

DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2014

The Danger of Tale Bearing and Rash Judgment

(ctd)



Wednesday, October 1, 2014

Text: “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” - Romans 13:9, 10.

Comment: Tale-bearing and rash judgement are evidences of lack of love. We should therefore put off these and other vices, by demonstrating love for one another, which the Bible says makes one not to think or do evil to one’s neighbour. Loving our fellow man as ourselves means that we will not do to others what we do not want others to do to us. We should not, on the basis of assumptions or hear-say, judge people from afar and pass sentence on them as evil-doers without hearing from them and getting the full details of the matter.

It is the character of the devil to misrepresent God. (John 8:44) For instance, one of the calamities that befell Job was that fire came from the sky and consumed the sheep and the servants. However, by causing the fire to come down from the sky, the devil made people to believe that it was “the fire of God” which came down from heaven and killed them. (Job 1:16) Many have deviated from the worship of God because of such misrepresentations. The person who will be allowed by God to continue in His organisation is he “that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour... nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.” - Psalm 15:1-5.

Thursday, October 2, 2014

Text: "And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." - Esther 3:6.

Comment: After King Ahasuerus, king of the Medo-Persian empire had promoted Haman above all his other princes, all the king's servants started bowing down to him. But Mordecai, a Jew, who was working in the king's court, refused to bow. When this was brought to the knowledge of Haman, "he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai". (Esther 3:6) He decided to bring a false report against the entire Jewish nation, so that they would be destroyed. He told the King that their laws "are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them". (Esther 3:8) Because of that negative report, the king signed an order for all the Jews to be destroyed on the 13th day of the month Adar. But the report was patently false. It was only Mordecai who was reported for the offence and because Mordecai refused to bow down does not mean that he and all the Jews do not keep the law of the King which did not conflict with their faith. It could be seen that some highly placed officers whom a leader trusts, could, for petty reasons and to further their own selfish interests, mislead him into taking certain rash decisions. But as the Bible says "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect." (Psalm 33:10) and "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise." (Job 5:12) God used Queen Esther to present the matter to the King and thereby expose Haman's plot. Subsequently, the king hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. – Esther 7:1-10

Friday, October 3, 2014

Text: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." - Proverb 6:16-19

Comment: Those who spread lies about other people, and those who readily believe them and help spread such tales are committing abominations against God. The way to put gossips and tale bearers out of business is to shun them, and refuse to give ear to their talk. Or one could insist on verifying the information from the person who is spoken about. "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." (Proverbs 25:23) Apostle James condemned those who spoke evil of those doing righteousness, saying they have by so doing, made themselves judges, even of the law which the person is keeping. (James 4:11-12) Instead of reading minds, making rash judgments, harbouring grudges or vexation against our neighbours who may even be innocent, our Lord Jesus Christ outlined for us the path to take, meet the person to talk the matter over. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matthew 18:15-17) Furthermore, God declared through Jeremiah the prophet, "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou was not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee: when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." – Isaiah 33:1

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

Saturday, October 4, 2014

Text: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation". – Exodus 19:4-6

Comment: According to the Oxford Dictionary, a nation is a large aggregate of people closely associated with each other by certain features such as common descent, language, culture, history, as to be identified as a distinct people. The declaration by God Almighty that the Israelite nation would be made up of priests and an holy nation shows the distinction between the priestly class, and the rest of the faithful. Right from the dawn of the Christian era, God has been calling people of various nationalities to come and serve Him in spirit and in truth. The pace took a new turn from the day of Pentecost and has continued apace in this age of the last days as people from the uttermost parts of the earth are being gathered through the preaching of the gospel. All those who are called must have a sincere desire to serve God by being obedient to His laws so as to be saved. Anyone who comes with the mind of coming into a position of honour, ease, and power is certain to fail if he does not have a change of heart. The only proper motive for serving God is the determination to do so as a duty and in appreciation of God's goodness. It is then left for God to do whatsoever He sees fit to such one by way of reward. (Isaiah 43:21; 3:9,10; John 3:27; 2 Corinthians 10:18) All those whose actions fall short of God's standards should retrace their steps now lest they be disappointed in the end.

Sunday, October 5, 2014

Text: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" - 2 Peter 1:10

Comment: Those who have been favoured to come into God's organisation must show in their conduct the new life in Christ which is expressive of the truth which they have known and is a manifestation of the spirit of God in them. Such people of goodwill make haste to carry out the King's business. (1 Samuel 21:8; Psalm 119:58-60) They are "not slothful in business" but are "fervent in spirit serving the Lord". (Romans 12:11) They are diligent and happy to study the word of God and to declare the truth to others. (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15) They serve God quietly and humbly and strive to do so until the end. (1 Thessalonians 4:11; Zephaniah 2:1-35) They obey God rather than men. - Acts 5:29

David declared, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the

LORD, and to enquire in his temple.” (Psalms 27:4) He also stated: “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God...For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”. – Psalm 84:1,2,10,11. See also Psalm 27:4

Monday, October 6, 2014

Text: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” - 2 John 8

Comment: Deep reflection on the sacrifice we made to be ardent Christians and our labours over the years by God’s grace demand that we do constant checks on ourselves, using the Holy Bible to mirror our actions, reactions and indeed our general conduct so that we will be found to be abiding in the faith by God’s grace. We should then by God’s grace be able to judge if we have been measuring up to the standards required of us. St. Paul in his letter to the Christians at Corinth declared: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.” (2 Corinthians 13:5,6) This exhortation by the servant of God is very important. He was saying that unless we are on our guard, constantly checking whether what we are doing is righteous, we may lose the blessings for the good things we have done in the past, thus, depriving us of getting all the reward for the many things we have been doing by His grace. If after examining our selves or after each examination we find we had erred in any way, we should not hesitate to make amends. “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” - 1 Corinthians 11:31, 32

Tuesday, October 7, 2014

Text: “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” - Matthew 16:24

Comment: The Romans had the custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross. For instance, Simon the Cyrenian was commandeered to help carry the stake with which Christ was killed. It was the Romans who brought the practice of nailing people to the cross to the land of Israel. The Jews therefore saw it as symbol of Roman domination and of great humiliation. And because the person crucified suffered greatly before dying, the cross was a symbol of suffering. Our Lord is saying in the citation for today that any one who wants to be his disciple should be prepared for a life of self-denial and sacrifice. He should be willing to suffer humiliation and shame at the instance of the devil and enemies of righteousness who will raise persecution against the true disciple of Christ., “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (Hebrews 13:13) said St. Paul who, in his letter to the Christians at Philippi also exhorted them thus, “And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” - Philippians 1:28, 29

THE BIBLE, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

□ According to Encarta Dictionary (2009), hygiene is the science dealing with the preservation of health. It is the practice or principles of cleanliness. Sanitation refers to measures to protect public health through proper solid waste disposal, sewage disposal, and cleanliness during food processing and preparation. The Bible stresses the fact that worshippers of God must habitually maintain a high standard of cleanliness so as to forestall infection and disease. For one to meet God’s standard of cleanliness, he must abstain from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. – 2 Corinthians 7:1.

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Wednesday, October 8, 2014

Text: “All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. “ - Leviticus 13:46

Comment: According to the law of God, leprosy, as well as other infectious diseases, renders one unclean. Such ones were isolated from the rest of the community. (Leviticus 13:46) In Numbers 5:1-3, the law of God says, "...Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." (Numbers 5:1-3) It was because of the law of God that the Bible has accounts of lepers staying outside the gates or outskirts of towns. (2 Kings 7:8; Luke 17:12) .Even the clothes of the afflicted person should be inspected by the priest and destroyed if infected, but washed for reuse if seen not to be infected. (Leviticus 13:47- 58) Even the person having an infectious diseases is commanded to announce to others that he is unclean. - Leviticus 13:45.

