to hear about God's amazing work in a global context.

In Taiwan, Augustine stayed with Rev and Mrs. Culver who were instrumental in arranging the trip and Augustine was ever so grateful to them for their kindness. The scheduled meetings in Formosa and Hongkong were hugely successful.

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

Route: India>>>> Cambodia>>>>Thailand>>>>India.

Gospel Message boldly proclaimed in a Buddhist stronghold

Cambodia has a population of 13, 250,000. The Capital of Cambodia is Phnom Penh. Literacy is 65 % only. Buddhism has been the national religion since the 15th century. Religions: Buddhist 83 %, Muslim 4%, Christian 1%.

Thailand has a population of 61,400,000 . It's Capital is Bangkok. 80% are Thai people. 10 % Chinese, Malay 4 % and Tibeto Burman 1% . Chinese control 85% of the Thai economy and most of them are Thai speaking. Literacy is 94%. Religious freedom is part of the constitution. Religions: Buddhist 92 %, Muslim 5%, Christian 2%.

In 1959, there were only about a thousand Christians in Cambodia. The handful of Churches that existed, were established by Christian Missionary Alliance Mission, the only Mission that had an access to the country.

Dr Harry Taylor, President of the Alliance Mission sent an invitation to Augustine. In Phnom Penh, Augustine preached in one of the small churches. Many Buddhists stood outside and listened curiously at first. The counsellors took the opportunity to go outside and speak to the seekers about Christ's redeeming work on the Cross. The response to the alter call was not as expected. After a few weeks, 11 members were added to the small congregation of 75.

The Jail Superintendent of Phnom Penh was invited to the meetings by an American Major who was a member of the Church. As Augustine was presenting the Word of God, he noticed that this man was visibly touched and moved in spirit. After the message, Augustine walked towards him and asked: "Sir, do you wish to accept Jesus as Saviour?" He responded with a simple and immediate "Yes." Later, as a follow-up to this commitment, the Major was able to counsel him and disciple him in Christ.

Such a forthright approach was not always appreciated nor anticipated by people. But Augustine exercised his God-given authority moved by the Holy Spirit to free people and bless them.

Augustine went from church to church feeding and strengthening the flock of God. A great revival broke out in Cambodia. Perhaps God was preparing them for the trials that lay ahead during the Communist invasion of their country.

Dr and Mrs Howard, who had accompanied Augustine from Miraj, India also arranged for Augustine to preach in Thailand. Initially he was given visa for a mere six days but after much prayer, it was miraculously extended to three weeks – just the right amount of time needed!

Large Chinese gatherings were addressed in Bangkok. Augustine was able to hold a series of meetings in a Thai Church. Many in the congregations received a new vision and purpose for their lives and dedicated their lives to the Lord.

Chiang Mai is a very important commercial city in Northern Thailand. Here too Augustine was able to speak at the Presbyterian Church. He visited and encouraged the people in the Leprosy colony in the outskirts of Chengmai as well.

THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

Route: India>>>>Singapore>>>>Malaysia >>>>>India.

Gospel Message rapidly spreads to non-resistant citizens of the Asian peninsular

Singapore has a population of 3,885,000 Capital, City State. 77% of the people are Chinese, 14 % Malay's, 7.6 % Indian, other 1.3 % Literacy 90 %. There is freedom of religion, but concern for harmony limits public proclamation. Muslim 15 %, Christian 15% and Buddhist 40%. Christianity first arrived on Singapore's shores in 1819 soon after the founding of modern Singapore. Within half a year, the first Protestant missionary arrived to set up a local ministry. The first Roman Catholic priest came in December 1821 to look into the feasibility of opening a mission station, and celebrate the first Mass.

The colonial administration adopted an official policy of neutrality and non-interference regarding religion. Missionaries established churches and Christian ministries on the island. They also set up welfare organisations and many missionaries which are well regarded for their high quality education today.

Local-born church leaders gradually took over the running of their ministries. Theological colleges were established to produce the next generation of leaders, and more churches and Christian organisations were set up, resulting in an increase in the proportion of Christians in Singapore today.

On the other hands, the Malay people are considered Muslim by birth. Less than 100 active Christian Malays are known. Drug addiction is a major problem among young Malay people. Malaysia has a population of 25,900,000. Capital is Kuala Lumpur. Malay people constitute 50 % , Chinese 25 %, Indian 7%, tribal 8%. Sunni Islam is the official and favoured religion. Overall Muslim is 58 % and Christian 9%.

The Malayan Christian Council (MCC), founded in 1948, coordinated mission groups during the Malayan Emergency. Chinese relocated into 'New Villages' were served by missionaries, sometimes ex-China, who worked alongside local Christians in social and medical work. However after independence in 1957, many churches were over-dependent on expatriates. In the 1970s churches developed structures independent of Singapore as well as of overseas support. Recent growth in independent churches is another sign of a desire to establish a Malaysian Christian identity.

The Asia Evangelists Commission was born through the efforts of Mr.Greg Tingson, an evangelist from the Philippines. Augustine was invited to the City wide Crusade organised by the Asia Evangelists Commission. A year of intense prayer and preparation had preceded this Crusade. Dr G D James, Founder and Director of Asia Evangelistic Fellowship and Chairman of World Literature Crusade,Australia has written about the highlights of the Crusade.

“Though Singapore, the Supermarket of the East , has had the privilege of hearing a number of Pastors, evangelists, conference speakers, both Asian and European, none spoke with such penetrating insight , conviction and compassion as Augustine Salins. Augustine's early morning devotions were delivered with power, incisiveness and conviction. He spoke to each one present as a direct word of inspiration and a

challenge from God. Deep truths were expounded with sincerity and clarity, interspersed with appropriate illustrations, forcefully and fearfully presented, and yet saturated with love and compassion, as evidenced by his tears. More than 3500 people had gathered to hear the Asian evangelist and hundreds were brought to the knowledge of Christ. The ' Weeping Prophet of India ' made a tremendous impact on countless numbers."

In Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Taiping, in Malaysia, hundreds of people from various nationalities - Chinese, Indians and Eurasians flocked to hear the Word of God delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Dr James reiterates - "Augustine's religion was no 'easy believism'. He emphasized and stressed the cost of discipleship, supreme condition of discipleship and the disciplined lifestyle involved in becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to deny oneself, saying No to self, yes to the Cross and following Jesus in His footsteps.

Saying No, to the self-gratifying desires of the flesh,

Saying No, to the self-promoting appeals of the world,

Saying No, to the self-feeding temptations of the devil.

George Muller, was called the 'Apostle of Faith '. He trusted in God to feed 2000 orphans without appealing for any financial assistance. When he was asked the secret of his great faith, he replied, "There was a day when I died. As George Muller spoke he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the floor. Died to George Muller, his plans, his preferences, his will. He died to the world and its approval, died to the approval or blame even of his brethren and friends. Since then he said, his only one desire was to show himself "approved unto God."

Dr James testified and said, "As I travel around the world, I am asked by people in many countries whether I know Augustine Salins. Hundreds of people from different nationalities and all walks of life have been blessed by this servant of God. They are praising the Lord for his commitment and selfless service which has enabled them to be a blessing to others."

FOURTH MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

ROUTE:

**INDIA>>>>NORWAY>>>>SWEDEN>>>>>DENMARK>>>>>FIN
LAND (SCANDANAVIA)>>>>>INDIA.**

Scandinavia is the general term for the three kingdoms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

The Nordic countries include the above and Finland and Iceland .

The warmest recorded temperature is 38 C and the coldest is minus 52 C.

The languages are Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Danish.

Complete freedom of religion Christian 55 % and Muslim 3 %

It was the Methodist bishop of Scandinavia who arranged meetings in this sector. Mrs Howard travelled with Augustine as his interpreter. In Oslo, the capital of Norway, a large hall was rented for the purpose of evangelism and it was wonderful to see it filled to capacity every night. Many people committed themselves to the Lord and others rededicated their lives.

In Sweden, Augustine was able to speak in Stockholm, Gothenburg and other smaller churches in the villages. He was invited to speak at the Methodist Theological Seminary at Gothenburg to the theological students from all over Scandinavia.

In one of the churches, when the alter call was given, the Pastor himself came forward and fell on his knees. He confessed that God had spoken to him about his lack of concern and love for his parishioners. On that night, many other young people surrendered their life to the Lord.

After the meeting, Augustine and the Pastor were relaxing over a cup of coffee. The caretaker of the Church interrupted them informing them that a young man was weeping at the doorstep of the Church. This young man had been living in sin, drunkenness and debauchery. He had come under the conviction of sin and wanted forgiveness of sins. The Pastor was able to counsel him and lead him to Christ.

In Finland, Augustine spoke – as usual - in English. Mrs Howard interpreted the message to Swedish and another lady translated it into Finnish! It was quite a lengthy and arduous procedure. At the end of the message, the alter call was given in all three languages! The Spirit of God was moving in such a powerful way that the entire congregation fell on their knees. The line of people rushing to the alter weeping and shedding tears of repentance was a sight to behold.

On the train to Helsinki, a young man came and sat next to Augustine. Having seen Augustine's photo in the papers he had come to speak about his backslidden life. He had accepted Jesus as his Saviour at the age of 12. Later, he had a definite call to serve God full time at the age of 18. He had not however, been willing to obey. He explained to Augustine how he had rebelled and over the years, he felt God had given him up to follow his own ways. As in Romans Chapter 1:24 and V 31 - the result was that he had become senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless and hopeless. He wanted to know whether he had any hope at all. Can one man on a speck of a planet in a speck of a solar system really mean anything to the Creator of that Universe? Surely it was more plausible to believe that life was meaningless!

Augustine prayed for wisdom from above to be able to speak to him.

“Do I matter to God? Does he care for me?” The young man pleaded.

Augustine finally replied: “For thirty three years, God experienced in flesh what it is like to be one of us. In the stories Jesus told, the lives he touched and healed, he answered for all time that perturbing question. Jesus said that angels rejoice when a single sinner truly repents. It is Jesus who gives God a face and that face is streaked with tears because he understands each one of us and we are precious to Him. Peter, James and John followed Jesus and watched him respond to a centurion who was grieving, an epileptic boy, a widow's dead son, and old blind man. They learnt how God felt about suffering and sorrow. When his friend Lazarus died, “Jesus wept.” Jesus took the form of a servant and came down to earth. He showed that the hand of God is a hand engraved with our individual names. He also showed that the hand of Jesus is engraved with the scars, the cost of God of loving us so much. The Father's outstretched arms are always ready to welcome and embrace the repentant prodigal.”

The next day, the young man attended the meetings in Helsinki and also requested prayer for his wife.

1996. Fifth Missionary Journey:

Route:India>>>>Switzerland>>>>Germany>>>>>Austria>>>>>West Berlin>>>>UK>>>>Holy Land>>>>>India

Gospel Message claims new and reclaims backsliding souls for Christ.

It is fascinating to learn how Christianity reached Switzerland in the first century. Beatus was a British missionary who came to Switzerland in the first century AD. He was baptized at Avalon by Barnabas, the brother of Aristobulus, sent in advance by Apostle Paul to Britain to represent the Apostle to the Gentiles. He founded a church in Helvetia, and erected hospitals and churches, building a band of devoted missionaries who continued the work of the Gospel throughout the centuries. Switzerland has a population of 7,602,000 . Capital is Bern. Literacy 99 % Religion, Christian 86 %, Muslim 33 % and non religious 8%. Switzerland has the highest proportion of foreign residents of any major state in Europe including Turks, Kurds, and also Bosnians, Albanians and Arabs.

Germany, on the other hand, has had quite an unsettled history. It is a country that has been much influenced by God, but sadly also much used by Satan. Throughout the migration period, which started around 300 AD, tribes of Israelite origin like the Goths, Scyths, Angles and Saxons (descendants from the Israelite tribes of Gad, Dan, Judah and Ephraim), Franks (Reuben), Jutes (Judah), moved through central Europe and eventually settled in Germany. While there was and is a majority of descendants of pagan tribes such as Hittites and Assur in the South, the North was mostly of Israelite descent. The population of Germany in 1933 was around 60 million. Almost

all Germans were Christian, belonging either to the Roman Catholic (20 million members) or the Protestant (40 million members) churches.

Today the population in Germany is 82,032,000. Capital is Berlin. Literacy 100% Christian 69% and Muslim 4 % A strategic country in Europe, but there has been a spiritual decline in all these countries. There are many illegal immigrants who have never heard the Gospel.

Augustine was invited for the World Congress of Evangelisation at West Berlin - a congress organised by Dr Billy Graham. To honour Kunjalia for her 25 years of Service in the Basel Mission Hospital, as a doctor for nine years and as Chief Medical Superintendent for 16 years, the Basel Mission made it possible for Kunjalia to accompany Augustine.

They were able to tour Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Augustine also took every opportunity to speak in several churches during his time there. The love and care shown by their colleagues and others was overwhelming and their hearts overflowed with thanks and gratitude.

On their way back, they visited the Holy land thus fulfilling Kunjalia's long-standing desire to walk where Jesus walked. These were unforgettable experiences for the couple.

1996. Sixth Missionary Journey:

Route:India>>>>Fiji Islands>>>>>New Zealand>>>>> India

Gospel Message turns cannibals into Christ-followers

Fijian history shows that the country accepted Christianity and the tribal wars came to an end. From 1879 to 1916 the British colonizers imported contracted labourers from India to work in the sugar plantations. Many stayed on as independent businessmen when the indentured system was abolished. The Indo-Fijian people comprise 43.6% of the population. Fiji is a country of over three hundred islands, in the South Western Pacific Ocean, about 1100 miles north of New Zealand. Only about 100 of these islands are inhabited. The Dutch Navigator Abel Tasman is credited with the discovery of the Fiji islands in 1643. Missionaries from Australia were the first to take the Gospel to the Fijians. It is alleged that the first missionary was killed by the Fijians as they were cannibals!

It was different with New Zealand which was first discovered by the Dutch mariner, Abel Tasman in 1643. It was Tasman who gave the newly discovered islands the name and who first prayed for its blessing: "May God Almighty vouchsafe His blessing on this work." One hundred and twenty years later, Captain James Cook carried the Word of God to New Zealand with many records confirming his Christian faith. Cursing and the use of profanity was strictly forbidden on his ships, and he

personally conducted divine services for his crew on Sundays. He also carried a Bible with him wherever he went, which he obviously put to good use as many of the places he discovered bear Biblical names. The missionary movement in New Zealand was initiated by Rev Samuel Marsden who conducted seven voyages to New Zealand between 1814 and 1837 during which time he was able to befriend and gain the respect of the native Maori chiefs. This contrasted with the fate of many of his countrymen who were killed and some even eaten by Maori tribes.

As of today, most of the Fijians and New Zealanders are nominal Christians. The Indian immigrants in Fiji are primarily Hindu. Indian farmers are the richest residents of Fiji. Dr. J T Seamands, Dr Sam Kamaleson, Augustine Salins and Rodrick Roberts were invited for six weeks of ministry. Suva, the capital of Fiji, put on a grand traditional celebration and welcome for the evangelists in what was then a rather posh Government house.

The team took the Gospel to the churches, schools, colleges, and market places. Open air meetings also were held. The film strip on the life of Sadhu Sunder Singh was shown to Hindus by Rodrick Roberts. This had a great impact on the Hindu audience and several surrendered their life to Christ. A number of Hindu converts took baptism.