The word quarantine refers to the enforced isolation of people or animals suspected to have been exposed to a contagious or infectious disease or the place of such isolation. In the world today, a ship arriving a port is forbidden to land freight or passengers because it is suspected of being infected with a contagious disease. States or municipalities also have sanitary regulations that restrict the spread of contagious diseases within its own boundaries. It is interesting that the law of God on the isolation of those with contagious diseases is still being applied today. Just as the person made unclean by disease is isolated until he is pronounced clean, so one who defiles himself by breaking the law of God should be put out of the assembly of God's people until he makes his way right with God. (1 Corinthians 5:5-7; 1 Timothy 1:19,20) In the words of Apostle Jude we should hate even "the garments spotted with the flesh" of one who has corrupted his way, a symbolic way of saying we should distance ourselves from his wayward conduct. - Jude 23

Thursday, October 9, 2014

Text: "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days."
"Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. "-Numbers 19:11; 19:13

Comment: Right from time of old, emphasis was placed by God on sanitation. The contact of the people of God with dead bodies should be as minimal as possible and must be based on necessity. Efforts must be made to quickly bury the dead while all those who had to touch the body for one reason or the other, must wash their clothes and their bodies and disinfect the house and whatever came in contact with the dead body or with themselves. The point is repeatedly made in the Scripture that it is when one is alive that one can give praises to God and be reckoned with by Him. Once the breath of life leaves the person, the person becomes lifeless - and thus a source of defilement. It is those who do not know God that keep the dead in homes after embalming out of superstition, or as a way of showing their love for the person while he was alive, thereby defiling the house and the occupants and exposing them to possible infection. Jesus Christ told the Sadducees in those days "And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living ..." (Mark 12:26, 27) Whatever we can do for God and humanity, we should do them now that we are alive, because it is on the basis of what one does while alive that he would be rewarded. - Hebrews 9:27, Ecclesiastes 9:5,6,10.

Friday, October 10, 2014

Text: "...ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land." - Numbers 9:14

Comment: A stranger denotes a foreigner, among the Jews. They were required to keep the law of God as did the natural Jews, showing that God has one mind towards all nations of the earth. The proclamation in the text for today was prompted by the case of the men who, being unclean through touching a dead body, could not keep the Passover. When Moses inquired from the Lord what they should do, the instruction given was that they should keep it on the fourteenth day of the second month of the Jews. This should apply to all those who could not keep the Passover on the 14th day of the first month due to accidental uncleanness, or by being absent on a journey.

(Numbers 9:6-14) Here again the importance of avoiding defilement by touching the dead or any form of uncleanness is highlighted. Those defiled at that time could not join the congregation to keep the feast. However as soon as their days of cleansing were over, they made efforts to inquire as to what to do to meet the Lord's requirement. The danger of deliberately flouting the commandment of God is stressed, in that there is no respect of persons with God. – Romans 2:11; Galatians 1:10

With the spread of the Ebola Virus, the importance of the law about not allowing oneself to be defiled by a dead body is now being better appreciated. An advisory on the Ebola disease published by the BBC says, "If you think someone has died from Ebola, do not touch their body, even as part of a burial ceremony. When someone has died, you can still catch Ebola from their body as it ejects fluids that make it even more contagious than that of a sick person. Organise for a specialised team to deal with the body as quickly as possible as it is risky to leave a dead body for any length of time in a cramped living area." In the new Testament we learn that the Jews even kept their distance from graves, and painted gravestones white for easy identification. - Matthew 23:27; Luke 11:44

Saturday, October 11, 2014

Text: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." - (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Comment: Cleanness is highly demanded of worshippers of God. This has been right from the time of old. For instance, before Aaron and his sons were dressed with the holy garments and ordained for their duties, the Bible says that "Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water". (Leviticus 8:6) As part of the rites of cleansing the Levites, God directed that shave all their flesh and wash their clothes and so make themselves clean. (Numbers 8:6,7) Concerning the person who has recovered from leprosy, the law says, "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days." (Leviticus 14:8) These directions were essential as decency and cleanliness promote health, and prevent many diseases. God also directed that when they want to ease themselves,

they should go outside the camp and dig a hole and cover it up. (Deuteronomy 23:12,13) "For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." (Deuteronomy 23:14) When Jesus Christ criticized the Pharisees and Scribes for their emphasis on washing of hands, "washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables" (Mark 7:14) he was not saying that it was wrong to wash hands but that they were hypocrites who pretended to be righteous before God whereas they were not keeping the law. They even elevated such observances above the keeping of the laws of God. That was why St. Paul said we should cleanse ourselves not only of the filthiness of the flesh but also of the spirit, that is we should be clean both in body and mind. It is the spiritual cleanliness that springs from good heart condition, that is more important. Christ said, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man." - Matthew 15:18

Sunday, October 12, 2014

Text: "And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean." - Leviticus 15:13

Comment: This text once again highlights the concern God Almighty has for the physical health and well being of the people. Historical records show that ancient people did not know about hygiene, sanitation and the importance of washing or the prevention of infectious diseases or how to care for the sick or needy. These are taken care of in the laws of God. It is instructive that the importance of washing under running water is stated in the law, whereas the importance of it was only discovered by scientists thousands of years later. A publication on hand washing says that "The soap suspends the dirt and soils. The friction motion helps pull dirt and greasy or oily soils free from the skin. Warm running water washes away suspended dirt and soils that trap germs. Final friction of wiping hands removes more germs." Public health warnings recommend that employers should ensure that employees wash their hands properly after using the washroom as this reduces disease transmission. While using soap and lathering up is very important (rinsing hands in water only is not as effective) and running water should be used for washing, preferably warm where possible. Hands should be washed for a minimum of 15 seconds - longer if the hands are visibly soiled. To help people (especially children) wash long enough, one option may be to say "A, B,

C" twice. For infectious diseases like the Ebola, washing hands regularly with soap and clean water - and using clean towels to dry them is an effective way to kill the virus.

The word of God is compared to water because as water cleanses the body of germs, so the word of God cleanses us. (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26) St. Paul asserted, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." - Hebrews 10:22

Monday, October 13, 2014

Text: "And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat." - Exodus 40:30-31. See also 30:18,19

Comment: It is the custom among the people of Palestine to invite the traveler or visitor to wash his feet. This was a highly cherished form of hospitality. In those days the footwear was made up only of sandals or soles, which fastened round the foot with straps. After walking long distances in the hot weather and dusty roads, one would need to cool the feet and clean off dirt. When Abraham saw the angels passing on their way to Sodom, he invited them to wash their feet and refresh their feet in the shade. (Genesis 18:4. See also 19:2) Medically it is said that one who does not regularly wash sweat and dampness from the feet with soap and water, is at a higher risk for developing athlete's foot.

In the text for today God Almighty commanded water be constantly kept in a basin in the space between the tabernacle and the altar for the priests to wash their hands and feet every time they went in to minister. (See Exodus 30:19-21) Failure to do this would attract the death penalty. While it is required of the people of God generally to keep themselves pure, more is required of those who go to minister in the temple. To whom much is given, Christ said, much is expected. (Luke 12:47,48) St. Paul, after listing some of the sins which would debar people from entering the kingdom of God, stated, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11) We must be determined to flee anything that answers to ungodliness and pray

God to help us to do His will at all times. David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." - Psalm 51:7

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

Text: "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued." - Deuteronomy 20:19, 20.

Comment: The importance of trees in enhancing sanitation and the health of man has long been documented. The law of God to the Jews was that they should not copy other nations to indiscriminately destroy trees after a conquest because they are essential to man's existence. The text for today points out that it is the trees that are not for food the Jews could cut down during war. A write-up from "Savatree, the tree and shrub care community" says that trees take in carbon dioxide and produce the oxygen we breathe. They filter air by removing dust and absorbing other pollutants like carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. They intercept unhealthy particles, (and) rain washes them to the ground. Trees control climate by moderating the effects of the sun, rain and wind. Leaves absorb and filter the sun's radiant energy, keeping things cool in summer. Trees also preserve warmth by providing a screen from harsh wind. In addition to influencing wind speed and direction, they shield us from the downfall of rain, sleet and hail. Trees also lower the air temperature and reduce the heat intensity of the greenhouse effect by maintaining low levels of carbon dioxide. We are all aware of fruits and the countless other fruits and nuts provided by trees. The bark of some trees is a source of chemicals and medicines. Quinine and aspirin are both made from bark extracts.

People of God are like trees in His garden. The ones that are fruitful he purges that they may bring forth more fruit, but the ones that are unfruitful he taketh away. (John 15:1, 2) John the Baptist told the Jews in those days, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for

repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." - Matthew 3:7-10

Significance of the Names and Titles of Jesus Christ (2)

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

Text: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." - Malachi 4:2

Comment: In Malachi 4:1 a prophecy is made of the fate that will befall the wicked, those who because of their pride refuse to do the righteousness of God, as it is written, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." The Bible says that "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." (Psalm 10:4) Such arrogant ones who refuse to humble themselves to obey the word of God would be destroyed by God in due time. As the dry stems of plants left after harvest are easily burnt by fire so such proud ones would be destroyed by God. The person God would use to carry out this work is the "Sun of righteousness", one of the titles of Jesus Christ, signifying his role as the light of the world through whom people of goodwill would learn the righteousness of God. While he would visit complete destruction on the wicked, he would guide, strengthen, restore to full health all those who fear God. The righteous will respond to the Lord's favour with unspeakable joy, leaping with gladness as calves newly released from the stall. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) Again he said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) Now is the time therefore for all those who want the favour of God to make use of the opportunity God has offered for His people to get life and peace through the knowledge that comes from Christ. St. Paul says, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee." - Ephesians 5:14

Thursday, October 16, 2014

Text: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." - Isaiah 9:6

Comment: Because of his pre-eminent position in God's scheme of things, several promises were made about Jesus Christ before he was born. The text for today says that he will be the king of God's Kingdom, that is, on him will lie the responsibilities for the administration of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ told Pilate that he is a King, but not of this world. (John 18:36-38) Ironically, it was Pilate who directed that a superscription be placed above the head of crucified Christ, which read "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews". When the chief priests of the Jews requested Pilate to change the wording, he answered, "What I have written I have written." Moreover, so great would be the effect Christ would have on the people of God that he would be called "wonderful". This was fully expressed when he did many miraculous works during his days on earth and the people marveled. But these miracles were just tokens of what he would do in a greater measure in the Kingdom of God fully set up. (1 Corinthians 2:9) Because he is the wisdom of God personified, the One in whom "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" ("for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him"), he is able to abundantly satisfy the people of God with all they need to know about God and His purpose of creation. (1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3; John 3:34) These words give life, hence we are required to acquire them and put them into practise. Christ said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." - John 6:63

Friday, October 17, 2014

Text: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." - John 16:33.

Comment: Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus Christ exhorted his disciples extensively, to strengthen their hearts so that they could carry on the work since he would soon leave them. The peace they would have comes from faith in him, the son of God, based on the truth they had learnt and from the spirit of God which will continue to help and guide them. However he did not fail to point out that people of the world who do not believe in him will be used by the devil to persecute them. (See John 15:20) However, by the power of God, they would carry on the work to conclusion because he (Jesus Christ) had overcome the world. Just before his ascension Christ had declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) He also said, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John 17:2) Having overcome him who had the power of death, Jesus Christ would destroy the devil in due time and usher in everlasting peace on earth, hence he is called the Prince of Peace. If we remain faithful to him until the end, Christ would enable us to overcome and enter the new earth that would be made Paradise. Apostle John says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." -1 John 5:4, Eph 1:20-23; 1 John 4:4.

Saturday, October 18, 2014

Text: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." - Revelation 12:7-9

Comment: The name Michael means "Who is like God?" It is a name that proclaims the supremacy and majesty of the Almighty God. Jesus Christ is the one whom God uses to vindicate His name and uphold the majesty of the Most High, the God of gods and Lord of lords. The name Michael is one of his titles. He is the arch angel spoken of in 1Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 1:9. The text for today speaks prophetically of a time a war was fought in heaven in order to expel the devil from the heaven of heavens to the regions of this earth. The expulsion of the devil from heaven by the hosts of heaven under the command of Jesus Christ was the first stage in God's plan which would culminate in the destruction of the devil and his hosts and the salvation of the just in an earth made paradise. After the devil was driven down from heaven a proclamation was made in heaven which said, "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” (Revelation 12:12) That short time the devil has to live before he is killed is known as the last days. We are now in that age. How are we to conduct ourselves? Christ exhorts us thus, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” - Luke 21:36

Sunday, October 19, 2014

Text: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” - Matthew 16:27

Comment: In several places in the gospels, Christ refers to himself as the son of man. However, he is not the son of any man on earth, as he was planted by the power of God into the womb of Mary. He is the son of the man, Jehovah. He is the First Creation of God Almighty and disclosed that he received life from the Father. (Revelation 3:14; John 5:26) As the son of God, he has the most trustworthy or reliable account we could ever have of the Father. According to St. John, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John 1:18) When Phillip said to Christ “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” Jesus Christ corrected him for the fact that as One who is the representative of the Father, One who expounds to us, by words and actions the knowledge of the Father, the person who has seen him (Jesus) had seen the Father. (John 14:7-9) .”If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also”, he told Philip. Those whom God gives the privilege of getting this knowledge are not the wisemen and statesmen of the world but those who are despised by the society. “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” (Matthew 11:26, 27) What a privilege we have to be disciples of Christ, “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people”! (Daniel 12:1) St. Paul declared: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” - Hebrews 4:14-16

Monday, October 20, 2014

Text: "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?" - Joshua 5:14

Comment: While Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and saw a man facing him with a drawn sword. As a war-hardened soldier and one with the spirit of God, Joshua did not run away from what appeared to be a possible conflict situation. He walked up to him and asked him "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" But the man answered: "Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." This prompted Joshua to worship him. Joshua then asked for instructions. He was told to loose his shoes as the place he was standing was holy. And Joshua did so. - Joshua 5:13-15.