Seventh Missionary Journey:

Route:India>>>>Ceylon (SriLanka)>>>>> India

Gospel Message filters into the island in fits and starts

History and Christian tradition hold that Thomas the Apostle visited Ceylon around the same time he came to India, during the first century. Small Christian settlements were recorded to have been established on the coast-line but the reports have not received authoritative endorsement. History declares that the population of Christians in Ceylon did not increase until the arrival of Portuguese missionaries in the 15th century. After the Dutch took over the country in the 17th century, they were able to convert 21% of Ceylon's population to Christianity by 1722. In 1796 the Dutch were displaced by the British and in 1802 Ceylon became a Crown colony. Anglican and other Protestant missionaries arrived in the island. Thereafter, missionary work was undertaken by several English denominations including the Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist churches. Ceylon was renamed Sri Lanka in 1972

The population of Sri Lanka is 20,869,000. Capital is Colombo. 75 % are Sinhalese and 17 % are Tamil speaking people. Moor 8 % Arab- Tamil descent. Literacy 90 % Buddhism 72 %, Muslim 8% and Christian has dwindled to 8%.

Mr B E Fernando, Income tax Commissioner of Colombo, who was also the secretary of the YMCA invited Augustine to preach in 8 city churches in Ceylon. Meetings were arranged in Anglican as well as other Churches. The Kurunagela Cathedral opened the pulpit for the first time to a lay preacher. After the message, twenty people stood

up to make their first commitment to Christ. In one of the Churches, Augustine spoke in English and it was translated to Synhalese .

Although Augustine could not understand the language, every time Augustine mentioned the word "Hell", he could sense that the Interpreter was hesitating. It happened a few times and then Augustine had to elaborate on the subject of Hell. He understood that there were people who did not believe in 'Hell' and it was a sensitive topic. Augustine prayed for power through the Holy Spirit and was able to explain.

It was Jesus who spoke about Hell in Luke 16:19 – 31 - the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man lived in luxury and poor Lazarus at his gate longed to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Both died and the rich man went to Hell "and angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. Abraham replied to the rich man, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.' The rich man answered, 'I beg you father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to the rich man, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Further, in Mathew 18:9 Jesus said *"If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of Hell."*

Revelation 21: 6 – 8, Apostle John describes his vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven: *"He said to me, It is done, I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. To him who is thirsty, I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be His God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars –their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."*

Even as they heard these solemn words from the Word of God, many were convicted of their sin, they began to dread the possibility of being sent to Hell, and were brought to repentance.

On the Eastern Coast, in a place called Baticoloa, a series of meetings brought forth a rich harvest and many souls were added to the fold. Years later, Augustine met a Theological student in Madhurai, India who said that he was converted in Baticoloa meetings. The Word of God brought forth fruit and the network of blessings continued from one country to another.

Brother R Stanley writes, "Soul winning means reproduction. It is giving birth to children into the Kingdom of God. John 3 :3. Is there such a thing as giving birth without travail or delivering a child without pain? Isaiah 66:7 - Sharing the Gospel is **called ' sowing in tears ' (Psalm 126:5,6)** What this means is that the soul winner pours himself into the message. There's a deep sense of reverence within him as he deals with a soul. It is a matter of life and death. Here is God's call to those in the rescue mission. *"Let tears run down like a river day and night. Give yourself no relief. Give yourself no rest. Arise, cry out in the night.....Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord."*(Lamentations 2:18,19)

Soul winning is not a spare time activity. We must have a spirit of evangelism, not just a spurt of evangelism! We should be everyday "witnesses" - in season and out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2).

Augustine Salins believed that evangelism is not an option to be indulged in during seasons of convenience, but a command to fulfil during every waking hour of a believer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS – PORTRAIT OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST

I cornered him one day and asked him, "Brother Augustine, I have been hearing about your ministry everywhere I go in India. What is the secret of your spiritual power?" My question embarrassed him? He hung his head and replied, "It's nothing in me. I'm so weak. You can ask my wife! In myself I'm just a big zero."

A chronic or uninvited illness often makes a human being feel like a victim; think, act and pray like a victim. You feel as though your life has been taken away and you have no control. But as Christians we need to believe that as humans we never had control in the first place. Our life is God's and we are in His hands. He created us and sustains us. As one who had died to himself and knew that his life was now hidden with Christ in God, Augustine Salins did not stop his work for God's Kingdom even when terrible illness hounded him like a crazed stalker...

2 Corinthians 12 : 9,10 - " He said to me , My grace is sufficient for you and my power is perfected in weakness - for when I am weak then I am strong."

It seems to be the most natural thing to think the world of ...

... a beloved, self-sacrificing father. My *appa* was my inspiration and joy. However, lest any portion of this biography appears to be merely a daughter's subjective view of parents she greatly revered, let us look at Augustine through the eyes of others who walked alongside him as he strove to fulfil his destiny in Christ. Here is a blog written by Rev Ian North (former director of Ambassadors for Christ) which was widely read and circulated to inspire others who wanted to serve Christ.

Ian North was an Australian evangelist and teacher , who ministered for many years in India. He worked with Ambassadors for Christ in Sydney. His life was inspirational and exemplary as is evident in the life and activity of his four adult children who are actively serving the Lord in various parts of the world.

During his lifetime Ian North, had extensive ministry around the world. He is remembered by men and women from many different nationalities and cultures. He is honoured because in so many ways he demonstrated what it is to be a real man of God. In 1964, Ian North was appointed Director for Ambassadors for Christ, India where he remained until Augustine Salins was appointed to that position in 1971.

It was during that phase that Ian North met with my father and posted the following piece on his blog; a piece that I hug close to my heart for it assures me that my regard for my father is not subjective but shared by many who interacted with *appa*.

Now here is the blog, unedited:

The Weeping Prophet of India

by Ian North

It was January, 1960, the place was Calcutta, India. This was my first experience of a large gathering of Indian Christians as the Evangelical Fellowship of India held its annual conference. My curiosity was aroused when a friend, pointing to a large tent, said, "You should go over and hear the man they call 'The Weeping Prophet Of India.'"

We had arrived in India the previous year to assist Dr. Akbar Haqq as he developed a wide-spread evangelistic ministry in India and Pakistan. Dr. Billy Graham came to India in 1956 and Akbar Haqq had been invited to be his translator for large meetings in New Delhi. As Principal of the Henry Martyn School of Islamics in Allahabad, Dr. Haqq's approach had been more the intellectual and apologetics method rather than the direct preaching of the Gospel. It was through his contact with Billy Graham that he caught the vision of evangelistic campaigns conducted in the context of the largest democracy in the world.

One year after meeting Dr. Haqq in the New York 1957 Graham Crusade, I received my call to India. With five years of seminary education and a further year of special Islamic studies behind me I felt well equipped for the task of preaching and teaching. Of course we knew very well that 'without Him we could do nothing' and that our equipping would not be complete without the empowering of the Holy Spirit. But there were many basic lessons to be learned before I could become "broken bread and poured out wine for the feeding of multitudes." One of those was the lesson of brokenness, of weakness, of tenderness, of what the older generation used to call "a burden for souls." This is where Augustine Salins comes in.

On the advice of my friend, and never having heard a 'weeping prophet', I turned my steps in the direction of the large tent to which he pointed. It was crowded with eager people singing worship songs accompanied by the tabla, a hand beaten Indian drum, and the harmonica so typical of such gatherings. I was getting used to the semi tones and quarter tones of Indian tunes and was beginning to feel that this was my land and these were my people. My grandfather served in East Bengal as a medical missionary in the old days of the British Raj, establishing a hospital in what is today Bangladesh. My father, born in India, was the medical superintendent of the Welsh Presbyterian Hospital in the mountains of Megalaya among the Khasi tribal people. And now here was I, by no planning of my own, one of a new generation of missionaries, working under the direction of an Indian leader as part of an

Indian evangelistic team, learning as much as possible to be an Indian in culture and in thought. What new lesson would I learn in this big tent?

There is a story from the early years of the Salvation Army in England. A young officer was sent to a town to preach and establish a witness for Christ. He took his stand and preached on the street corner, calling upon the people to repent, threatening them with the wrath to come, seeking to "pull them out of the fire." But there was no response. Frustrated and disappointed at the hardness of this place the young man sent a message to General William Booth requesting that he be reassigned to a place where the people were less resistant, less hard hearted. The good General sent a brief reply. "Try tears!" In the days that followed the discouraged missionary realized that the hardness was not out there but in here, in his own heart. On his knees he asked God to give him tears! And He did. Was this the lesson for me in the big tent?

Augustine Salins was born in a fishing town on the south west coast of India. His mother was a godly praying lady and his father was the headmaster of a school for orphans. Augustine was the fifth of twelve children. It was through the prayers and example of a godly mother and the witness of a faithful German missionary that Augustine came to saving faith. Some weeks later, after commencing studies in a distant college, Augustine was invited to give his testimony to a young people's group. Naturally nervous and shy he trembled as he walked to the front but as he began to speak his nervousness vanished. With great power he gave his testimony and "because these words came from the depth of his heart, they were charged with emotion. He could not hold back the tears that rolled down his cheeks." The impact was such that early next morning two young men under deep conviction came to Augustine, their fellow student, seeking salvation. From these early beginnings, through times of great inner trial and nervous illness, into many years of marvelous ministry God lead this humble, broken, weeping man.

As Augustine Salins stood to preach that day in the tent in Calcutta he first requested us all to pray for him. Then, beginning in a slow soft voice, he opened the scriptures and preached with clarity and power a biblical message beautifully illustrated from his own experience. As he spoke of the grace and love of God he was unable to restrain himself. His voice, tremulous with deep emotion, and his tears conveyed the passion of his heart for Christ and souls. Any doubts that I may have had about the reality of these tears was swept away. I understood that day something of the heart of Jeremiah, another weeping prophet, who said, "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people." Or the passion of Paul who reminded the people from Ephesus, "I served the Lord with great humility and with tears... Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."

It was not until the next January, again at the EFI Annual conference, this

time in Lucknow, that I met "the weeping prophet" personally. He invited me to speak in an annual retreat attended by hundreds of believers in his home town. It was here that I cornered him one day and asked him, "Brother Augustine, I have been hearing about your ministry everywhere I go in India. What is the secret of your spiritual power?"

My question embarrassed him? He hung his head and replied, "It's nothing in me. I'm so weak. You can ask my wife! In myself I'm just a big zero." I had the answer to my question. The secret of the turning of thousands of people to Christ under his ministry lay in the fact that here was a man physically and nervously so very weak, and so totally dependent on the grace and power of God, that the Holy Spirit could work through him with unhindered freedom.

To me this broken man has always been a living demonstration of 2 Corinthians 12: 9,10. "He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you and my power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then I am strong."

It has been my privilege to sit under the preaching of this servant of God as he preached to simple village folk, to university city people, in other lands to those with such diverse cultures as are found in India, England, Australia, and USA, and to see the same Holy Spirit moving with deep conviction upon all. Only eternity will reveal the abundant fruit of his poured out life. We give glory and praise to the Lord who delights to take the weak and to show forth His strength. "When I am weak, then I am strong."

When God ordains partnerships...

Ambassadors for Christ (AFC) is a mission organization (still very active) which was started in Australia with a two-fold vision: revival in the church and evangelism through the church.

It one of the EFI (Evangelistic Fellowship of India) Conferences that Augustine met Rev Ian North and Dr Akbar Haqq in Lucknow. The Headquarters of AFC was in Coonoor, Nilgiris, with Ian North was serving as Director. He began his evangelistic work in India with just two associates, Rodric Roberts in North India and John Paul in South India.

In 1966, Augustine was led to work in fellowship with Rev Ian North. Both had similar visions and believed that a God-centred partnership would bring the best results for God's glory. They prayed and they teamed up together. *(At about this time, Augustine's health was failing. A team effort seemed the right thing to do and certainly eased the pressure on his frail body.)*

Together, they were able to arrange large scale campaigns in different parts of India and in many of the major cities. The work gradually built up into a powerful and effective ministry with seven evangelists. John Paul was sent to the Arab countries as a missionary and he was based in Lebanon.

The season for which God had brought them together came to a close. In 1971, Rev Ian North had to return to Australia and the mantle of responsibility fell upon Augustine. His health was delicate at the time and he was undecided and at a crossroad about what to do next.

He was delighted at the opportunity to serve God more fully, but would his health allow him to?

The Lord showed him what he had meant when he said, *"I will never leave you or forsake you..."* (Hebrews 13:5)

My mother Kunjalia resigned her job at the Mission Hospital and came to his aid and was willing to follow him to Coonoor to care and support him. Even as they waited upon the Lord for definite guidance, God spoke to them through a verse in the book of Esther (Esther 4:16). "So, will I go.....and if I perish, I perish." They closed their house in Udipi and set out to 'Allendale', the Headquarters in Coonoor to take on the challenge.

In the pouring rain and bitter cold the couple arrived at the beautiful bungalow not knowing what lay ahead. They trusted in the promises of God and were strengthened to take on this great new responsibility.

Coonoor is one of the three hill-stations of the Nilgiris district in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. It is known for its production of the world-famous Nilgiri tea and located at an altitude of 1,850 miles above sea level. It is a heart-catching hill-station in which the air is appealingly fresh and the scenic beauty compelling.

The Headquarters 'Allendale' which my parents had to report to, was a gift from an English lady, Mrs Allen to AFC, India. Mr Cyril Kunder and his wife Vivienne, who handled the accounts and administration were a great help and support. They being in their youth and full of zeal for the Lord took on many responsibilities and lessened the burden which was on Augustine. In the seasons that followed, Cyril went on to become an effective evangelist and Bible teacher and was a great asset to the organisation in its later years.

To be able to support the evangelists based in different states, they had to raise prayer partners and sponsors from all over the world. They received invitations from USA, UK, Australia and several other countries. All the evangelists were able to see the outside world, meet with zealous international Christians and committed believers, and develop a broader vision.

Unfortunately, Augustine's health began to deteriorate and he developed high blood pressure and Angina pectoris. Doctors advised him to move out of the hill country and high altitude which was detrimental to Augustine's condition.

After much prayer and the counsel of godly leaders came the decision to move out of Coonoor and into a city. Bangalore which was gradually becoming the "Christian capital" of India, was seen as the ideal place to move to since it was also the capital of Karnataka.

Selling ' Allendale ' in Coonoor and buying a property in Bangalore was not an easy undertaking. But God so arranged it that Mr Abraham Thomas, who was an honorary Associate Evangelist, bought Allendale and enabled them to have a smooth transition. Abraham Thomas and Martha, his American wife, came to India from the US after completing their studies in Theology. Abraham Thomas joined AFC in 1975.

(Later, after my father moved into glory, in her tribute to Augustine Salins, Martha wrote, "The world has truly lost a wonderful man, and the beauty of his life makes his loss more painful. I never knew a child of God as uncle, with such devotion to preaching God's word especially in order to save souls. Surely a great heavenly host is welcoming him in to the presence of God and perhaps - most likely he is having the joy of seeing before him thousands of souls he has won to the Lord. Though he was afflicted on every side, he always persevered and never let anything, especially poor health, keep him away from abounding in the work of the Lord.")

Kingdom work never to stop...

Three Evangelistic Campaigns had been arranged in Manipur, India, in 1977. Few people realized or appreciated how much time, energy, prayer and preparation was devoted to these campaigns. Praying, organizing workers, volunteers, training counsellors, started months ahead of the actual meetings. The follow up process after the campaigns and turning the babes in Christ over to different churches was difficult to execute.