It is remarkable that Joshua worshipped this great personality, showing that in course of time, Jesus Christ would be receiving the honour being given God Almighty exclusively – that of worship. (Philippians 2:9-11) Jesus Christ is the one who will lead the charge against the devil - bruising the serpent's head, and executing the sentence passed on the serpent at the Garden of Eden. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly", said St. Paul in Romans 16:20. People of God should therefore avoid sin in all its forms, so as to be saved from the wrath that would be visited on the nations at the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty. Apostle John stated, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." - 1 John 3:8

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

Text: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." - Isaiah 63:9

Comment: Isaiah the prophet, having being inspired to reflect on the goodness and mercies God Almighty manifests to His people, expressed the need for us to be appreciative of such loving favour, "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that

will not lie: so he was their Saviour.” (Isaiah 63:8) To the extent that people who are called by the name of God remain faithful to Him, He will Keep His promises to them. He will never forsake His people. When the devil visits them with afflictions, he will help them and deliver them, just as He did to the Israelites while they were travelling to the promised land, when God sent an angel, referred to here as “The Angel of His presence” to protect and guide them. This title refers to Jesus Christ in his prehuman days. God Almighty told the Jews, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.” (Exodus 23:20, 21) St. Paul stated: “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4) Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever, has been exalted to fulfill in even greater measure the duty of granting succour and salvation to the people of God. He declared “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” – Matthew 28:20

Wednesday, October 22, 2014

Text: “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” - Revelation 3:14

Comment: The word Amen means “So be it”. It signifies something as certain, sure and valid. Christ is called Amen because what he says is the truth, hence he is called “the faithful and true witness”. Moreover, what he says must come to pass. (Matthew 24:35). Christ bears these titles because he has the privilege of being the beginning of the creation of God, the “firstborn of every creature”, “and he is before all things, and by him all things consist”. (Colossians 1:15, 17) Apostle John wrote of the exclusive sonship of Jesus Christ. He stated, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:1-3) Further emphasizing the fact that what he says are absolutely trustworthy, Christ, the Revelator, told Apostle John, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” (Revelation 3:7) The certainty of the Lord’s promise to St. Paul was the basis of his hope to be rewarded after his martyrdom in the hands of unbelievers. He declared, “I have fought a good

fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." - 2 Timothy 4:7, 8

Thursday, October 23, 2014

Text: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." - Genesis 14: 18-20

Comment: There was a time in the days of Abraham that four confederate kings fought against the five kings of Canaan. They overran and looted the whole country, including the land of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, his goods, and his family, who dwelt in Sodom were carried away as captives. When Abraham (then known as Abram), was informed of the disaster that met his nephew, he armed 318 of his servants, and defeated the vandals and recovered Lot and his family and their goods. On his return he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, "Priest of the most high God" who not only provided refreshments but blessed Abraham in the name of God Almighty. Being a Priest, Melchizedek also received from Abraham, the tenth of all the spoils. Paul the apostle in his writing concerning Melchizedek, revealed that he was not an ordinary man but an angel who appeared to Abraham, who, having fulfilled his mission, disappeared. (Hebrews 7: 1-3) The Melchizedek, was Jesus Christ in his pre-human days. Truly, when Jesus Christ came to this world he told the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. - John 8: 54-59. St. Paul further stated, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." - Hebrews 2:17; 4:14

Friday, October 24, 2014

Text: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." – John 6:48-51

Comment: Early in the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness, precisely, the 15th day of the second month in which they left Egypt, the whole congregation complained that Moses and Aaron had brought them forth into the wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 16:3) God Almighty then told them that He would "rain bread from heaven" for them so that the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day. Consequently, God caused to come upon the face of the wilderness "a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat." (Exodus 16:14,15) When they gathered according to their abilities "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack". The provision God made for the Israelites in the wilderness teaches us how He provides for His people even in seemingly impossible circumstances. He provides sufficiently for everybody according to their needs and capacities, as St. Paul explained further in 2 Corinthians 8:13-15. Jesus Christ explained that the type fulfilled on him. He feeds us sufficiently with spiritual food on a daily basis. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world..., I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:32-35

Saturday, October 25, 2014

Text: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." - John 6:32,33

Comment: Christ had an interesting conversation with the Jews while he was explaining to them that he was the true bread from heaven. They did not understand the point he was making that unlike the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness, those who believe on him and do the will of God until the end would live for ever. (see verses 49-51) Rather they said "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" (42) Things became even more confusing for them when Christ said "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you..." (verses 53,54) Even his disciples, many of them "when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" All that Christ had been saying in picture language he explained in verse 63 to wit "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Yet in spite of that the Bible says that "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (verse 66) It is interesting that true to what he had said earlier that all those the Father had given him would remain (verse 44), when Christ asked the twelve "Will ye also go away?" (verse 67) It was Simon Peter who answered him, saying "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (Verse 68) This question is still critical for children of God as they face various trials in their onward march to the promised land. "Will ye also go away?" See Matthew 24:12,13; Hebrews 10:35,36,38,39

Sunday, October 26, 2014

Text: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." - John 10:11-14

Comment: A large part of the wealth of people in time of old consisted of their animals, and they shared the work of caring for them among their sons, daughters, and servants. The shepherd was responsible for each member of the flock put in his care. The angry response of Jacob to the deceitful ways of Laban, his father-in-law gives an insight into the life of the shepherd. He told him, "This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I

was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.” (Genesis 31:38-40) A shepherd thus needs great courage and endurance. David, who was also a shepherd boy, told Saul of how he had to fight a lion and a bear and kill them to protect his father’s sheep. (1 Samuel 17:34,35) The Bible applies the virtues of the dutiful shepherd to show the care and love which Christ has for the sheep of God. Jesus Christ describes himself as the Good Shepherd, who gives his life for his sheep. He stated: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” - John 10:27-29

Monday, October 27, 2014

Text: “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” - Genesis 12:3

Comment: After the death of Abraham’s father in Haran, God told Abraham to go out of his own country, from his kinsmen and his father’s house, to a land that He would show him. This command was backed with the promise that Abraham would be made great and blessed and that in him blessing would redound to the whole world. In obedience to the Lord’s command Abraham and his household set out of Haran on their journey to Canaan. Then he was 75 years old.

St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians explained that the seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ he said: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Galatians 3: 16) The point is that it is through Jesus Christ who is the promised seed of Abraham through that all the nations of the earth will be blessed. That was why St. Peter said: “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:11,12) He also said: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” - Galatians 3:26-29

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Tuesday, October 28, 2014

Text: “And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Alfa and Omega, beginning and the ending.” - Revelation 21:6

Comment: Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, meaning the beginning and the end. Jesus was the first creation of God and was used by God Almighty to create all perfect things. (John 1:1-3) He is in that sense the beginning. Having been appointed the king of God’s Kingdom, he will destroy satan the devil and bring all things to perfection to the glory of God the Father. In that wise, he is the end. (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 20:1, 4-9; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28) When Christ had completed his assignment, he will hand over the administration of the Kingdom to God Almighty, who then will be all in all. The sacrificial death of Christ and his enthronement are to the end that people of God may have life and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10) Let us make good use of the opportunity for life God has provided through Jesus Christ. St. Paul exhorted: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”- Hebrews 12:1, 2

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The Beatitudes

Wednesday, October 29, 2014

Text: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” - Matthew 5:3, 4.

Comment: Those who mourn are those who are saddened by the injustices, ungodliness going on around them. St. Peter stated that Lot who was a righteous man dwelling among the people of Sodom, "in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds". (2 Peter 2:8) In Ezekiel 9:3, 4, the Lord directed the man "man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side" to "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof". (Ezekiel 9:3,4) As Christians we should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. (Ephesians 5:11) Christians also mourn because of the great flight of afflictions they have to go through at the instance of the devil. (Hebrews 10:32,33) These are trials or tests of their faith. God will comfort and deliver His children from afflictions that occur from time to time and save them in His kingdom. In the words of St. Paul God "comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:4) And David the prophet declared, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." - Psalm 40:1,2