About two months prior to these city wide campaigns, Augustine suffered a massive heart attack (Myocardial infarction). Although he was seriously ill, he pulled through by the grace of God.

The doctors advised rest for six months. Even his colleagues and well-wishers asked him not to take a risk. Having heard from Pastors in Manipur that they were fasting and praying for his health, he stepped out in faith. Prakash Yesudian, an outstanding evangelist, accompanied him. Thousands heard the Gospel and many turned to the Lord.

In 1980, Augustine was preaching in Jhansi. His message was based on the text from Isaiah 32:2 and the theme was "Who is Jesus?" Even as he was preaching, he said that it was his desire to fall forward in the service of the Lord and die. As the words were still ringing in their ears, Augustine was leaning heavily on the pulpit and the pulpit was starting to tilt ...

The Pastor who was next to him came to his rescue, and catching him just before he fell over, rushed him to the nearest hospital. Yet again, he pulled through and went on to serve the Lord.

Even as his health further deteriorated, Augustine spent more time in prayer, meditation and intercession. One morning, while he was meditating on the Word of God, he received a promise from Isaiah 43:19 - *"I will do a new thing and it shall spring forth right now."*

He saw pictures of two projects taking shape in his mind. One was a Public Reading Room. The other one was a Conference Hall and a Retreat Centre. He had no inkling so as how to obtain the land or to find financial support for these building projects. Over the next few months, he rather miraculously met people who sold the property just next to AFC Headquarters. As they prayed and waited on the Lord, donations started pouring in from different parts of the world. A builder who lived nearby took on the work and completed it in record time.

The Public Reading Room opened its doors to people from all communities. Throughout the day and especially in the evenings, people came to enrich their knowledge. There were others who were curious to learn about the Truth. Some were true seekers who wanted to learn more about Jesus. Mr Jacob, who had been appointed as the librarian, was a thoughtful guide and a gracious friend to all who came to read. The spacious Auditorium which could accommodate up to 400 people and was used for retreats, conferences and prayer meetings. The upstairs rooms at the AFC Headquarters were built by donations through the 'Friends of Basel Mission', on Rev Gengnagel's (secretary for South East Asia at Stuttgart's) recommendation.

In 1982, Augustine stepped down as Director of AFC, India, and handed over the responsibility to Rev. Paul Deva Kumar.

How should a man of God view debilitating illness..?

Is he gripped with fear? Does he feel like someone just kicked him in the stomach after the doctor makes pronouncement after pronouncement?

Or does he praise God for His unfathomable grace, mercy, love and peace that passes all understanding, and thank Him for the chance to strengthen His relationship with the Lord and depend more exhaustively on Him?

I saw my father do the latter. He remembered that he had always been a sickly child and yet the Lord had raised him to a great height and width of service. He was grateful for that and all he hoped and prayed for was that he should "die in harness", with his boots on, serving the God who had always revealed His mighty strength through Augustine Salins' frailty and weakness.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ACID TEST

Appa didn't allow any of us to visit the Film Theatre or take part in anything he considered worldly. It goes without saying that there was to be no hint of drinking or smoking at all. He also made it quite clear that he didn't approve of flashy jewellery or gold ornaments.

The Evangelical Union of Students group was chosen by our father as it was grounded in the Word of God.

What happens to the children of parents who have dedicated their "all" to Christ and his Great Commission? Lurking behind the altars and campaign stages for several decades, a whole bag of problems related to and expressed by missionary kids or "MKs" as they are called, has now ripped open and litters the floor for all to see. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the child of a concerted or itinerant missionary can be the significant though rarely understood factor in the success or failure of many a missionary. In this chapter, writer, editor, mainstream media journalist and author INGRID ALBUQUERQUE-SOLOMON interviews the three adult children of Augustine and Kunjalia Salins to test their parenting style and assess its fruit.

The trial and tribulation of some children of missionary parents has today become a matter of concern even if it is sometimes manifested as a swinging pendulum. Considering the current concern and anxious review of the vitality and welfare of Christian families, the glimpse into the heart of missionary kids (MKs) has both pathos and promise, and is being seriously considered by the contemporary church. In many churches, proper concern for the children of missionaries has become a dominant factor in the calling of a missionary and in mission career planning.

In retrospect, there had been decades of virtual neglect and taking for granted that missionary children would turn out fine; as their parents took the initiative for God's Kingdom, He would take care of the children no matter what the problems, privations and traumas. This was followed by an almost paranoid preoccupation including international conferences on missionary kids!

As a national mainstream journalist in India, family has been a chief concern with me; even during my days as a film journalist with STARDUST, I would interview film stars on issues relating to family. I was the founder-editor of a magazine called FAMILY LIFE and co-authored a book titled FACTORS THAT SHAPE AND BREAK FAMILIES for Gospel Literature Service (GLS); added to that, ever since I committed my life to Christ in 1990, the Lord has often used me to minister to the children of pastors (pastors' kids or PKs as they are called), in Mumbai and in Bangalore.

As Augustine and Kundalia Salins went out full-steam to win souls for Christ, what was going on in the hearts of their three children Monica, Christine and Paul? A chapter in this biography on the parents could be the appropriate place to find out. I sent an identical question to all three and waited with interest for their responses. What did I discover? Find out!

Legacy speaketh...

Q. As MKs did you somehow feel different from other children in school?

Paul: Never. I was a very bad student as in those days I never felt education or schooling was important.

Christine: My primary education was at home. The teacher from the Primary Christian School which was opposite to our home gave me private lessons at home as I fell ill often and my mother was protective of me. When I started going to the Christian High School, I did not feel any different.

Monica: No, I did not feel different.

Q. Let me rephrase the question: Were classmates kind or condescending toward you?

Monica: We stayed in the Mission Bungalow and were sent to the Basel Mission Elementary School which was just round the corner. My grandfather was the headmaster of the Basel Mission orphanage and the children from the Orphanage attended the same school. Coming from adjacent compounds, most of the time we were good friends. We began to learn English in Class 5 and the word 'condescend'

hadn't entered our vocabulary! On one occasion I remember being bullied which culminated in severe head injury, after which they were most kind. The culprit was *my* double ears. While the adults believed that to have double ears is doubly lucky, children found it to be extremely funny! All is well that ends well - it resulted in a double promotion that year, the first and the last!

Christine: Most of the children in my class knew me from church or from Sunday School. Even those non-Christian students and teachers knew my mother as they in some point of their lives had visited the Basel Mission Hospital where my mother was the Medical Superintendent. My classmates were very kind and good to me. I had many friends. As a young girl I could make friends very easily. Either I wanted my friends to come home and play with me or I wanted to go to their home to play, but my parents didn't encourage me to do that. I had one friend who was staying close to our home, whose parents and grandparents were known to my parents, and so I was allowed to play with her.

My memories of my school and college years are not happy ones. My initial years were at home, where a teacher came home to teach me. I was ten when I enrolled in high school. My Studies were not my forte and I just scraped through high school. It was my mother's desire that I study science at college but I was influenced by my friend Nalini who choose the Commerce and Law stream.

At college I made many friends and continued to grow in my Christian experience, but accountancy, commerce and Mercantile law were the bane of my life. Having been brought up in such a happy home, life at college opened my eyes to see the reality of my wrong choice. The wisdom, patience and forbearance that my parents showed at that time in my life were truly extraordinary. I think we become wiser when we discover how wise our parents were and how tender their care for us.

During my college days, I really didn't have a goal or ambition. In those days, it was a common practice in many families for a girl to be given in marriage when she completed her University studies. Through these years as a Christian I had dedicated my life for God's service. I used to read biographies of missionaries in remote parts of the world and after reading each book I would say a quiet prayer "Lord, send me", not understanding the full implications of those words. I was a sheltered, timid girl but I had a strong faith in the Lord and a desire to serve Him, not knowing how. My parents on the other hand prayed for me and were convinced that I should be married to a good Christian young man and together, we could serve the Lord. I vaguely remember some of the proposals that came for me. My parents were open with me. They wanted me to pray and ask the Lord to show me the right person. I used to wish that it would have been easier if my godly parents chose a life partner for me.

Paul: My mother as an eminent doctor and head of the hospital, was one of the most important and highly respected member of our community and district, Most people called her "*doctor-amma*" (physician-mother) out of respect. My father was highly respected as a Christian leader and a man of great spiritual insight. My teachers would sometime threaten to tell my parents and chide me for being such a stupid son to parents so distinguished .

Our father was one of the few who in those days travelled the globe and the pictures he showed of his visits, and the stories he narrated and the fascinating spectrum of people who visited our home, exposure to music as well as art and also the annual retreat he conducted bringing people from every corner of our state for three days of retreat, with board and lodging, was perhaps the most significant event for our Christian community.

As children, with our friends we became born again annually and prodigals the month after, readying us for exquisite feelings of contrition and conversion the year after! Besides its spiritual value the retreat brought together the entire Christian community and gave them a sense of their identity and challenged them. I am sure all the fragmentation and meanness that we see today has emerged because they no longer have a unifying spiritual event. I cannot think of a more exhilarating, happy and wonderful childhood. Our house was enormous and such an inspiring place to invent new games and great adventures. My classmates would have loved to be in *my* shoes!

Notion of Neglect...

Q. Your parents being so dedicated to God's work, did you occasionally feel neglected?

Paul: As a child, I was very happy my father was not there every day to enforce discipline, stifle my curiosity (which made me somewhat destructive) which led me to open up every device to see what was in it and trying out all sorts of stunts and influence my natural way of thinking.

I am so glad that our parents set a great example of spiritual life as one where you pursue your particular calling with utmost zeal and passion because you love a living God and expect great miracles because you believe he hears our prayers. In my own career I used to ask my mother to pray and then have the absolute certainty that her prayers would be answered while I tackled some of the most difficult challenges in surgery.

My parents fortunately never sat at the rudder steering the course of my life as many parents inadvertently do. My father's return from a trip was always exciting because I loved to hear him talk to my **mother** about the places he visited and people he met, there was also the attraction of the wonderful gifts he brought me, which included a chemistry and mechano set, LP's of classical music which included LP's of Richter, the unforgettable version of the Messiah in German with Gedda and Schwarzkopf, Heifitz and Menuhin etc which truly made me distinguish the great from the ordinary.

With my father's arrival I also had to face the fact that the day of judgment for many of my peccadilloes had arrived! We had terrific servants taking care of us and

the hospital for me was full of great friends like Dora Aunty, who really made us feel so loved. *I never once felt neglected.*

Monica: My mother tried her best and in her absence where she was involved in saving lives, grandparents, biological and adopted uncles and aunts (plenty of them), and faithful cooks (two of them played with us instead of cooking!) filled in.

Christine: As a young girl growing up in our home, I don't remember feeling lonely or neglected because they were committed to God's work. I remember wanting my mother and waiting for her when she was busy at the hospital, even though she tried her very best to balance work and home life. As we were growing up we had very good and efficient helpers to cook and look after us. They were very kind to us. We also had extended family (our grandparents, uncles and aunts) who showed us much love and care.

Q. Did you sometimes resent this God who was taking so much of your parents' time?

Christine: I did not resent God, but as a young girl, I remember disliking the medical profession which took so much of my mother's time.

Monica: I loved God, never resented the situation by the grace of God.

Paul: Never. I never thought of *amma* and *appa* as my playmates. Looking back now I am sure even the thought that I can lay claim to my mothers time when she was involved in saving lives(I knew this very early) occurred to me. However, whenever I needed them, they were *always* there, particularly my mother.

Heartstrings...

Q. What are the outstanding memories you have of your mother and father?

Paul: Phoning my mother before performing an operation, Craniofacial surgery was at its infancy and often no clear path or a evidence based approach was available. My mother would ask for details of case and the time I would be performing the operation and would assure me that God would be guiding me. For me that was enough. I was sure all would be well.

Once I saw an advertisement for a Parker pen in National Geographic and asked my mother to get it for me through my uncle Watson who was in Bahrain. When the pen arrived much to my mother's chagrin it turned out to be a very expensive silver pen, and certainly not an item to be given to a "totally irresponsible boy" like me. She said, 'Your father will decide when he comes back.' The awaited day arrived and I still see my father taking the beautifully sculptured pen in his hands and slowly admiring it, then he said, 'I am so glad that at last my son has exhibited real taste, he can truly cherish this lovely instrument, but if he is careless and should he lose or destroy this pen, we will know of what substance, he is made.' In fact, years later it was stolen from my room when I was a resident doctor, and one of the first things I did when I made some money was to go and buy the same model. It is still with me.

Monica: I called my father *Appa* and he was the picture of what it means to live a triumphantly fulfilled life. He was the picture of a humble and contrite spirit bowed low in prayer, shedding tears incessantly for others to be saved. "The weeping prophet of India" – This he was, in both public and behind closed doors. He was the picture of what it means to do whatever needs to be done with such focus and passionate single-mindedness for the glory of God. He was the picture of one who made each and every place holy and every contact an opportunity to initiate and introduce someone to new possibilities and a new adventure with Jesus - to be blessed to be able to bless others.

He was also a picture of weakness turned to strength through the power of God. He could be described as one of the "Knights of faith" Through his harrowing and agonising ordeals of faith, he achieved a level of fidelity obtainable in no other way.

I remember him as a caring father.

He was also a wonderful storyteller. We loved listening to his accounts of what had happened – true, transformational stories, and tales of his experiences during the journey. His stories illustrated the manifestation of God's amazing power at work in his life and in the lives of other people through his ministry.

Appa loved fishing and we enjoyed accompanying him for hours in the hope of catching something. He was actually rather good at it! And of course, rather good at being a fisher-of-men too!

These were wonderful times and the mental image of my father carrying me on his back riding the low and high waves has always been one of my fondest childhood memories. Even now, it helps me understand God, my Heavenly Father, who carries me close to his heart.

Christmas was another celebration that was special. *Appa* made it a point to be at home for Christmas for which we were all grateful. The simple joy of tree decoration, the thrill and excitement, the noise, the laughter, the running, the climbing but most of all, the time spent together as family was most valuable and precious.

He brought mirth, surprise and joy and had the ability to turn even the sadness of life (and we did of course have times of sadness) into joy.

On Christmas Eve, after the Grand service at the Basel Mission Church, all of us would visit our Grand parents house and my father would distribute the presents to the family. The food and fireworks always followed.

Appa also loved Music and was determined to make his children learn what he never did. We had a 4 octave organ with pedals. When I was about seven, he arranged for the church organist (a young doctor) to come home and teach the organ to myself and my sister Christine. My brother Paul was sent to Bhagyan Master to learn violin. When it came to music, he was a hard taskmaster. He had set a few rules for us at home and he expected implicit obedience. For the Family prayer, we had to play the organ and violin.

On the day of my 'confirmation' at the age of 14, my father insisted that I play the Church organ for the service. Wearing a sari for the first time and a little over excited, I however, wanted to be with my friends. But my father's word was law and I had to obey. On this occasion I remember being particularly angry and hurt. In fact that was probably the first time I rebelled and retaliated. He never expected that reaction and he was hurt too. Despite my not wanting to comply, *Appa* won in the end and very reluctantly, I did play for the lengthy service! Nearly two hundred people were invited for lunch and all the uncles and aunties showered their love and compliments on me afterwards. It ended up being a wonderfully memorable day. Before sunset, *Appa* and I had made up and were friends again!