Thursday, October 30, 2014

Text: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." – Matthew 5:5

Comment: The meek are the humble, teachable ones. They accept correction and are very contrite or sorry when they err. They are not proud and do not feel sufficient of themselves as their hope is in God Almighty. The man Moses was described as being very meek, even above all who were in the earth. (Numbers 12:3) They accept the word of God and serve Him as fools, endeavour to practise righteousness in line with the teachings of Christ. They are kind, patient, and ready to learn regardless of their position in society. They do not go about to do their own will but subject themselves to the will of God, following our Lord's example. (John 6:38) Such ones will be given the spirit of God to understand Him and do His righteousness until the end. "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" said David in Psalm 25: 9. It is such humble ones in whatever part of the earth they may be that God Almighty invites to seek the Lord by doing His righteousness so that they may have the grace to be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. (Zephaniah 2:1-3) Our Lord Jesus Christ enjoins us to learn from him in that he is meek and lowly in heart, so that we shall find

rest unto our souls. (Matthew 11:29) Most importantly, God has given the assurance of salvation for the meek in the earth made paradise. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace". - Psalm 37:11

Friday, October 31, 2014

Text: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." – Matthew 5:6

Comment: Those people of righteous disposition, who yearn to do the will of God and are happy doing His righteousness, will be rewarded abundantly. This is because they understand the reason why they are created and are deeply appreciative of the abundant provisions God has made for mankind to live in peace and happiness on this earth. David said, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Psalm 63:1) He also said, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." (Psalm 84:2) Those who strive to know God and do His will would be enlightened spiritually to understand His purposes and enabled to do His righteousness. The invitation to all such people through the prophet Isaiah is highly instructive. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isaiah 55:1) In the kingdom of God fully established, there shall not be want or fear or ignorance among the redeemed. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." - Revelation 7:16

Saturday, November 1, 2014

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□Text: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." - Matthew 5:7

Comment: In line with the principle of loving our neighbours as we love ourselves, worshippers of God are required to show mercy to their fellow men, just as they would

like to be treated were they to be in the other person's shoes. The prophet Micah was used by God to state, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8) Jesus Christ taught us to forgive as many times as the offender is willing to apologize. He gave a parable about a certain king, who was owed 10,000 talents (the equivalent of \$10 million) But he forgave his servant who begged, stating that he did not have the money to pay. This same servant however refused to forgive his treat colleague who owed him an hundred pence (about \$2000). Jesus Christ then added: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matthew 18:21-35) Those who show mercy would receive similar treatment from God. (Matthew 6:12;18:25) "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies." - Psalm 41:1, 2

□ Saturday, November 1, 2014

Text: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." - Matthew 5:9

Comment: Peacemakers are those who make sacrifices to live peacefully with other people and who strive to settle differences and quarrels among people. Christians are enjoined to "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord", (Hebrews 12:14) while St. Paul stated that "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18) That Christ specially blessed peacemakers shows that something thrive in controversy and discord. They pour fuel to situations that are already on fire instead of doing what they could to put out the fire. For peace to reign people must learn to listen more and talk less. They should be self-controlled, patient and slow to wrath. They should not act on impulse, but strive to avoid strife. They should learn to suffer wrong wherever and whenever possible. They should avoid envying others but be content with what they have. They should avoid partiality and hypocrisy. (James 1:19; James 3:13-18; 2 Timothy 2:22-24) every true Christian, by virtue of the fact that he has the spirit of God would be a peacemaker. The Bible says, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." - 2 Corinthians 13:11

Sunday, November 2, 2014

Text: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 5:10

Comment: The world loves darkness rather than light. They hate those who will expose their falsehood and errors and oppressions and injustices. So they persecute them. Christ said: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3:19,20) Those persecuted ones are, hated, isolated or ostracized by the ungodly from their company, and are reproached, and the very mention of their name evokes anger among them. (Luke 6:22) David says : The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth." (Psalm 37:12) Indeed, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12) The account of Job shows that Satan goes all out to persecute those who are diligent in the service of God so that they may backslide and curse God to His face. (Job 1:9,10) As the shining of example of Job shows, the Christian would overcome by the grace of God if he remains firm in his faith, is patient and prayerful. Christ stated, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." - Matthew 5:11

Monday, November 3, 2014

Text: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." – Matthew 5:13

Comment: Scholars say that it is common to find in eastern countries salt that was so mixed with impurities that it loses its saltiness. Also, if exposed to the sun and rain it was no longer useful as salt except to be poured out in foot paths, or walks, as gravel is

used. The value of salt is to make food pleasing to the taste and palatable. It also prevents food from easily going bad or getting spoilt. But if salt no longer gives taste to food and does not preserve anything, then it is useless and only fit to be thrown away. The Christian by imparting the word to people of the world and showing example of right living enables people to understand the purpose of God and believe the truth being preached to them. They therefore stem the level of perversion in the earth. But if he does not live the life of a disciple of Christ, is ignorant of the word of God and ungodly, then he is not doing his duty as a Christian and the end would be destruction. To be Christians indeed we must do what we preach, not say one thing and do another, which is hypocrisy. (Romans 2:1; Galatians 5: 19-21) The point of obeying the laws of God in order to prove ourselves as followers of Christ cannot be emphasized enough. Apostle John said "...He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2: 3-5) The converse of the lusts of the flesh listed by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians are the fruits of the spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) When we are equipped with the knowledge of God and reflect it in our day-to-day lives, that we shall be playing the role of being the salt of the earth. See also Matthew 5:16.

Tuesday, November 4, 2014

Text: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." - Matthew 5:14-16

Comment: Ordinarily, the light of the world is the sun. When the sun is shining, people are able to find their way and go about their legitimate businesses. Christ said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." (John 11:9) Properly speaking, the apostles of Christ are lights to the world. They are cities set on a hill, which of course would be visible to all the surrounding country. St. Paul said that they (the apostles) had been "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men". (1Corinthians 4:9) They apostles are called "A city not forsaken" (Isaiah 62:12) However, all true Christians, who are partakers of their grace, are also lights by virtue of the knowledge they impart through the teaching of the saints, and their exemplary conduct. They thereby give direction and inspiration or encouragement to others by the grace of God. Everyone who claims to be a worshipper of God must ask himself whether he imparts the truth to others and whether his conduct draws people to the faith or drives them away. St. Paul

exhorted: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8) And in his letter to the Romans the learned Apostle Paul added: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” – Romans 13: 11-14

Wednesday, November 5, 2014

Text: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 5:17,18

Comment: A number of the religious leaders in the time of Christ thought his teachings were radical; that they amounted to changing what was written in the laws given them by Moses and the writings of the prophets. But the fact was that it was they who did not understand what had been written and the fact that what had been written, including the festivals and sacrifices, the Sabbath and other ceremonial laws, foreshadowed Christ and pointed to a time he would come to “magnify the law and make it honourable”. (Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 42:21) At the time of Christ, so many man-made traditions and customs had been formulated by the Jewish leaders. Of course, they were not based on the law of God. And Christ did not tolerate that. It would be recalled that at a time the Pharisees took him up for not observing the traditions of the elders. Christ countered them by asking them why they were breaking the law of God by their tradition. (Matthew 15:1-14) Christ did not come to undermine adherence to the law of God but to interpret it clearly to them so that they would know what God requires of them in the Christian era and to fulfil or accomplish prophecies about himself, the messiah. To buttress the fact that he did not come to destroy the law, our Saviour warned that anyone who would teach anything contrary to what had been written in the law and the prophets would not escape punishment but that great blessings awaits those who faithfully preach the word of God as stated in the Scriptures. The fact is that

the word of God, as fulfilled in Christ, remains constant all through the ages. No one has the right to add or subtract from it to suit prevailing trends or customs or opinions of men. See Jeremiah 6:16; Isaiah 40:8; Mathew 5:18

Thursday, November 6, 2014

Text: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 5:20.