My mother, on the other hand, had absolutely no musical talent at all. My children – during the time they stayed with her in Bangalore – often marveled at how she was literally incapable of singing a single note in tune! I asked her about this once and she attributed it (her lack of musicality) to a very fierce music teacher that taught her in Trichur. Her father had sent her to learn the Harmonium when she was about seven years old and together with not particularly liking the Harmonium, she didn't like the teacher either! She cried, threw tantrums, and refused to go for lessons. Her father eventually decided that the Music teacher was doing something wrong and gave him a piece of his mind. Following that incident, *Amma* imagined that the Music teacher had put a curse on her!

When the family (all of us are quite naturally musical) used to sing in parts, *Amma* would graciously accept the invitation to be the conductor. She was a wonderful woman – humble, gracious and submissive to the very end.

Music has added so much colour to my life and looking back, I don't resent the fact that *Appa* was a hard task master! Music has played a big role in my own personal life – enriching, enlivening and energising it. Even now, it is my antidote to a stressful day. When I play the Piano – even to myself - I enter a hidden world of beauty, grace, awe and wonder. I feel my spirit lighten and able to rise higher in praise to the Lord.

In a similar vein, I thank God for my husband Christopher Benjamin who can play almost any musical instrument. The God given gift of music is one which has enabled us to emotionally connect and be inspired and motivated in all that we do. It has sustained us throughout our 36 years of married life, for which I am truly thankful.

Although Appa was an artist, surprisingly I do not remember him encouraging us to draw or paint! It's possible that we were too engrossed with our studies and did not show an aptitude for art at that stage in life. Most Indian parents back then – and still(!) want their children to be either doctors or engineers. Art and music were not prioritised as great achievements!

Our education was largely taken care of by my mother. Whatever grades we achieved, high or low, as long as we got enough marks to pass, kept Appa happy and content.

Appa loved to dress well and he appreciated good food – notably chicken and fish for which he had a definite weakness. On the other hand my mother – Amma - dressed in a simple white sari and loved vegetables. They were different people and in many ways starkly opposite but it was beautiful how they complimented and compensated for each other.

Appa was innately a very hospitable, friendly and generous man. Almost all the preachers, servants of God, pastors and deacons who passed through Udipi were invited to our house for a meal. Ghee Rice, Chicken curry, and a vegetable dish was the standard menu. Thankfully, our cooks were great and the burden did not fall on my mother who was already extraordinarily busy with her hospital duties. Guests stayed with us varying periods – some short and others quite long. We children, half-heartedly tolerated the ordeal of shaking hands with all the many guests. Sometimes, my father's generosity of Spirit was a bit of a trial to my mother. I remember how often our evening meal had to be stretched to feed a hungry mouth he would bring home – sometimes an old tramp, a stranger or a hippie. While Amma cared deeply about the poor and needy her generosity didn't quite compare to Appa's exuberance which didn't always take into account the practical and logistical considerations! Speaking of food, another fond memory I have is that during the Mango season, one of Appa's delights was to collect the different varieties of mangoes in a room and send basketfuls to the neighbours. He enjoyed life to the full and shared both his life – along with everything he had - with others.

I am ever so thankful and grateful to God for such prayerful godly parents who led an exemplary life and were an inspiration and encouragement throughout my life. My mother, while she was working, saved money and built a 4 bedroom house in Udipi which cost Rs. 9000. Later they bought the adjacent property for Rs 1800 which was given to my sister Christine when she got married to Kenny Jeyachandran. They built a house and stayed close by as long as they were in Udipi. Eventually, due to my father's ill health, Amma took early retirement.

When Christine and her husband moved to Bangalore, my parents followed them at their request. They sold both the houses in Udipi and built twin houses in Bangalore as the initial plan had been for my sister to look after them after they retired. Within a year however, my sisters family moved to Australia. When my father retired from Ambassadors for Christ - except for the house - they had very little money and practically no savings.

At the time, my husband Christopher and I were running a mission hospital in Robertsganj, Uttar Pradesh. My brother Paul was studying in the UK. Christine – my sister - invited them to Australia and they moved there having given the twin houses to be used by evangelists serving in Operation Mobilisation of India. In Australia, Appa continued to minister through personal evangelism, prayer and intercession. Although he was weak in health, God made it possible for him to continue his ministry to the Lebanese, Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians (the countries he had not visited earlier) . Almost every Sunday he could speak in one of these assemblies . He was faithful to the very end in the Lord's work until he was called to glory on the 9th of August, 1985.

LIFE'S RACE WELL RUN, LIFE'S WORK WELL DONE, LIFE'S CROWN WELL WON.

Christine: I visualize my mother, dressed in a simple spotless white cotton sari with a thin border adding a hint of colour. She was not one who dressed to be admired or commended for her taste in fashion. This simplicity in the external appearance spoke volumes about her values. She was a woman of small stature, much respected and loved. She was the physician who knew the joys, sorrows, frustrations, failures and the dark secrets of most families in our community. They felt safe to have her as their confidante, counsellor, judge and mediator. They called her respectfully as "Doctor Amma" which meant "doctor mother" - a doctor who met their medical needs and a mother at heart who loved them much.

My father Augustine Salins was a person whom everybody respected; an itinerant evangelist with a passion for winning souls; a preacher invited to speak in many conventions, crusades and church meetings all over India and abroad. Time had not washed away his story based messages from the memories of the listeners. Dad's ministry kept him away from home and we missed our Appa (Dad) dearly. He was a loving dad and always made an effort to bring each one of us small thoughtful gifts.

My mother in the meantime efficiently balanced home and work and continued to be an ardent prayer warrior. Her dependence on God, diligence in her work and faithfulness in prayer helped my father to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

A Christian home prepares you well to face the challenges that come your way. My parents walked the talk and their children did not have to look any further for examples of what it means to live for Christ. I was fourteen when I committed my life to Christ; my home was a solid training ground in my spiritual journey. I often accompanied my father to the hospital to share the message of Jesus with the patients. I can vividly remember the simple whitewashed walls of the general ward adorned with plaques bearing Scripture verses and the look of resignation on the faces of the patients quickly turning to that of anticipation with our arrival. A word of encouragement that Jesus is beside them and that He is the living God who loves them to the extent of dying for them, He forgives their sins,

and a little prayer for them, can make such a difference in their world. These experiences filled my heart with immense joy. As I look back now and think about my own conversion, I understand one thing that even a child can receive the gift of salvation, and how childlike we are, when we first receive the message.

Challenges and struggles...

Share the difficult turbulent moments of your life...

Monica: Engagement to a doctor which had to be subsequently cancelled.

Christine: I remember once my mother getting very ill. She was taken to Vellore hospital. My sister Monica was staying with relatives in Mangalore and studying at St. Agnes College, so I went with my mother to Vellore. I remember praying beside her bed pleading with God to preserve her life. I was asking God to spare her life just as God spared Hezekiah's life and gave him fifteen more years to live. Our God is a merciful God. He extended my mother's life by more than 30 years and enabled her to see her grandchildren. Her simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and her prayer life was truly exemplary. In spite of her busy life as the superintendent of Udupi Mission Hospital, she would kneel beside her bed both early morning and evening praying for hours. Many nights, even after visiting serious patients in the hospital, she would come and kneel beside her children's beds, place her hand on each of them and pray. After a year of my mother's illness, my father fell ill for a few months and couldn't go for preaching. My father was a passionate soul winner. He couldn't sit quiet. He did not know how to relax. My mother reminded him that not only the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord but also the stops! Even during later years when he had heart attacks and was forced to be admitted in the hospital, he would say, "If I perish, I perish". What he meant was that it was better for him to die while soul winning than to die while doing nothing.

Nobody could hold him back. When he regained a little strength he went about sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ all over India. After his retirement when my parents came to stay with us in Sydney, one of his friends, John Paul, who was previously a missionary in Lebanon, introduced him to some of the brothers in the Arabic, Lebanese and Assyrian churches. They loved my parents dearly and made my father their preacher week after week. My father was very happy with this God given opportunity that he could witness to the Middle Eastern people whose countries he could not visit as an evangelist. Through the illness of my mother and father were difficult times of trial for me, those were the years when my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was deepened and I too learnt to trust and depend upon Him. During my tenure as pastor of Wesley Mission in Sydney, I've counselled both the elderly and young, sat with people who were suffering, I could see how wonderfully God in His great mercy uncovered for me life's experiences.

My father was weak but he was going for walks and on Sundays was happy to preach. My mother accompanied him wherever he went and was content. She was also loved by everyone. We loved them dearly even though we couldn't give all the comforts which we wanted to give as they were our beginning years in Australia. Our children loved them and spent a lot of time with Grandpa and Grandma. They went with them for walks and my parents enjoyed their company. Every now and then when I practiced piano, my father would come and sit at the lounge and listen and then he would ask me to play that hymn "All That Thrills My Soul" and he would sing:

“Who can cheer the heart like Jesus?

By His presence all divine?

True and tender, pure and precious,

Oh, how blest to call Him mine!

Chorus: *All that thrills my soul is Jesus;*

He is more than life to me;

And the fairest of ten thousand,

In my blessed Lord I see.

This was truly my parent’s testimony. Jesus was more than life to them.

Paul :

I depended on my mother's prayer so much so that when she went to be with the Lord I was devastated.

It was the most turbulent time of my life.

Faith factor...

Q. Since 'born again' faith is not one that can be inherited, when did Jesus become real to you?

Monica: When I was seven, I responded to the alter call and gave my life to Jesus. Although I became a Sunday School teacher at 14, I began to have doubts about 'It is only by grace, we are saved', not by works. The “hound of Heaven” did not give up. God pursued me, and the Holy Spirit convicted me and sanctified me until I surrendered to His will and calling at the age of 15. I learnt that all of life is a gift and blessing from God and I live every moment of this life being thankful for that gift which He has bestowed upon me by His Grace.

I should mention that Appa ensured, we all lived up to a certain standard of spirituality. This wasn’t always easy, especially for us children, but we knew that he cared for us and that it was our duty to be obedient. We did – for instance - had to attend all the services (and sometimes there were five!) on a Sunday. In the days where the occasional beating was perfectly normal, Appa rarely used the cane - one look was enough for us.

In his private life, we witnessed his great and genuine passion for souls – I have never come across another man with so desperate a burning desire to win souls for the glory of God.

To put things in perspective, it may be interesting for readers to note that Appa didn't allow any of us to visit the Film Theatre or take part in anything he considered worldly. It goes without saying that there was to be no hint of drinking or smoking at all. He also made it quite clear that he didn't approve of flashy jewelry or gold ornaments. The Evangelical Union of Students group was chosen by our father as it was grounded in the Word of God.

Christine: I asked Jesus to come into my life very early in life. My parents brought us up in the fear of God. I used to pray, memorise Bible verses, attend Sunday school regularly but only at the age of 14 I fully understood what was sin and why Jesus had to die for my sins.

My father had invited a preacher from Australia to speak in one of the revival meetings that he conducted every year. The preacher spoke on the love of God.

That day when I realized that I was a sinner and I needed a Saviour, I asked Him to come into my life and accepted Him as my Saviour and Lord. That was the beginning of my Christian journey.

Paul: In my own case it was a gradual process of self-discovery through the bible and really I felt being pursued by God. I cannot give you a date or a moment.

Q. Have any of you followed in their footsteps?

Paul: Yes, I think even now most major decisions in my life are influenced by both of them. I am a doctor because I wanted to be like my mother and she remains my role model. I inherited my father's love of beauty, art and music and this has immensely enriched my life. He also made me sensitive to evangelism. Although I am not an evangelist like my father, but in my work and conduct I try to provide witness.

Monica: The humility, prayer life, passion for souls, sacrifice in my parents' lives was exemplary and exceptional. I am forever grateful for such godly parents. In my walk with God, the Holy Spirit is sanctifying me day after day as I fix my eyes on Jesus and run the race.

I am also grateful and thankful to God for giving me the privilege to serve him in Mission hospitals in India for about 25 years with an emphasis on Evangelism through the medical ministry.

My father was quite keen to get us girls married . It was my mother's desire that Paul my younger brother who is brilliant like her , study to be a doctor. When I told her about my calling to be a doctor, she explained to me the difficulties of being a doctor and a mother and both of them tried to dissuade me. When they saw that I was determined , permission was granted as I obtained a free seat in KMC Manipal which was newly built just 3 miles away.

Soon after my postgraduation, I got married in 1977, and joined my husband 2500 miles away in the 16 bed rural Mission Hospital, at Robertsganj, Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh. After serving for nearly 5 years, we went to England to pursue postgraduate studies for my husband. Our son Philip was born in England.

Having lived in England for over 5 years, when we returned to Robertsganj Hospital , our daughter Ruth was 8 years old. She got admission to the local convent school where the children as well as the teachers spoke only in Hindi. Coming from England, she had a terrible culture shock and she was bullied and ridiculed. The hospital was in a terrible state with a massive financial deficit . We were only 2 doctors working round the clock. I must confess that the children were on the sideline.(unlike my mother)as the circumstances were different. Although my mother protested, we sent Ruth to the boarding School in Mussorie (24 hours journey by train).

Having stayed at home in England to look after the children, the separation was extremely painful and it was the biggest price I had to pay. Ruth could never understand why she had to be sent to boarding school while Philip continued to stay and later study at Robertsganj. Paying the exorbitant fees to the boarding school with our meagre salary was another concern.

We are not perfect and we can not come up to their standards in everything. We fix our eyes on Jesus and are thankful to God for His mercies which are new every morning. He turns even our mistakes into blessings in His mercy and grace. Ruth and Philip love the Lord and serve as Teacher and doctor in the UK.

The Word of God remains eternal. The psalmist reminds us in Psalm 119:105 that God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path. He also says in V 96, " To all perfection I see a limit: but your commands are boundless."

We usually think that the commands are restrictive, binding and limiting.

The Psalmist experiences God's commands as a boundless terrain of pure delight !

Quite regularly, I pray for the children of Indian Missionaries working in remote villages, and at times,especially those in the boarding schools by name.

There are many who disqualify themselves and feel insecure because of their past, backgrounds, broken homes and education. One of the Biblical examples of a secure

and successful woman is Esther. She was a Jewess, a member of the hated minority sect, a teenage orphan, living in exile with her step father in an alien and foreign land. She had plenty of reasons to be insecure, discontent, unhappy and unfulfilled. All around her there were women who were competing for power, popularity and position. The voices of this world are powerful and seductive. Men and women cling to what the world proclaims as keys to fulfilment and security – career, looks, family and possessions. Esther could have been side-tracked easily and be entangled in the manipulation and power games of the world. She displayed a praiseworthy conduct and behaviour. By fulfilling God's purpose, she saved herself, her family and her people.

What was the secret of Esther's life ?

Esther 2 : 20 " She continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up. " It was Mordecai, her step father who taught her to fear God and to follow His commands.

Ephesians 6 : 2 " Honour your father and motherthat it may go well with you."

She faced perilous times due to the pernicious plan of Haman to destroy her family.

What was her reaction ?

She did not blame her childhood, background, ancestry or misfortunes. She was not pessimistic or panic stricken.

Esther was 1. Prudent 2. Purposeful – to do God's will 3. Prayerful 4. She stood on the Promises of God 5. She set her Priorities right and was pragmatic. Her priority was to save her people.