Comment: It is said that the Pharisees were the largest sect among the Jews, and that their membership included the scribes, the learned men of the law and most of the common people. They were formed to restore and practise the pure worship of the Most High but had degenerated in the time of Christ to merely keeping the outward forms of purity. Christ said they cleaned the outside of the cup and the platter, whereas within they were full of all uncleanness. Christ warned us to "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1) Warning his disciples that they will not enter the kingdom of God except their righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees therefore means that no one who is not honest in his profession of the faith, who merely pretends to be serious with the faith and therefore a hypocrite should expect to be saved. God sees the heart and things which people do in secret. It is therefore gross folly for people to not only try to deceive man but to expect they would be deceiving God also. Such ones are doing their own righteousness not the righteousness of God. In any case the antics of the pretender would be exposed sooner or later. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." (Luke 12:2) St. Paul, speaking of the mistake of many of the natural Jews stated, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." - Romans 10:3, 4

Friday, November 7, 2014

Text: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." - Matthew 5:23, 24

Comment: This text underscores the importance of peaceful co-existence and of reconciliation. In the imperfect world in which we find ourselves, misunderstandings and quarrels are bound to happen from time to time. But we should strive to reconcile thereafter. The person who, on second thought, is convinced that he is wrong should not waste time, he should put his petty ego aside and go to apologize. Sometimes the parties to the quarrel have all erred in one way or the other and so need to apologize to one another. Apostle James said, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James 5:16) The point is made repeatedly in the Scriptures that we should not store anger or grievances in our hearts but take the initiative to settle the problems we have with our neighbours. (Matthew 18:15-18) Those who are wronged should be ready to forgive when apologies are offered. It is when one does such acts of righteousness that his gifts in support of the work of God would be accepted by God Who declared: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6) God told the Jews through the Prophet Amos "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." - Amos 5:21-24

Saturday, November 8, 2014

Text: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." - Matthew 5:27, 28

Comment: Adultery, the illicit relationship between married persons, is a violation of the law of God. (Exodus 20:14) Earlier God also decreed that "the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." (Leviticus 20:10) This law was vital to put away evil from Israel. (Deuteronomy 22:22) The commandment

was so strong that if a man suspected his wife of adultery, he took her to the priest where she swore to an oath attesting to her innocence, after which she was given the "water of jealousy," to drink, as prescribed in Numbers 5:1-31. Solomon the prophet warned that "whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul". (Proverbs 6:32) This should be better understood now in the light of modern knowledge, in view of the health risks involved in loose conduct, besides the spiritual consequences.

Our Lord Jesus Christ raised the bar on the sin of adultery by stating that it is not the physical act alone that is a sin but the nurturing of the thoughts. Since it is from the heart sin is conceived, it is from the heart, the breeding ground of evil, that it must be expunged from men. Christ then admonished: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." - Matthew 5:29, 30

Sunday, November 9, 2014

Text: "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." - Matthew 5:33-36

Comment: In Exodus 20:7 God Almighty gave the law that "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." And that "ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God:..." (Leviticus 19:12) Because of this law, the elders of the Jews refused to reverse the treaty they made to the Gibeonites when they found that they did not come from a far country as they claimed but were living close by, in the land of Canaan. Since they had vowed in the name of God not to kill them they could only make them hewers of wood for the sanctuary. Consequently, five neighboring kings who attacked the Gibeonites for making such an agreement with the Jews were,

by the power of God defeated by the Israelites in a great battle, during which "the sun stood still upon Gibeon". - Joshua 9; 10:1-27.

Unfortunately, as time went on, degeneration set in and people began to swear falsely. A good number of them were making promises in the name of God but were not keeping them. (Jeremiah 5:2; 7:9) Our Lord Jesus Christ then gave the command that his disciples should not swear at all, whether in the name of God or a person or any object. "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:37) Apostle James restated this command of Christ in his general epistle when he said: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." - James 5:12

Monday, November 10, 2014

Text: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." - Matthew 5:38, 39

Comment: The law of retaliation or of like for like was among the laws God gave to the children of Israel through Moses. (Exodus 21:22-27; Leviticus 24:19, 20) It was a deterrent against people wilfully inflicting injuries on their neighbours. In case of false charge made by one against another, the judges would make diligent inquiry, "Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you." (Deuteronomy 19:19, 20) It should be noted that the revenge was not left to individuals to carry out. It was the duty of the judges to find out the truth and award punishment.

The law of retaliation has been cancelled by Christ. He also showed the example in that "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter 2:23) St. Paul stated, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:17-19) When Christ said we should not

resist evil, he meant that we should not fight back or take revenge for harm or persecution. Turning the other cheek reinforces the point of non-retaliation: the person who does not revenge gives the impression that he is submitting himself to the repetition of the injury or of wrong done to him. Christ added, "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." - Matthew 5:40, 41

Tuesday, November 11, 2014

Text: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." - Matthew 5:43-45

Comment: What the law of God says is that "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD". (Leviticus 19:18) The aspect of hating one's enemy was made up by the Jews who believed that if one should love his neighbour then the natural thing was to hate his enemy. Jesus Christ strengthened the commandment on love and correcting the wrong interpretation made by the Jews by stating that love should be shown even to those one perceives as his enemies. We should pray for God to enlighten them and bring such ones from their captivity. It is by practically demonstrating the love of God to them that those of goodwill will realize their errors and turn to Christ. Our Saviour added: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:46-48) The publicans were hated by the Jews, for their greed and for being symbols of Roman domination. Those who love only their friends are no better than those they despise as not knowing God. St. Paul exhorted: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." - Ephesians 5:1, 2

THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Text: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." - John 6:15

Comment: By reason of the wonderful works he did, including that of feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes, a number of the Jews thought his role as Messiah was to establish an earthly kingdom over which he would be king. When the people looked for him the following day and did not see him they entered boats and came to the other side of the sea where they found him. But being an inspired man, he knew they wanted to make him king by force. He did not mince words in telling them, "...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John 6:26, 27) Christ also dispelled the notion Pilate had that he came to possess an earthly kingdom, telling him that his kingdom is not of this world. (John 18:36-38) The disciples of Christ who are children of the kingdom have their hope in the world to come, God's Kingdom fully established. To them St. John gave this admonition, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." - 1 John 2:15-17.

Thursday, November 13, 2014

Text: "He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do." - Mark 7:6-8

Comment: Our Lord Jesus Christ was hard on the Pharisees for placing traditions which they and their forefathers had created above the laws of God. When they challenged him for not obeying such traditions, he cited the declaration made by the Prophet Isaiah as stated in the text for today. As disciples of Christ we must also condemn and refuse to take part in traditions that water down, undermine or directly contradict Christian principles. Such traditions as holding of New Yam and New Corn Festivals, the dancing of masquerades, the craving for traditional titles are contrary to the Christian character and involve idolatrous practices. There are also festivals being observed by a number of Churches which are pagan in origin and had been given a Christian veneer or covering. We should not have anything to do with these festivals, which are holdovers from the days of ignorance. God Almighty enjoins us not to learn the ways of the heathen for the customs of the people are vain. (Jeremiah 10:2,3; Colossians 2:8) Moreover St. Paul charged us thus: ““Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” - 2 Corinthians 6: 14-16, 17-18.