A Praiseworthy example indeed.

Christine: My father's life truly exemplified what it meant to "live for Christ". His legacy of love and faith was imbued by us and has passed on to the next generation, and the ones after them too. Their prayers have borne fruit and her children and grandchildren have come to know Christ in a personal way and they endeavor to walk in His ways.

Epitaph...

Q. How would you like your parents to be remembered?

Christine: Humble, caring, godly parents who gave first place to God in their lives.

Monica: Humble servants of God.

Paul: As a true miracle couple. They were two people, in every way different from each other in age, culture, educational background, personal taste and temperament, and yet who became the very best of friends, most complimentary and passionate of partners, and ideal parents because their focus was not themselves or even their family but *humbly* serving God. One of my non-Christian friends once told me that when my mother passed away he felt a great soul had left us and the earth was thus impoverished of its spiritual content, I know it is true in the case of both my parents.

Interviewer's conclusion:

It is evident from their deep sharing of the heart that the Salins children have lived from the deep imprint of their parents' lives upon their soul and spirit. It is a lesson for all MKs! You can rebel against your missionary parents and blame them till Kingdom come for all that has or has not happened to you. Or you can – like Monica, Christine and Paul Salins – realize the extraordinary blessing of being born to parents who live for Christ, let all they stand for be imputed into your psyche so that you can hand down the legacy to the next generation who can do likewise. It's called, I think, a generational commitment to the Lord of the universe.

CHAPTER TEN

PUBLIC OPINION

"From the time God called him, with half a rupee in his pocket, Augustine lived by faith, and yet, out of the meagre love gifts he received in Nagaland, he would immediately set aside his tithe for the Lord, and also share part of the money with me, for he knew what little salary I was getting in EFI."

The dictionary uses the word testimony in two ways. One when a person is brought into a courtroom and placed under oath to tell, attest to, or give witness to his or her personal knowledge or experience with reference to the case that is being heard. The second way is when the word "Christian" is linked to the word testimony when believers relate how they came to know the God of the Bible through the moving of the Holy Spirit in their hearts; when giving this testimony, a sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in always a necessity.

In this Chapter we present a third type of testimony which is a combination of the above two. A few of the many who knew and related to Augustine Salins give their personal knowledge or experience of him as they evidenced the moving of the Holy Spirit in his life, and his undivided commitment to sharing the Gospel of Christ.

My siblings and I were deeply moved when – after our father's death ...

... we came across several testimonies of persons (some we were not even acquainted with) who spoke of how Augustine Salins impacted their lives. I would not like to conclude this biography without presenting their perspectives for they prove that it was not only his family that knew of my father's selfless service to his Creator and Saviour.

"He (Augustine Salins) actually shed tears for my soul!" –Rev Rodric Roberts

(An excerpt from an internet testimony presented by 'zoominfo')

Rev. Rodric Roberts – another faithful-to-the-end soldier of the Cross - was a dedicated and enthusiastic evangelist. Some referred to him as the "opening batsman who stayed till the end at the crease!" It is not very often one could be credited with being faithful to his calling till the end; many good starters have had inglorious finishes. Rev. Rodric Roberts was one of the exceptions. Born in 1932 to Christian parents in Larkana, in Pakistan, he was like any other youth of his day, sporting with a streak of violence in his behaviour. Therefore, he especially enjoyed sports such as wrestling. In his aimless days of youth, he thought even disturbing an evangelistic meeting would serve his interests! With this ulterior motive, he attended

an evangelistic meeting conducted by Mr. Augustine Salins, the then National Director of AFC India, at Jhansi. One night Mr. Roberts approached Mr. Salins in order to trap him with some difficult questions.

The evangelist responded with a prayer and true tears for Roberts. This had a tremendous impact on the questioner because he thought that it was strange that someone was willing to shed tears for his soul! He came under the conviction of the Spirit. The same night Roberts found peace and his answers in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. From then on, it was 'no turning back' for Rodric Roberts. His initial ministry was on the streets and crowded bus-stands where he proclaimed Jesus as Lord. Later he went for a brief period of theological and ministry training at the 'Stanwel Tops' AFC Training facility in Australia. It was here that he first met John Paul and Ian North. The three of them became the 'Founding Fathers' of the *Ambassadors For Christ* India ministry in 1964.

***"As he (Salins) preached about the prodigal son, I couldn't help identifying with the older son."* – Dr. Rukhsana**

(This is an excerpt from the book *'To the Unknown God'* authored by Vicky Harley Holland)

An impossible marriage ---- "I was off to St Stephens hospital, Delhi, one night to meet a Muslim-born doctor named Rukhsana. Her husband kindly offered me a seat on the back of his motorbike. We tore through the darkness, sweeping past the magnificent, illuminated Red Fort into Old Delhi and past rows of figures already asleep. We travelled sometimes 12 abreast, including oxen, rickshas, buses and bikes, weaving in and out of lanes, like children round a maypole. I just prayed that I could hold on! I finally found the beautiful young doctor in her room where she sleeps when on call. Her 2 young children were staying with her and were already asleep stretched across the beds. We had enough time before her next shift to speak about her life and her Christian marriage to Evangelist C.S.Dutt.

Rukhsana was in her first year of Medical studies in 1974 when she met a Christian girl who invited her to a crusade sponsored by an organization called "Ambassadors for Christ." In spite of herself and her reservations she went.

Rev. Augustine Salins was speaking on the parable of the Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). His sermon focused the life of the older brother, whose sins were perhaps not as apparent as those of the prodigal son.

"Meanwhile the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. "Your brother has come," he replied and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound. The older

brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I have been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet, you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" My son, the father said, "You are always with me and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found."

As Rev Salins opened the word and applied the parable to hearer-application, Rukhsana said to me, "I identified with the older son. I knew I used God only when convenient. But until that day it had never occurred to me that I was a sinner." That was the night Rukhsana knew she was 'born again'. "Something happened in my heart," she said simply. "Things that used to be so important- fashion and movies – suddenly lost their appeal. I had always suffered from feelings of insecurity and now, all at once, my heart was filled with peace and I felt a security I had never felt before."

Rukhsana did not mind that two of her friends teased her about her decision to commit her life to Christ. She knew she had taken the right step. And when those same friends attended the meetings the following night – and went forward themselves – it was her turn to smile. Soon there was a growing group of new Christians on the Medical course. When her father discovered what had happened, he forbade her to attend Church and tried to get her married to a Muslim boy. But Rukhsana knew this wasn't something she could do.

Some friends told her about a young evangelist who had been praying about her and had discerned that she was the one God had chosen to be his wife! She went through a restless phase. To make things more difficult, Rukhsana spoke Urdu and Evangelist Dutt spoke Telugu. She wondered how she could marry a poor preacher who did not even speak her language? But the Lord ironed out all the differences and gave her perfect peace. Evangelist Dutt and Rukhsana married in Hyderabad in 1980. The famous Brother Bakht Singh solemnized the union."

"He (Augustine) loved Christ with all his being and hated sin in any form."
–J.T. Seamands

(A tribute by a close friend and fellow evangelist)

I first met Augustine Salins back in 1943 when I was teaching in the OMS Bible School in Gadag. He came to speak to the students in the Chapel Service. Right from

the start our hearts beat together in a common cause and vision. We soon became the closest of friends and partners in evangelism.

We often preached together at Darur and Khanapur Christian Jathras, in Church revivals and village campaigns. The last time we were together was in the 1972 campaign in Fiji, where for seven weeks we preached all over the island of Vitu Levu, and witnessed thousands of people make a decision to follow Christ.

Augustine was an excellent preacher of the Gospel. He had the God given gift of combining simplicity with spiritual depth. His messages brought conviction to the illiterate villager as well as the sophisticated administrator. He preached with boldness yet love, and sought earnestly to lead people to a personal relationship with Christ.

Augustine was a saint in his personal life. He was truly a dedicated person, filled with the Holy Spirit. To be like Christ was his all consuming passion. He loved Christ with all his being and hated sin in any form. Humility was one of his greatest virtues. Though reserved and timid by nature, Augustine was courageous in his denunciation of evil. Though he was delicate in health and suffered from physical infirmity, he was strong in spirit and persevered to the end.

Augustine was a pioneer in lay evangelism. He was one of the first in recent decades to give up the security of a secular occupation and enter the field of evangelism without any financial backing. As a lay person, un-ordained and unlicensed, he had to face much prejudice and opposition during his initial years.. But his sincerity and life of faith won out in the end, and the Church in India was forced to recognise his calling and gifts as an evangelist. In this way, Augustine won respectability and confidence for the office of evangelist and paved the way for many others to follow in his trail. Through the years, he was able to gather around him a choice group of dedicated evangelists and establish the Indian branch of Ambassadors for Christ organization. Today, these men are some of the most gifted and effective evangelists on the Indian scene.

We all miss the presence of our friend and brother, Augustine Salins, but we rejoice in his coronation at the heavenly throne. He has heard the words of His Master, saying, ' Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.'

He will be remembered for years to come by thousands in many lands, who are members of the Kingdom of God and servants of the Church today, because of the faithful preaching and saintly life of this beloved man of God

"From the time God called him, with half a rupee in his pocket, Augustine lived by faith." – Ben Wati

(The late Dr I Ben Wati, a leading evangelical figure and former general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), moved into glory at age 91.)

I first heard him [Augustine] testify at the Annual conference in the Evangelical Fellowship of India in January 1953 at Ramapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. We had all been deeply moved by the powerful presentation of the 'Evangelical Christ' by Dr. Harry Hager of Chicago, USA. And as the man of sorrows was presented, most of us had tears which we could not control. Augustine Salins, later to be known as the 'Weeping prophet of India' was among the first to testify. His voice was choked with emotion. His hands were shaking and his witness was clear and powerful.

As a member of the EFI council of Evangelists he was used in India. I was privileged to team up with him several times particularly in Nagaland whether in the capital town of Kohima or in remote villages like Chazouba. If there was any spiritual life in the hundreds of Ao Naga Baptist Churches during the two decades of the fifties and sixties, it was because of God through the ministry of Brother Salins.

In a Pastor's conference at Impur, Nagaland, many pastors got converted and were transformed. At another time, as we teamed up in Mokokchung, we were staying with a deacon Mr. MosaJamir. He remarked, 'Brother Salins, You are like a lamb in the house but you are like a lion on the pulpit.' This is a true evaluation of the ministry of Augustine Salins, tender, quiet and humble and yet, so powerful and effective in his preaching.

In the Naga homes where he stayed, he would often sit by the fireside in the kitchen, chat quietly with the simple tribal people and also assist in the cooking. He also painted scenes of sunset and sunrise while he was in Nagaland.

From the time God called him, with half a rupee in his pocket, Augustine lived by faith, and yet, out of the meagre love gifts he received in Nagaland, he would immediately set aside his tithe for the Lord, and also share part of the money with me, for he knew what little salary I was getting in the EFI. Through the years our fellowship and love grew deeper.

The Lord gave Salins the gift of tears which would flow naturally down his cheeks as he preached the Word of God. Hundreds were converted wherever he went. In one meeting, when people flocked towards the platform in response to his appeal to accept Jesus Christ, Brother Salins asked one of them, "Brother, do you want to be saved?" The young man replied: "Yes, but weeping is not coming...!"

Augustine, the soul winner is gone, but the many converts left behind will continue to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and God.

"I have met many who traced their spiritual birth to the ministry of Augustine Salins." – Theodore Williams

(The late Rev Dr Theodore Williams – 1935-2009 – was the founder and first general secretary of the Indian Evangelical Mission IEM.)

It was in 1958 that I first met Augustine Salins when he came to speak in the Revival meeting in South India Biblical Seminary. What impressed me at that first

meeting was the anointing of the Holy Spirit on him and his tenderness of Spirit. I was greatly challenged when he gave his testimony. He told how, in utter brokenness and in a sense of unworthiness, he surrendered his all to the Lord. I have an entry in my diary on that day stating, ' Lord I am utterly inadequate and unworthy. Yet, I give my nothingness and my all to you.'

Three years later, I was delighted when I had the opportunity to team up with him and preach in two conventions in Tirunelveli District. His childlike laughter and simplicity, his godliness and zeal for the Lord left a deep impression on me and there developed in my heart a love and friendship for this man of God which remain even to this day.

I have met many who have traced their spiritual birth to the ministry of Mr Augustine Salins and these are making their impact today for Christ.

His burden for souls was manifested not only on the platform but also in his zeal for personal evangelism. By his dedication and determination, he stuck to the task of evangelism and has elevated the calling and gift of an evangelist in the Church of India today. Church leaders throughout India came to recognise his role as an evangelist and thus he gained respectability for the calling of an evangelist.

When he joined the Ambassadors for Christ, his critics said that he had left the life of faith. But I have had close contact with him during those years and after he became the Director of AFC. His faith was no less than before because he continued to trust the Lord for funds to support himself and his team mates and for AFC building projects. His simple trust in the Lord never left him.

When the Indian Evangelical Mission was launched at the Annual conference of the EFI in 1965, it was Brother Augustine Salins who gave the first contribution for the New Mission.

His burden for the unreachable continued and he initiated the move for AFC staff to support a missionary in the IEM.

We will certainly miss brother Augustine Salins. But his fragrant memory remains with us inspiring us in our work for the Lord. The apt memorial for him is the hundreds of men and women in this land and in other lands whose lives can never be the same because his life touched theirs for the glory of God.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HOLY HOMES RAISE GODLY CHILDREN

MEMOIRS OF EILEEN KAUNDINYA (NEE SALINS)

"My mother had great hopes for Augustine because she believed that God has chosen the weak things of this world to shame the strong and the foolish things of this world to confound the wise as in 1 Corinthians 1:27. She dedicated him to God and blessed him to be a great man of God for God's glory. In answer to her prayers and commitment, not only Augustine, my brother Sebastine and myself were instrumental in leading hundreds of souls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

In this very precious Life-sketch penned by Eileen Salins Kaundinya, youngest sister of Augustine Salins and a servant of God herself, we get a closer glimpse into the kind of home in which the 'weeping prophet of India' was raised. We also realize how powerful is the impact and prayer of a godly mother.

"This is what the Lord says who saved you , who formed you in your mother's womb. Do not be afraid . I have called you by name and you are mine."
Isaiah 44 : 24, 43 :2



It was on the 8th of November 1931, Lazar and Sanjeevi Salins were blessed with their twelfth child .In their home at the Udupi Mission Compound, I was born and they named me Eileen. As I was the youngest, I was loved by all. I was a happy child, always surrounded by friends.

I remember my mother as a cheerful and prayerful woman who gave special attention to each and every child. She was proficient and an expert in telling stories and we used to gather around her to listen to the stories skillfully narrated to make us laugh, learn and sometimes shed tears of joy.

Evangelistic meetings and retreats were held at our Church once or twice a year. Outstanding, eloquent preachers used to be invited to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A great revival took place in our Church during one of those evangelistic meetings. Many young men and women accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour and I too was one among them. God instilled a deep desire in my heart to love Him and to dedicate my life to serve Him. I had such a hunger and thirst for righteousness that I spent much time in prayer and studying the word of God. There were times when I used to doubt and wonder whether any change and transformation has really taken place in my life. But I can confidently say that the

Holy Spirit was my Counsellor, and a helper and He guided me every step of the way. I was given the strength to stand on the promises of God and to trust Him implicitly. On one of those doubtful and uncertain moments, I cried out to the Lord and He gave me a promise from Isaiah 44:22 – *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me for I have redeemed thee.*

Memory-Keeper...