Friday, November 14, 2014

Text: “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” - Matthew 18:1-3

Comment: While they were still young in the faith, the immediate disciples of Christ were bothered about position and were involved in status-seeking. But Jesus Christ made them to understand that God’s Kingdom operates by different standards. Thus, when they sought to know from him who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God, he called out a little child and explained that the character of the child is the model they should emulate. He added, “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little

child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:4) In other words, it is those who humble themselves as to be obedient, teachable, forgiving, sincere, as little children that would be exalted by God. On another occasion he told his disciples, “But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” (Matthew 20:26, 27) The children of the kingdom should not be fighting one another, to outdo the other, striving to belittle the other so as to shine among people. Rather in honour, they should be “preferring one another”. (Romans 12:10) The Bible also says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” - Philippians 2:3

Saturday, November 15, 2014

Text: “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” - Matthew 20:28

Comment: Jesus Christ taught us the importance of self-sacrifice for the good of others. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9) And Christ stated, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends...” (John 15:13, 14) As the good shepherd, he gave his life for the sheep. (John 10:11) The lesson taught us by Christ is that the position of leadership should be reserved for the person “who is prepared to live for others and if possible, die for them”. Those who are leading the sheep of God must therefore ensure they put their personal interests and pleasures aside for the interest of the work of God. Those who see leadership position in the work of God as a matter of life and death, as their personal property or even their birthright, which they must hold on to no matter the odds, are after personal interests of money, power and influence and not the interests of the work of God. Such ones scatter and not build because they create a cult of cronies and praise singers who are also out for their own benefits. St. Peter admonished: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” - 1 Peter 5:1-3

Sunday, November 16, 2014

Text: "And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." - Luke 19:9, 10

Comment: This statement was made by Christ when he visited Zacheus, a tax-collector for the Romans. It was because of his work that he was classified by the Jews as a sinner or a mere heathen. His anxiety to see Jesus Christ was such that he had to climb a sycamore tree, as his small stature would not allow him to see from behind the crowd. On discerning his heart condition, Christ told him to make haste and come down, saying he would be his guest that day. But the people murmured that Christ should be the guest of a man who in their estimation was a sinner. We should not judge spiritual matters by human standards. (See 2 Corinthians 10:12) Jesus Christ then made the declaration as in the text for today. Certainly, Christ came to call sinners to repentance. – Matthew 9:12, 13.

It could be seen that the rich could also humble themselves to serve God in sincerity and in truth. Zacheus, despite his status as a rich man, demonstrated willingness to live the life of sacrifice and self-denial required of Christians. His conversion was attested to by his readiness to give away half of his goods to the poor so as to be rich in Christ and to return anything he obtained through false accusation or deceit. Scholars say that Roman laws obliged the tax-gatherers to make restitution if it is proved that they had abused their power by oppressing the people. But in the case of Zacheus there was no such proof, he did so of his own accord. That was sincerity and evidence of his willingness to live the new life in Christ. Once one accepts that he is a sinner and is willing to change, the door of salvation would be open to him. The challenge is to keep the faith until the end by the grace of God. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." - 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Monday, November 17, 2014

Text: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." - 1 John 1:8-10

Comment: Because of the influence of satan the devil many people still indulge in various ungodly behaviours which they were practising in their days of ignorance. While the convert should not be seen to be deliberately breaking the laws of God, he should be ready to acknowledge his faults and to refrain from doing so again. It is on the basis of sincere repentance that forgiveness can take place. It is by constant self examination one identifies his errors or mistakes and corrects himself or accepts correction from other believers. No one should convince himself he is perfect and so refuse to accept correction.

The fact is that those who come to God must do so on the terms He has laid down. The attitude of the Pharisee who adopted a holier-than-thou attitude and was praising himself while praying was condemned by the Lord. But the Samaritan who saw himself as a sinner with nothing good to be proud of spiritually was commended. He was deeply sorry for his sins and sought the mercy of God. The unstated fact is that he was determined not to do so again. The Bible says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3) "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." – Galatians 6:3

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

Text: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" - Luke 10:25-29

Comment: After correctly answering the question put to him by Jesus Christ, the lawyer followed up with another question, asking him who was his neighbour? Christ then told him the parable of the Samaritan, making him to understand that we are neighbors to one another and that we ought to do to another what we would want done to us. According to the story, a certain Jew who travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho was robbed on the way and left half dead. A priest, saw him but passed another way. A Levite passed also saw him and passed by. It was a Samaritan, whom the Jews despised, who had compassion on him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. "And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." (Luke 10:33-35) The lesson being taught in the parable was so clear that when Jesus Christ asked the lawyer "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" he did not hesitate in replying: "He that shewed mercy on him". Jesus said unto him "Go, and do thou likewise". As children of the Kingdom, we must do as Jesus Christ has taught us. We should help or show kindness to any person, friend or foe, of whatever nation or religion, he might be, who needs our help as the Samaritan did. A neighbour therefore is not just the person living next door but anyone who needs our help, who could even be one we do not know. See 1 John 3:17,18.

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

Test: "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel."- Matthew 15:30, 31.

Comment: The fact is that Jesus Christ during his days on earth amply demonstrated the love of God for His children through His works of mercy. There was a day he was nigh to the city of Nain, a dead man's body was being conveyed for burial. He was her only son and she was a widow. He had compassion on her and touched the bier, the wooden frame on which the corpse was placed and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Miraculously, he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. "And there came a

fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.” - Luke 7:14-16.

The interest of Christ was on the sick, the helpless, the poor, women and children, the social outcasts. These are those whom the society regards as outcasts but they made a genuine response to Jesus Christ and still do so. The policy of “the weakest to the wall” is thus hereby condemned. God does not judge one by his position in the social or economic ladder but by his heart condition.

To those who are worn down by burdens, he offers relief. We should therefore pay heed to his clarion call to wit, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” - Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday, November 20, 2014

Text: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” - Matthew 6:1, 2.

Comment: Jesus Christ taught that real generosity does not look for returns or rewards from men. This is because a number of people do good to others not from the spirit of charity or because of love of God but by the desire to impress. Our Lord said of the Pharisees that “all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, (pieces of parchment containing sentences of the law) and enlarge the borders of their garments, (Matthew 23:5, parenthesis ours) In other words, whatever good they do, or zeal they show, they do it to get human applause. In his sermon on the mount, Christ warned his disciples not to make a show of giving of alms by doing it for everybody to see and hear about, otherwise they will have no reward from God. He also instructed that when we make a feast we should not just give those who are our friends, brethren, kinsmen, nor our rich neighbours. Such ones have the means and so

will return the gesture some other day, which amounts to returning the favour. "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:12-14) Many people today give, not to those who need it, but to those who have more than enough. A show of love with strings attached is not charity. Scripture says, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." (Proverbs 19:17) and that "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." - Proverbs 28:27

Friday, November 21, 2014

Text: "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." - Matthew 17:20

Comment: Faith, is strong or firm belief in God. It is an assured and clear-cut belief in God. Faith can move insurmountable obstacles. This was emphasized so many times during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. There was a time Jesus Christ came into his own country and taught such that they were astonished. Yet they looked down on him because he grew up among them and they knew his earthly family. The Bible says that "he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief". (Matthew 13:58) the woman with the issue of blood reasoned that if she touched the hem of Christ's garment, she would be healed. And so it was. When she identified herself, Christ told her. " Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." When word came that the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue was dead, Christ told him "Be not afraid, only believe". When Christ even told those weeping not to weep anymore, "they laughed him to scorn". But Christ raised the 12-year old girl to life and all were astonished. (Mark 5:24-43) Jesus Christ has been given full powers by God Almighty to work for the spiritual and physical well being of the children of God We must have faith in the power of Christ who was killed for our sins and rose for our salvation. Speaking of how God could do for those who have the faith, that which is humanly impossible, Christ said "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." -Luke 17:6