From then on, great joy flooded my soul. I started memorising verses from the Bible which became one of my strengths.

I started reading the Biographies of men and women who were prayer warriors and who had spent all their lives in the service of God Almighty. My one desire was to lead a life of faith and serve the Living God. I shared my experiences and dreams with my friends young and old.

I did not know how to make my dream come alive but I continued to walk with the Lord who said: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life."

Mother faces spiritual war...

My father was a school teacher and the Warden of the Boarding school of Udupi. My mother's firstborn son was Theodore. Two and a half years later, male twins were born, but they lived only for 3 days. God blessed her with 3 more sons, Sadananda, Augustine and Jeremiah. Jessie was the seventh child and the first girl. Berta was the eighth; Ignatius and Sebastian, ninth and tenth.

Four years later, Christy, the eleventh boy was born. I, Eileen, was the twelfth and the last child.

I will never forget a dramatic memory my mother shared with me. When she was pregnant with her tenth child, she used to spend much time in prayer. One night, she had this strange feeling that she was struggling and wrestling with principalities and powers. She knew that it was Satan himself, who is the accuser of the brethren. She rebuked him saying, "In the Name of Jesus I rebuke you. Even if you take away my five boys, I will never deny my Jesus. I will trust Him and live for Him forever. Whatever may happen to me, I will never yield to you, away from me!"

As soon as she finished saying these words, Satan left her. She was so exhausted physically, that she was ill for 3 days but soon recovered. The tenth child, Sebastian, was born in December 1925. He committed his life to the Lord early in life and in quietness and confidence found his strength. He was tall, fair and handsome. He had an impish sense of humour and a smile that lit up his face. He remained a bachelor till he was 40 and took care of his parents. He held a good job in the Life Insurance Company. What I found most amazing is how after tedious duty hours and during the holidays, he served the Lord as an evangelist. Wherever he went, he carried a bundle of tracts and Gospels and distributed them all along the way. He got married to Veeda who cared for my mother till she went to be with the Lord. After

Sebastian retired, he took on full time evangelistic work in the surrounding villages and spent almost all his money in the service of the Lord. His wife Veeda, twenty years younger to him is a Prayer Warrior and leads a group of women who fast and pray every Friday at the Prayer Hall in Udipi. Sebastian is 87 years old and is living in the Family house in Udipi with his wife Veeda and are involved in Prayer Ministry.

Family tears...

My parents were proud of their 7 boys and 3 girls. My mother took great trouble to bring us up in the fear of the Lord. Later on in life, death snatched away 5 of her boys in their youth. Sadananda, brilliant in studies, who held a good job contracted Tetanus and died suddenly. The shock and the sorrow was unbelievable. She cried and cried until one day she told the Lord to send her son once more to her and promised to cry any longer. God heard her prayer and one night my parents were sitting in the verandah of our house. They saw Sadananda, their beloved son in a thick cloud right in front of them. With a beaming and joyful face he addressed his mother and said " Amma, why are you crying ? I am happy in the presence of Jesus, my Lord and Saviour. Cry no more for me."

As my mother ran to embrace him, he disappeared with the cloud. From then on, my mother learnt to thank the Lord even in adversity.

She narrated this experience to me when I was a teenager and explained to me that everything works together for good to those who love God and who have been called according to His purpose.

During the Second World War, Ignatius had to join the Army. He returned after a year with advanced Tuberculosis and died within 3 months. Who could explain my parents sorrow and suffering? They set an example to us through their lives. My mother gathered all her children and kept singing hymns to her Lord until she almost forgot her sorrow over the days and months. The time she spent with the Lord early in the morning gave her the strength and energy for the day. On several occasions, I have seen her sitting alone with her Bible in her hand, praying. I understood the secret of her joyful and cheerful attitude at all times of the day!

One month later, mother fell ill and was admitted to the nearby Basel Mission Hospital. I stayed with her at the hospital. In the morning, when I woke up, my mother looked sad and she said it was the dream which had disquieted and distressed her. In her dream she had seen my brother Theodore who was also brilliant and had completed his graduate studies. He was married to Evelyn and had 4 lovely children, Jocelin, Austin, Sybil and Baldwin. He lived and worked in Mangalore, only 36 miles away. In her dream Theodore looked extremely weak and weary. He requested my mother to hold his hand and sing the song, "Safe in the hands of Jesus". Both sang the first stanza together, but he was too weak to sing the next verse. He wanted her to sing the second verse holding his hand. Even as she was singing the second verse, she woke up and saw me.

“Eileen, probably Theodore is ill, my dear,” she said despairingly and despondently. I ran home which was about half a mile away to get breakfast for her only to find the house in utter commotion and disruption. Then I heard the devastating news that my eldest brother Theodore had gone to be with the Lord that very morning. Tragedy after tragedy had struck her. Her twin boys to begin with and then one after the other the best and the brilliant of her children, Theodore, Sadananda and Ignatius were snatched away from her. Did God allow this to happen to her to test her faith? Who can question the Almighty, Sovereign God who is the Maker of Heaven and Earth? He holds our future and our ways in His hands. In all these, God's loving kindness, His unfailing and steadfast love was her comfort and He was her refuge and strength.

In the days that followed, she busied herself in lovingly taking care of Theodore's widow, Evelyn and her 4 lovely children along with her own children. My brother Augustine and his wife Kunjalia who was a doctor at the Basel Mission Hospital took the responsibility of the childrens education and lightened the financial burden which was on my father.

Encouraging Augustine...

My mother saw God's powerful but loving hand in all this. Her eyes turned to Augustine, my elder brother. He was more interested in Music and Art and failed in the Arts exam. My father thought that he was good for nothing. My mother had great hopes for Augustine because she believed that God has chosen the weak things of this world to shame the strong and the foolish things of this world to confound the wise as in 1 Corinthians 1 : 27. She dedicated him to God and blessed him to be a great man of God for God's glory. In answer to her prayers and commitment, Augustine became an Evangelist.

In 1953, my father fell ill and was bedridden for almost a year and died at the age of 75. My saintly mother took care of him night and day in spite of all her other responsibilities. God had placed my brother Augustine and his wife Kunjalia in Udupi and they were a great support to my mother through thick and thin.

Her generosity of spirit extended not only to the immediate family but even to others in need. Our house was always full with relatives especially during the holidays. My mother's eldest brother who used to live in Mumbai with his wife and children absconded and was not to be found. My mother kept on praying until one day the Prodigal appeared at her door in Udupi. He refused to return to his family in Mumbai and stayed with us till he died at the age of 75. During that time, my mother was able to lead him to Christ and he wrote a letter to his wife and family asking for forgiveness. I used to massage his back every day and he loved me very much.

Then there was my father's only sister who was rejected by her only daughter! She lived with us for several years and later died at the hospital. My mother considered it

a privilege to be kind and compassionate to the poor and needy. Whatever little she had, she shared with others and God multiplied what was given.

My mother was a prayer warrior and she was also an evangelist in her little world. All who came to her house, those who sell vegetable, fish and other things heard stories about Jesus. The cooks and construction workers heard about Jesus. Even the beggars would stand at the gate to listen to her stories. Every Tuesday, she visited the Widows home and prayed with the widows.

Her story and her life are remarkable and noteworthy. As a wife, as a mother of 12 children, as a mother in law to 4 daughters in laws, as a grandmother to 20 grandchildren and a true sister to her brother she excelled in everything she did and brought glory to God. She blessed every one she met and became a great blessing and inspiration to many lives as she could always say ' I know that my Redeemer lives.' Psalm 40 :3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of Praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. Praise His Holy Name.

As for me and my turning point...

When I passed SSLC exam, my parents sent me for the Teachers Training course at Mangalore. At the end of the first year, I fell ill and was admitted at the Basel Mission Hospital, Udupi. I was diagnosed with Tuberculosis. I had to discontinue my studies as I was kept as an inpatient for nearly a year.

I hardly ever questioned God because I knew in my heart that God had a definite purpose and plan for my life as I had fully committed my life into His hands. I started my evangelistic ministry in the TB ward. I started visiting other patients and got opportunities to pray and present the Gospel to them and as a result, the life in the Ward was transformed. It brought sparkle into their eyes and the resigned dull look of long stay at the hospital endured without hope was turned into a bright look as they understood that God loves them and each one is precious in His sight. Sister Trudy, the Nursing superintendent was the first one to recognise my skills. She gave me the assignment of translating the notes for Nurses from English to Kannada. I was invited to the other wards too. I was able to cheer everyone with my songs, jokes, Bible verses and prayers and in the process was thoroughly uplifted and satisfied. I won the affection and admiration of all because of my serenity and friendliness although at times they were shocked at my exuberance and unpredictability.

Dr Eva Lombard, the founder and Medical Superintendent of the Hospital watched me carefully over the months. Having heard glowing reports about my enthusiasm and sprightliness in evangelistic work, from many of her colleagues, she decided to send me to Madras (now Chennai) to undergo Theological training . How on earth could I get admission in Christa Seva Vidyalyaya, a branch of the Womens Christian College? The course was only for graduates! However no power on earth can go

against what God has willed. Nothing is impossible for Him. *Blessed is the man or woman whose hope and help is in the God of Jacob.*

It is mind boggling when I think that God had sent a Lady doctor from Switzerland to the land of India, to make my dream come true ,who inspired me and supported me so that I may become an evangelist and spread the good news of Jesus Christ in the land of India.' His ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts are higher than our thoughts.'

A bible woman in a mission hospital...

' The task ahead of you is never as great as the power behind you.'

By the grace of God, I graduated from Christa Seva Vidyalaya and joined Basel Mission Hospital, Udupi as a theologically qualified woman. In the mornings I worked with the Ophthalmologist, Dr Pflugfelder in his department. In the afternoon, I visited patients in the TB ward, General ward, Children and maternity wards. I conducted ward prayers and distributed Gospels and tracts to the patients and their relatives. I got the opportunity to counsel many patients who have been at the hospital for a long time. My spiritual sister and friend was Manorama Kakadan who accompanied me and supported me in our ministry. Many heard the Gospel and were blessed through the ministry. I could narrate many instances where the power of God was manifested, people being healed physically and spiritually.

I would like to mention Sister Ruth Dill, a Swiss Missionary, who was a great inspiration and encouragement to me; a gentle and gracious lady with pleasing manners which endeared her to everyone. Every day, we prayed together and as a result she had the vision to start pioneering work among the Koraga people (untouchable class of people) in a nearby village.

Launching out into the unknown...

I was happy and content in my world which was my comfort zone ,as a spinster doing the Lord's work. I loved meeting new people everyday and to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them and I was dedicated to my work. But God had other plans. He wanted me to launch out to the deep and to the unknown.

One day, out of the blue, my brother Augustine, called me and said, " Eileen, Christy Kaundinya wants to marry you." It came as a shock to me. The Kaundinya family was well known in Udupi.

Mr. S.J. Kaundinya was the Head Master of Christian High School. Our families were very close to each other. Out of the 13 children, Christy was the 8th. All of us grew up together and we attended the same evangelistic meetings. Christy also accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour in one of the meetings . He took active part in the meetings held at the Prayer Hall and was known to be a practising and active born again Christian. After finishing his high school studies, he worked in the L I C as a typist for 10 years. Then he had a definite call to serve the Lord full time. He left his job and went to Chintamani and led an Ashram life for 5 years with Brother Shathananda. In the Ashram, he learnt to lead a life of faith , trusting the Lord for his daily needs. The systematic Bible Studies and prayer life he practised while in the Ashram enriched his spiritual life immensely.

We were married on January 4th, 1959. I continued to work at the hospital and received a small salary which I used to hand over to my husband. My eldest son, John was born on the 20th of October and my mother-in-law who was loving and kind took care of the baby while I was away at the hospital. God supplied all our needs in a wonderful way.

An invitation into the unfamiliar...

"Faithful He is, who has called you."

Christy and I received an invitation from Rev. Sundar Tholar to come over to Munirabad to take charge of a small congregation which belonged to the Oriental Missionary Society. Munirabad was a town near the Thungabadra Dam in Raichur District. Rev. Tholar was the District Superintendent for the Gadag area. We had not even heard about this remote place but we were overjoyed because we knew that it was an answer to prayer and God had opened the door for us to spread the Gospel to the heathens in this place.

John was only 7 months old. Hearing the call of God, like Abraham, we set out, not knowing where exactly we were going. One trunk and a handbag full of feeding bottles, milk powder and a few clothes were our sole possession.

Serving the Lord in Munirabad...

' Sing to the Lord a new song for He has done marvelous things.'

Even as we were approaching Munirabad, the beauty of the place made my heart sing for joy.

Mr K.J.T. Sadhu, an Electrical Engineer welcomed us at the Railway station and took us to his home in his Jeep and we felt quite at home. The next morning, he drove to the house allotted to us by the Mission. It was an old zinc sheet shed, a ramshackle place. The doors and the windows were almost falling apart. There was a partition in the middle. One side was used as a Church on Sundays and the other side was to be our house for the next few years. 2 wooden cots, a Godrej table and 2 chairs were provided by the Mission. Life was very basic, but we were thankful.

God gave us a vision to build a Church there in Munirabad. Our monthly allowance was just Rs 70. We prayed and waited for a miracle. As an answer to prayer Mr. Devamithra sanctioned a site of land in the outskirts of the Camp. To crown it all, it was donated to us free of cost.

My prayer partner, Sister Ruth Dill had returned to Switzerland from Udupi due to ill health. I wrote to her in faith expressing our need. Her friends came forward to raise the money for the Church Building project. Within a short time, she sent enough money to build a small Church, and the Church was named Ebenezer (Hitherto hath the Lord helped us). It was registered under OMS and was the first Church in the Gadag area. The Mission authorities and the people all around marvelled and praised God.

We found a Telugu boy, Sathyananda, who was a dropout from school wandering in the streets and invited him home. He stayed with us and was instrumental in teaching us the Telugu language. Jocelin, my nephew visited our Church to conduct Evangelistic meetings. He agreed to support Sathyanand's education. After School, he joined Gadag Seminary for 3 years and became a Pastor. He worked among his own Telugu people and many people were saved and added to the Church through his ministry for the glory of God.

Yesu Ratna was another boy who lived with us, supported by Jocelin who is in Australia. He too became a Pastor in the Telugu area to continue the work after we left. Jane and Dany were born during our 10 years of ministry in Munirabad.

Our Mission transferred us to Hulligi, just 3 miles away from Munirabad very close to a Railway station and a sugar factory. We continued to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this area for 5 years. God blessed us with 3 children and our ministry was very fruitful.

Called to Koppal...

Once again, our Mission transferred us to a place called Koppal where there was no Church. We walked down the winding street towards the mud house allotted to the Pastor. Simple bore-hole latrine and the smell permeated the whole house. The villagers of course preferred the early morning walk to the fields which was neither sociable nor hygienic. With God's help we responded to this challenge with determination and a sense of humour! The Lord spoke to us through his word.

Isaiah 61 : 3–5, “ I will bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of Praise instead of a Spirit of despair. They will be called Oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord, for the display of His splendour.”

We accepted all the deficiencies cheerfully, as challenges rather than frustrations. Christy plunged into his duties with the zest and vigour of a human dynamo. We visited houses and families all around near and far. It was a typical Indian village, crude, unsanitary, dust ridden and infested with flies and mosquitoes. My heart ached in sympathy for the sheltered Muslim wives, mothers and daughters, cringing behind their veils when a man appeared, not even appearing in their courtyards except to change one set of high walls for another! Poverty was widespread and real.

On Sunday, we sat in the empty verandah and kept praying as we waited. A middle aged lady, came in limping on her badly damaged feet. Her claw hands were almost fingerless and her face had the marks of old Leprosy. She introduced herself as Subbamma who became a Christian while on treatment at the Miraj Leprosy Hospital. As we were chatting with her, a man arrived in a torn shirt.

With a radiant and joyful face he welcomed us warmly, heartily and affectionately. Daniel came from a nearby village called Bhagyanagar. He worked as a 'Coolie' in the Municipality. He was the first convert to Christianity from that village. How we thanked and praised God for these 2 people from different backgrounds who came and encouraged us immensely. The four of us and our bundle of joy, little John worshipped, and exalted the name of Jesus, prayed, shared and studied the Word of God on that first Sunday.

Soon, children started flocking to the Sunday School. Cottage prayer meetings were started in different corners of the village. Our congregation grew from infancy to childhood.

Daniel had a great burden for his own village. Converts were subjected to social ostracism, persecution and even threats to their lives. They were devil worshippers and were full of fear and superstition. Wherever you turned you could see a shrine containing images of the demon- goddesses, the Kali and goddesses of some dreaded disease or misfortune. Daniel's mother was one of the prominent devil worshippers and was highly respected in the village. One day Daniel requested me to go to his house to tell stories from the Bible to the children of the village. All the children crowded around me and I started teaching songs. In the middle of the story telling, Daniels mother rushed in and ordered me to get out of the village immediately. I consented but to our sorrow at least for a year we were not allowed to preach the Gospel in that village.

But Daniel was not disheartened. He believed with childlike faith that all things are possible with God and He will accomplish things no one else could. He believed that

God can deliver his mother from the clutches of Satan and devil worship and his prayers were answered.

God was glorified in Koppal and the surrounding villages not only through our Evangelistic ministry but also through our healing ministry. As in Acts 3:16, many received 'complete healing' in the Name of Jesus and the faith that comes through Him. Praise be to His holy name.

During the 6 years of our stay at Koppal, Indian as well as International teams of volunteers and evangelists came and stayed with us and visited the surrounding villages with the Gospel. During the week, guests were accommodated in our verandah and on Sunday the same place would be overflowing with believers for the worship service. The teams from Every Home Crusade and Operation Mobilisation stayed with us, encouraged us and supported us in our ministry. The team consisted of girls and boys from different countries, UK, USA, and Australia, staying at a time for one or two months. They did not know the language and we used to translate for them. They visited each and every village in and around Koppal with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were a dedicated and consecrated group of believers. The Lord added to our number almost daily those who were being saved. Once again, the Lord put a burden in Christy's heart to build a Church in Koppal. As we waited on God and persisted in praying, God did wonders. We could obtain a plot of land near the hospital for a reasonable price. Sister Ruth Dill was approached again and God enabled her to send the whole amount needed for the site and the building! Is it not marvellous that God could inspire and motivate a group of ladies thousands of miles away in another country to send money to build a Church in an unknown remote village in India?

Weak vessels in His mighty hands...

We were only instruments and weak vessels in His mighty hands. The day, 'Christa Jyothi Church ' was inaugurated and dedicated for the Glory of God , our Mission authorities, Government officials, Pastors, entire congregation, Hindus and Muslim friends and neighbours went on a procession singing praises and lifting up the name of Jesus Christ.

When our Mission was handed over to the Indian Management, the name was changed from O.M.S to Evangelical Church of India. Rev Davis was very pleased with our work and sent money to build a parsonage next to the Church. Within a year, having served in Koppal for 7 years, we were transferred to Bangalore to lead a team of boys called ' Every Creature Crusade.'

After serving in Raichur District, (North Karnataka) for 22 years, we joined Church of South India. God changed the rules for Christy and he had to study theology along with the BD students for one year. Then we were posted to Mandya.

There were many Christian families in the congregation at Mandya. They had rebelled against the authorities and had filed a case against the Diocese. The Bishop

was not welcome in Mandya. Fervent prayer and loving and caring approach brought about a breakthrough within a few months. Transformation and change in the hearts of the members of the Parish enabled them to withdraw the court case. As love and forgiveness flowed, the Bishop was made welcome. They raised enough money to renovate the Church, the Parsonage and the compound wall. The young people especially, gave their lives, their money and time for the service of the Lord. God blessed the ministry.

They collected sufficient money to build another daughter church in a village called Besagarahalli, 10kms away from Mandya. God gave us the opportunity to see the third Church built for His glory.

After serving 5 years in Mandya, we were transferred to Hardwick Church in Mysore. It was a beautiful and quaint little Church with a big congregation. I had the privilege to work as a Bible Woman in the nearby 200 bed Holdsworth Memorial Mission Hospital. I loved the work among the patients and the nurses. Outreach work started in the suburbs of Mysore and in Kurempunagar, cottage meetings were started. A site was sanctioned by a Christian Lady D.C and the Church ' YesuKripalaya ' was built with the money collected by friends in Mandya, Mysore and Sister Ruth in Switzerland. The church was registered under the Diocese and it was dedicated by Rt. Rev. D.P. Shettian.

Christy was given one year extension to be in charge of Yesukripalaya.

Christy retired at the age of 65. Christy considered it a great privilege to serve the Lord for 35 years in Evangelical Churches of India and Church of South India. God not only blessed his ministry abundantly, he ordained and appointed Christy to build 4 Churches for the Glory of God and to spread the Good news of Jesus Christ to hundreds, thousands of people. These stand as monuments to the Greatness, Goodness and Grace of God and His power to empower the weak things of the world to glorify himself.

Believers never retire, they only re-tyre...After retirement, we stayed in Mysore for 13 years in a rented house and served in churches all around. Our eldest son, John became a scientist, got married and settled down in San Francisco, USA. He is the one with his good wife, Samantha who supported us in our retired life.

Our second son, Daniel completed his BD in UTC, Bangalore and is working as a Pastor in Mangalore, Church of south India, with his wife Latha. Our only daughter, Jane, is settled in Mysore with her family. We are grateful to God for all what he has done for our family:

This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. Psalm 118 : 23

In 2005, we returned to our home town in Udupi and celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in Udupi on the 4th of January 2009 by the Grace of God.

In July 2011, Christy developed cancer of the stomach. We celebrated his 84th birthday and I am thankful for all the relatives and friends who came and prayed for him and blessed him.

On the 12th of March, 2012 , Christy had a massive heart attack. My brother Sebastian and his wife Veeda came and prayed with him and loudly, my husband Christy said Amen and then slept and went to be with His Lord and Saviour whom he loved and served throughout his life.

Praise God for the eternal hope we have in Jesus Christ. Jesus said: *I go to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you there to be with me, so that you may be where I am.* John 14:2-3

Now I am 81 years old and this separation is very painful and beyond description. But I pray like King David ' Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. Ps 143 :8

And my song (thank you, Bill & Gloria Gaither) is:

Because He lives I can face tomorrow

Because He lives, all fear is gone.

Because I know, who holds the future;

Life is worth the living, just because He lives.

EPILOGUE

MOTHER OF THE SECOND MILE

What happened to Kunjalia Salins? Before signing off, the author Monica J. Benjamin parts with some more hidden-in-the-heart memories of her mother, retained until this point so as not to distract from the amazing ministry of Augustine Salins. In this and the following chapter, we get precious glimpses of a woman for all seasons – ‘little Elizabeth’ made with such care and tender divine fingers in the secret place, lived every moment in her life for the glory of her Father who’d dispatched her to earth with a very special mission. Did she fulfill it? Find out!

“ Aristotle (in his Economics, about 400BC) described perfect household based on threefold submissio : of a wife to her husband, of children to their father and mother, of slaves to their master.. The role model for Jewish women was the outgoing successful businesswoman in Proverbs 31. She succeeded in being a caring mother, a shrewd manager of her household, a craftswoman, merchant and profitable trader. She worked long hours so that her husband had time to be a political leader . She did not attempt to rule her husband but she certainly wasn't inferior to him.” July 2013 edition of Christianity magazine.

God fulfilled the dream of Augustine about his wife.

Proverbs 31 : 28 -31 “ Her children arise and call her blessed. Her husband also and he praises her.”

DESPITE THE HECTIC SCHEDULES MY MOTHER KUNJALIA HAD TO JUGGLE – AS THE WIFE OF AN ANOINTED ITERANT EVANGELIST AND A POPULAR, HIGHLY-SUCCESSFUL AND MUCH SOUGHT-AFTER “DOCTOR-AMMA”, KUNJALIA WAS LIKE A SECOND HAND TO HER MOTHER IN LAW. SHE STOOD BY HER THROUGH THICK AND THIN UNTIL THE DAY OF HER DEATH.

When Augustine's older brother Theodore passed away, it was Kunjalia that helped with the education of his children - Jocelyn and Austin. They stayed with us for two or three years.

Augustine's brother Jeremiah was born with a congenital respiratory condition and Jessie suffered from a mental disease. Again it was Kunjalia that was – whenever

she was able to – at their beck and call. During the times they were admitted to the hospital, it was she who was there with constant encouragement and support.

When Kunjalia's only brother Antony died suddenly leaving his wife and four children, she was devastated. Yet, she was ever resourceful and willing to help, giving of herself completely. She brought Baby and Rosy, the two older children (of the four) to Udupi. She wanted them to have the best education and sent them to the local Convent, which was a reputable English Medium School. As she could not afford any more than she was already paying out, her own children were sent to the *Kannada Medium* Basel Mission School! She bore all the burdens that came her way with patience, grace and love. Her humble and sacrificial life was exemplary and a witness to all who knew her.

Furthermore the consistency of her prayer life, her courage and boldness to face adversity with dignity was, and continues to be, an inspiration to us all. She was like a "rock" (This is how my daughter Ruth describes her) and a prayer warrior that truly depended on her strength from the Lord. It was said that she managed the hospital as Medical Superintendent 'on her knees.' Prayer was the secret of her life.

RIGHTEOUS, BUT NOT FOOLISH...

After my father went to be with the Lord in 1985, *Amma* came and stayed with me in England. (My husband Chris was doing his post-graduation in Ophthalmology in the UK between 1980 - 1986) After a few months however, she decided to return home to Bangalore – and stay in her own house there.

The twin houses belonging to my sister and my parents had been given to Operation Mobilisation (OM) to be used to accommodate their staff. When my mother returned to Bangalore, to her amazement and horror she discovered that the houses had been confiscated and allotted to two families decided by the Government rent control. Fortunately, my in laws, Mr and Mrs G.W.Benjamin lived on the same road and they were kind enough to take her in while she went to court and fought to get her house back. By the grace of God she was eventually successful.

She lived alone for about 15 years after my father went to be with the Lord.

Looking back I remember how she supported and stood with me through thick and thin. The first year of my married life was particularly stormy. She came to stay with us in Robertsganj, prayed with us and wrote to friends all over the world to pray for us. I believe that God heard her fervent prayers and sustained, protected and guarded us.

A DOOR FOR THE POOR...

When we returned from UK in 1986, Philip was only 18 months old and my mother arranged for a helper to look after him. My mother's cook who was a very cunning lady had suggested a 16 year old girl and my mother – not knowing any better –took her on in good faith. We took her to Robertsganj (from Bangalore) and the hope was that she would help with childcare and some of the domestic duties.

On Christmas day however, I made an interesting observation. She was taking part in the Nativity play along with other teenagers and staff children. She had, as it happened, been given the role of Jesus' father, Joseph. I remember watching the play and Joseph (our helper lady) was standing right in front of me wearing a rather thin new Selwar Kameez I had bought for her the day before. Being an Obstetrician, I suddenly noticed a bit of an unusual bump and contour in her abdominal area. As soon as she came home, I requested her to lie down and my worst fears were confirmed. She was pregnant! She put up a big fight saying that it must be a tumour and not a child but I assured her that tumours didn't have foetal heartbeats – and the arguments stopped there!

At last, she confided in us about her past - that the previous owner of the house where she worked in Bangalore had molested her and that was the reason she agreed to come away 2500 miles in the first place! We consulted other senior staff and they advised that she be sent back immediately.

I wrote to my mother to say that we were sending her back with immediate effect. My mother's prompt and very long reply arrived explaining the situation in Bangalore. Apparently her parents were not willing to accept her back, especially given the condition she was in. Returning would mean being completely ostracised by society and relatives with little or no support.

My mother's question was "What would Jesus do?"

Meanwhile, the poor pregnant girl was playing up and we found ourselves in a terribly awkward and difficult situation. What on earth were we to do?

It was then –like so many times in my life – that my Mother arrived and offered a clear solution. She stayed with us, took care of all of us including our pregnant girl. After she delivered, the male baby was given to the Mother Teresa Home in Benares. My mother then took the girl back to Bangalore with her.

The extent to which my mother was willing to sacrifice her own time and life was amazing! And every time, a humbling experience.

ANGEL, DOCTOR, NURSE AND MAID...

In 1987, there was drought in Robertsganj. The temperature rose to 46C and there was no drinking water available for even the hospital staff. The Government tankers supplied water from the nearby river which was polluted.

In spite of boiling and filtering the water, my son Philip developed Enteric fever and nearly died. The Hospital was teeming with hundreds of patients with enteric fever, diarrhoea, cholera and children in particular were dying like flies. It was a terrible time and as the only two senior doctors there, we struggled night and day to save what lives we could.

The anxiety and the sorrow in our hearts with our only son dying at home was unbearable. One option was to take Philip to Benares Hindu University Hospital but this was almost a hundred miles away and we were hardly in a position to leave the hospital and its patients.

Once again, my mother came all the way -2500 miles - in the sizzling heat of summer and how we praised God for her timely and invaluable help!

She gave freely of her time and strength and helped lighten our load without saying a word in complaint or frustration. Her strength was in the Lord – and she had a quiet confidence that was characteristic of the way she operated in difficult situations. How I praise God for such a mother. Following his illness, Philip was so weak, he was literally unable to walk for weeks. It was only after fervent and persistent prayer that he was eventually restored back to full health. After playing her part, my mother returned once again to Bangalore. We were able to praise God for saving our son –despite the heartache of all the countless other children that died during that time.

But just when we thought the worst was over, it was I that became severely ill with a combination of Enteric fever, Cerebral Malaria and convulsions. It was yet another time of testing particularly as Chris was terribly busy at the hospital. There was a point, when the illness was at its worst, that I felt close to death's door and even had a very vivid near-death experience. I eventually recovered though and as always, my mother was there to welcome us in Bangalore for a time of recuperation and rest.

“When I think of Udupi now, I think: love, love love...”

Much later, at the grand old age of 85, she visited us once again in Robertsganj. Unfortunately, it was that year that she fell down (while playing with my children) and sustained a serious hip fracture. Orthopaedic surgeons and an Anaesthesiologist came from other EHA hospitals and a successful operation was carried out. The procedure was done under spinal Anaesthesia and she showed remarkable courage and bravery throughout the gruelling ordeal and later too during post-operative recovery.

When she was 88, she willingly agreed to take care of my children, Ruth and Philip in her home in Bangalore. Ruth had completed her A levels and the equivalent American high school exams at the boarding school – Woodstock in Mussoorie. Almost all her friends went on to study in universities and colleges abroad. She had applied to a number of places in America and Sheffield University in the UK but eventually opted to stay with her Granny in Bangalore and study Bsc. Philip had studied up to the 7th standard at Robertsganj, Uttar Pradesh. We had no other option but to send him to Bangalore for further studies and we were ever so thankful to her for her loving care shown to our children even when she was rather frail (and by then had two hip replacements!)

In 1999, my husband and I left Robertsganj and came to Bangalore. I was able to spend the good part of a year looking after both her and my children – time I was very grateful for.

At about this time, my mother was invited for the Anniversary of Lombard memorial hospital in Udupi where she had served for 26 years. I accompanied her as she was quite keen to go, and together we flew to Mangalore, and onwards to Udupi by car for the celebration. Many friends, patients and relatives came to visit and thank her. She recalled later that this celebration and meeting all of her old friends was one of the highlights and happiest moments of her life. I remember her exact words: “When I think of Udupi now I think: love, love, love”

The hospital staff, various patients, friends, and believers and non-believers alike who had gathered, honoured her for the sacrificial service she rendered in the service of the Lord and in the service of the people. The whole service and ceremony was conducted with a quiet efficiency and dignity and was refreshingly free of pomposity

She was awarded with a medal and a shawl, a symbol of service and sacrifice. In the small speech that she gave, all glory was given to God. She praised Him for blessing her and in turn allowing her to be a blessing to thousands of people in and around Udupi.

A few months later, my sister Christine (from Australia) and my brother Paul (who was in Doha at the time) returned to Bangalore to celebrate her 90th birthday in great style. We invited—friends and relatives as well as friends from the Church.

It was quite soon after her 90th birthday that Amma fell ill. Her strength began to fail and after a few days in Manipal Hospital she was brought, on her request, back home. In the moments before she died, she asked me to recite the 23rd Psalm and I recall how she put her hands together in an “Amen” with whatever strength she had left. All three of her children, both her grandchildren as well as other friend and family members were present when she went to be the Lord on the afternoon of the 25th of November, 1999.

As I reflect on her life, I recall how closely she walked in the footsteps of the Great Physician, who went about doing good, healing the sick, pouring out his grace and a

love upon a sinning and sorrowing world. My mother was a mentor and inspiration to many – a great woman of God.

What do you think?

MORE PRECIOUS GEMS

LIFE IS FOR BLESSING

How often we hear the words, "Eat, drink and be merry. You only live once and life is for living. A corollary to that statement is: "Life is for blessing." My dear parents, were indeed blessings to countless lives. Yet – their story is part of a much bigger story, and it is in this context, of our spiritual heritage in Christ Jesus, that I wish to set the scene:

Luke 1: 47 – 56 - Mary sings a song in praise to the Lord. V 50 – *"His mercy extends to those who fear Him from generation to generation".* Psalm 103: 17, 18 - *"But from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children - with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts"*

In Genesis 12:1-3, God says to Abraham, *"Leave your country, your people, your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse. All people on earth will be blessed through you."*

It is here that God initiates a new beginning, a new promise (covenant), a new name, a new life, a new creation, a new calling to set out on a new pilgrimage based on faith.

WHAT REALLY IS THIS 'FAITH'..?

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 says, *"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."* Romans 10:17 - *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God."* Hebrews 11:6 - *As someone put it, "Faith sees the invisible, believes in the incredible and receives the impossible."*

At that moment, Abraham experiences God's loving kindness – His loyal, steadfast, unconditional love based on His mercy and faithfulness - a voluntary act of extraordinary mercy and generosity in choosing the most unusual, unsuitable, weak, frail, sinful man. God chooses to bless Abraham so that he may be a blessing to all nations. Abraham stands in awe at the greatness, goodness and grace of God.

ALL GOD WANTS IS OBEDIENCE...

A U- turn, a step of faith in obedience unlocks God's power. Abraham believed God's Word - which is living and active. It is sharper than any double- edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Genesis 15:6 - "*Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.*" He acknowledged and accepted his own helplessness, sinfulness and weakness. He put his trust (unwavering confidence) in an Eternal Father who imparts life to the dead, who creates something out of nothing, with whom absolutely *nothing* is impossible.

So, Abraham makes a choice – a decision - to set out on this pilgrimage of faith. He abandoned all trust in himself and in his resources. He cast himself unreservedly at the mercy of God and laid hold on the promises of God. Abraham did not go skirting round the promises of God asking sceptical questions. He took God at His word, trusted what He says and relied on His promise. Galatians 3:16 - "*The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed - meaning one person - who is Christ.*" In James 2:20-24, "*Abraham was called the ' friend of God.'*"

It is important to note that when Abraham set out, leaving Ur of the Chaldeans, he did so childless - but with a promise – and it was this promise that he held to - of a family. Yet, nothing happened for a decade. Sarai was restless and decided to take matters into her own hands. At Sarai's instigation, Abram became a father through Hagar, the maid. And all this happened at the age of eighty six! At the age of ninety nine, it is no wonder that Abraham begun to wonder whether Ishmael was to be God's chosen one. (Gen 17:18). But no - God appeared again, re-emphasised His promise and changed their names to Abraham (Father of nations) and Sarah respectively.

When Abraham was a hundred and Sarah, ninety, Isaac, the child of the glorious promise arrived. (Hebrews 11:11). In Galatians 4:23, *Paul writes: "the son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way, but the son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise."* Verse 29 holds, "*The son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit.*" It is important for believers to understand that Sarah and Hagar represented two different covenants. One is based on the promise of Grace, wherein God says: "*I, the Lord, will...*" and the other on the Law which says "*You must do.*"

The law produces children in the 'ordinary way' since flesh gives birth to flesh. According to Genesis 16:12 - Ishmael was a wild donkey of a man, whose hand was against everyone; this illustrates human sinful nature; it is wild and potentially untameable. Hebrews 8:6–13 - "*Jesus is the mediator of a covenant (promise) which is superior to the old one and the new covenant is founded on better promises.*" Galatians 3:11-14 puts it this way: "*Clearly, no one is justified before God by the law, because, the righteous will live by faith. The law is not based on faith. On the contrary, the man who does these things will live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, 'cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree!'"*

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Here we see that God's grace (eternal blessing) is bestowed not 'in the ordinary way ' but in a supernatural way! When we are born by the Spirit, a new birth, a new creation, a new beginning, a new promise, a new name, a new calling and mission is received through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23 informs us: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* The curse and sin has been passed on from Adam to all mankind. Adam doubted God's word, distrusted and disobeyed God. Romans 6:23 says - *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* There is that wonderful, reassuring message from John 3:16-20 - *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

How to gain understanding...

In John Chapter 3, Jesus teaches Nicodemus and says in Verses 5-8. *"I tell you the truth, no- one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ' You must be born again."* John 1:12&13 adds to this, *"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."*

A prayer of repentance: "Lord, I am spiritually dead like Abraham who was good as dead . But I believe in your word and in your promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. I have nothing to offer but my sin. I trust in Jesus Christ, whose cross has paid my debt and has given me new life. I thank you for adopting me into God's family."

Think of the link...

When the renewal of our mind takes place, a radical paradigm shift in our thinking that defines and determines us as the 'people of God.'

linked to history via Abraham,

linked to God's new family, the Church, via grace,

linked to eternity via God's promise.

In Mathew Chapter 1, the network of blessing runs through generations as given in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David , the son of Abraham. God promised

that the Messiah would come through the bloodline of Abraham. As Max Lucado writes, "Jesus's lineage is anything but a roll call at the Institute of Halos and Harps -the list goes on – an entire testament of blunders and stumbles of his people."

Yet, the common bond between these people was a *promise!*

The promise of the Messiah threads its way through forty two generations of rough cut stones, forming a necklace fit for the King who came, just as He promised. There were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ. Luke gives an account of the Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus in Chapter 3:21-38. In Jesus Christ, all nations are blessed. We are blessed to be a blessing to others.

Moot question...

What then is it that prevents us from being blessed and be a blessing to others? What prevents us from trusting God in every situation?

Let us look back at some of our most-loved characters in the Bible. You might begin to see a pattern. Abraham was old, Jacob was a deceiver and rather insecure, Rahab – immoral and of course there was King David that not only had an affair but was a murderer! Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, the Samaritan woman had many failed marriages, Timothy was timid ... yes, and the list goes on. Quite a variety of misfits! But... when God's love and grace converged on them, faith in God, repentance and implicit obedience transformed them to be blessed, to set out on a pilgrimage and adventure with God and become blessings all along the way to many others.

Apostle Paul, in Philippians 3:4–10 writes, *"If anyone thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the Church, as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."*

E. Stanley Jones was one of the great visionaries in Christ. He challenged the Americans to break out of their cultural and social blinders and have a global vision. He challenged Hindus and Muslims in India to find fulfilment in Jesus Christ. When he was a boy, he attended a series of evangelistic meetings at a Methodist Church in Maryland. On the third night, he ran a mile to church and could hardly wait to kneel at the altar to pray. He writes, "I had scarcely bent my knees when Heaven broke into my spirit. I was enveloped by assurance, by acceptance, by reconciliation. I grabbed the man next to me and said, 'I've got it. I've got it.' I knew I had Jesus and he had me (*"Christ in you, the hope of glory"*)

I belonged. I was indeed greatly blessed. As I rose from my knees, I felt I wanted to put my arms around the world and share this blessing with everybody. The centre of being was changed from self to Saviour. The whole of me was converted. It was the birthday of my soul. For me Life began there. Little did I dream at that moment that I would spend the rest of my life literally trying to put my arms around the world to share this good news and bless everybody?"

THE FLIP SIDE: BROKEN, BITTER, BACKSLID, BARREN AND BLAMING GOD?

In Israel's history, the period during which the Judges ruled was considered among the worst. In the book of Judges, we repeatedly read "*everyone did as he saw fit*". They went after other gods in spite of repeated warnings from the prophets of God and we see the consequences of this disobedience. The last few chapters of Judges give an account of the ugly stories of homosexual assault, rape, murder and idolatry which is what happened when God gave them over to their own lusts and evil desires. Families and society became fragmented and fractured. They became faithless, senseless, ruthless and heartless. To crown it all, the land was struck by famine.

It is against this bleak and dark backdrop that the book of Ruth (also the name of my eldest daughter) shines like a beautiful jewel. It depicts God's loving kindness in choosing the most unusual and unsuitable people to fulfil His purposes. In the story, Elimelech, Naomi and her two sons, Mahlon and Kilion move towards greener pastures to Moab. They adopt local practices and both sons married Moabite women - Ruth and Orpah. Interestingly, it should be noted that the Moabites were considered an ungodly nation – descendants of borne of incest (Lot and his daughter as illustrated in Genesis 19:37) As a result, the Israelites were warned against relations with them. In fact, we read in Deuteronomy, that the Law forbade the entry of any Moabite to an Israeli territory.

Tragedy strikes. Elimelech and both Naomi's sons die leaving Naomi empty of family, wealth and status. Heartbroken and poverty stricken, she cries out in bitterness of heart – the Lord has afflicted and brought misfortune upon me. If anyone was broken, bitter, barren, backslidden and blaming God, it was Naomi! And by human terms – she had good reason to be.

Yet, it is in the midst of this terrible tragedy, that God intervenes and chooses to lift her up from the miry clay. His Grace and love converges upon an undeserving Naomi to bless her. Naomi makes a U turn ... she takes a step of faith and decides to return to her own country. In spite of her helpless and hopeless state, having changed her name from Naomi (which means "delightful") to Mara ("bitter"), she still finds words to bless her daughters in law. Here, in speaking blessing over the lives of others, she becomes the first link in this chain of a network of blessings.

Ruth 1:8 - *"Naomi blesses Ruth and Orpah"* ; 2:4: *"Boaz ... The Lord Bless you"* ; Ruth 2:12 Boaz to Ruth: *"May the Lord repay you"* 2:20. Naomi about Boaz: *"The Lord Bless him."* Ruth 3:10 Boaz to Ruth: *"The Lord bless you."* 4:11, the elders say: *"...may the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house be a blessing like Rachel and Leah who built up the house of Israel."* And finally, 4:14 - *"The women rejoice at the outcome and say Praise the Lord."*

Note the number of times the word 'bless' may be found in this passage.

It is at this juncture that God fills Ruth – a Moabite by birth - with a determination and desire to follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. She experiences God's loving-kindness which overflows to Naomi and brings her into a place of blessing and hope – a reward for Naomi's step of faith. Ruth's confession of faith was a sign of God's goodness and blessing to Naomi. Ruth 1:16-18 *"Where you go I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God, my God."*

Ruth's unwavering trust and confidence in God Almighty, who is abounding in love, gave her the courage and confidence to obey Naomi in her rather dangerous and risky romantic mission and be successful! God chose Ruth and she was but a poor, marginalised, barren widow (childless for 10 years) and a foreigner who was considered inferior by the Israelites. God accepted her into his family and blessed her with a child, Obed (who was the father of Jesse, the father of King David). Ruth had the privilege to be included in the GENEALOGY of JESUS CHRIST. Here we see a powerful display of God's generosity, goodness and grace which transcends the law.

Naomi was brought from darkness to light, sadness to joy, emptiness to fullness, curses to blessing, doubt to deliverance, fear and to faith, hopelessness to hope, death to life. What a glorious transformation which made Naomi a link in the network of blessings which continued to generations.

Our life style of prayer and obedience to God will bring forth a network of blessings, a network of the fruit of the Spirit – love , joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-discipline and enable us to be a blessing to others .

Where does Jesus Christ figure in all this..?

Galatians 3:29- *"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* Verse 14 - *"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the gentiles through Christ Jesus."*

The "offspring" and the "seed" and indeed the "blessing" are combined into Jesus Christ.

WHY JESUS CHRIST?

The Gospel is centred on Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the sum and the essence of the Gospel. To preach Christ is to preach the Gospel. To believe in Christ is to receive the Gospel. To live for Christ, is to live for the Gospel. The fact is that God sent His Son and that son was the Lord Jesus. We call him "Lord" because he is one with the all-powerful God, "Jesus" because he is the divine Saviour and "Christ" because he is the promised King and deliverer. He gave himself as a ransom for our sins. He died so that we may live. He conquered sin and death on the Cross of Calvary and rose from the dead.

He is the Risen Lord. Hallelujah.

ⁱ Sadhu Sundar Singh felt that his religious pursuits in Sikhism and the questioning of Christian and Hindu priests left him without ultimate meaning. He resolved to kill himself by throwing himself upon a railroad track. That very night he had a vision of Jesus who opened Sundar's soul to the truth. Sundar announced to his father, Sher Singh, that henceforth he would follow Christ. His father denounced him, and his brother Rajender Singh attempted to poison him. Sundar's life was saved by the help of a nearby Christian community.

ⁱⁱ Dr Bamin Tada came from a background of animism and grew up hating Christians. One night he was woken up from his sleep and found a bright light before it. A voice said, "If Christ is for you who can be against you?" He did not know it was a verse from the Bible until much later. He felt overwhelmed with two desires – to become a Christian and to challenge the anti-Christian law of his home state Arunachal Pradesh

^{iv} Tandhe is the Kannada word for 'father'

^v Tayi means 'mother' in Kannada.

^{vi} The Kannada phrase for "Thank you, God!"

INDIAN EVANGELICAL MISSION MISSION FIELDS AND MINISTRIES