Saturday, November 22, 2014

Text: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." - Matthew 23:1-3

Comment: The gospels show that Jesus Christ did not tolerate the pretensions and self-righteousness of the Pharisees, the religious leaders in his day. He made it clear that behind those pious display were proud and selfish hearts. It was because of love of they enlarged the borders of their garments, loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, (teacher). He also condemned them taking advantage of the helpless condition of widows, who, believing them to be genuine men of God entrusted them with their property. They made long prayers to give impression that they were godly whereas they scheme to possess the property of these widows. Christ said "greater damnation" awaits them. (Matthew 23:14) Again they make strenuous efforts to get converts from the gentiles and when such are converted they by their wrong teachings and bad example a worse sinner than he was before, - "twofold more the child of hell" than their teachers. Also, though they pay tithe even of herbs and even the smallest things yet they neglect to practice the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith". He told them, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." (Matthew 23:24) (This refers to the practice of the strict Jews who use linen or gauze to strain out their wine, vinegar, and other drinks "lest unawares they should drink down some little unclean insect therein and thus transgress". The camel and gnat, an insect were, by the law of Moses, both unclean) True Christians should not be such that "profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate". - Titus 1:16

Sunday, November 23, 2014

Text: "And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury." - Mark 12:43

Comments: What counts with God is not the amount of money donated in support of His work but the amount of self sacrifice involved.. Worshipers of God should be willing to contribute to His work. It was such willingness to do her duty that moved the widow whom Jesus Christ was seen by Jesus Christ putting money into the treasury. Whereas the rich cast in much she threw in two mites, which make a farthing, explained by the Twentieth Century New Testament “two farthings, which make a half-penny”. Jesus Christ then told his disciples, that the poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: “For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living”. (Mark 12:41-44) Giving to support the work of God is an act of faith, or any activity in the work of God requires self-denial. One does not have to have so much or so much time to spare. Even though the Jews were in the wilderness yet when called upon to donate for the building of the Tabernacle, they gave so much that Moses had to appeal to them not to bring again. (Exodus 35:21-29) Apostle Paul commended the Church at Macedonia in that despite “a great trial of affliction” and their deep poverty they still donated liberally because of their love for the work. (2 Corinthians 8:1, 2) The good thing about giving for the work of God is that one does not lose in any way. The Judge of all the earth who sees the heart will reward everyone according to his works, but the greater the sacrifice, the greater the reward.- Matthew 10:42; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Monday, November 24, 2014

Text: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” - 1 Peter 5: 6, 7

Comment: Humility is defined as the quality of being modest or respectful or the quality of not thinking that you better than other people. No one can be a Christian without being humble. And Christ taught his disciples a great lesson in humility by washing their feet. He followed up with an exhortation to his disciples to also wash one another’s feet. (John 13:1-17) Apostle James stated that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. He added: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” (James 4:10) People of God should continue to do righteousness, even if things are difficult for them as time would come when God would lift them up by His grace. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to

revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isaiah 57:15) A simple but practical example of humility given by Jesus Christ is conveyed in his instruction that when we are at a wedding, (or any function) we should not choose the chief seats by ourselves. We should “go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher”. This is more respectable than being asked to leave a more exalted seat for a lower one. “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”. - Luke 14:7-11

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

Text: “But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.” - Matthew 21:28-30

Comment: From this parable of Christ has emerged the saying that “There is a difference between “I cannot come “ and I will not come””. Many there are who say they are convinced of the need to serve God but never really make the decision to be Christians. They keep postponing, forgetting that life man is a mortal being. There are also those who early in life claimed to have become converts but who are far from the faith because of their conducts. God is near in their lips but far from their hearts. (Jeremiah 12:2) The text for today is drawn from the parable of Jesus Christ in which a man who had two sons asked the first son to go and work in his vineyard. He said he would not go but afterward he changed his mind and went. The second received the same instruction and agreed to go but did not. Clearly, it was the first son, who went, though he initially said he will not go. From this parable Jesus Christ chastised the Jews that the publicans and the harlots would go into the kingdom of God before them because although they given to ungodliness initially, they repented when they heard the word of God. (Matthew 21:28-32) The point is that no one should think it is too late for him to turn to Christ. The door is still open. The Bible says, “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” - Ezekiel 18:31, 32

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the power of God which he does His works and moves people to do righteousness. It comes from God who Himself is holy and uses His power for righteous purposes. David the Psalmist said: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalms 143:10). Apostle James stated, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." - James 1:17

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

Text: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." - Galatians 5:16-18

Comment: Those who out of a clean heart decide to serve God and Christ, would be given the spirit of God to understand the truth and put away their sinful habits to live the new life in Christ. Without having the holy spirit, no one can serve God faithfully, in that bears "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" and "is in all goodness and righteousness and truth". (Romans 6:22; Ephesians 5:9) St. Paul said that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his". (Romans 8:9) Those who have the spirit of God will be doing things to promote the name of God and His Kingdom. Their priority is the work of God. (Matthew 6:33) They are studious, reading the Bible and knowing the mind of God on each topic, getting various perspectives on each subject - "here a little, and there a little, (Isaiah 28:10) They will use every opportunity to confess the faith and to defend the truth. (Romans 10:10; Jude 3) They avoid doing and saying things that will bring reproach to the name of God. (Romans 2:1,20-24) They seek the interest or well being of others and not only their own, thus loving their neighbor as themselves. (Philippians 2:4; Mark 12:28-31) They refuse to compromise their faith even if such will give them favour among men, popularity, higher position, or material benefit. (Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 10:1; Matthew 6:24) St. Paul says that the holy spirit "is the earnest (foretaste) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." - Ephesians 1:14. Parenthesis ours

Thursday, November 27, 2014

Text: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. - 1 John 4:7-12

Comment: There are those who claim to be serious Christians but who do not know that their claim to love God can only be proven by the love they show to their fellow man. The person who refuses to do good to others when he has the opportunity, who is cold and distant and is not moved by the plight of others or who is so selfish that he only thinks of himself and his family such that he even appropriates what belongs to others for himself – such a person does not in actual fact love God. Apostle John explains today's text that God Almighty did not leave human beings to be dying due to sin but, in exercise of His love, sent Jesus Christ to redeem them from that abject condition. We should also follow that example by helping others out difficulty when we have the opportunity. That is the way to show that we are appreciative of the goodness of God to us. Those who have this love in their hearts are longsuffering, continuing to do righteousness in spite of odds; they do not envy any body, because of their understanding that God manifests the abundance of His goodness to everybody; the person will not be proud because he knows that man is a mere mortal and only lives by the grace of God. He will not behave in a disorderly manner because of the soberness and discipline imposed by the word of God, is not selfish or easily angry and thinks no evil of anyone because he is prayerfully working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." - Ephesians 5:1-2

Friday, November 28, 2014

Text: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." - James 3:17, 18

Comment: Apostle James, giving us an outline of the character of those who know the truth and have the spirit of God, says such one always strives to live in peace with others. He is modest, easy to relate with, very forgiving and deals with everyone equally and is not moved to behave oddly due to self-interest, quest for worldly honour, or the fear of man. Very importantly, he would not be a pretender, claiming to love when he does not. We learn further in the Scriptures that those who are renewed in mind by virtue of the spirit of God will put away lying and be truthful to one another. They could be angry would not remain in that state until the going down of the sun, else the devil exploit the situation and they fall into sin. If one was stealing before, when he comes to Christ he will abandon that habit "working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth". True Christians will guard what they say, avoiding corrupt language except "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers". St. Paul added: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." - Ephesians 4:23-32

The simple guide for knowing what is expected of us as true Christians is given by St. Paul in his letter to the Christians at Philippi to wit: - Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. - Philippians 4:8

Saturday, November 29, 2014

Text: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." - Psalm 89:15, 16

Comment: Several researches have been done to find out what makes people happy. Among the results that came out was that money doesn't buy happiness. There are very rich people who are suffering from depression, others have committed suicide. David

stated: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Psalm 4:7) The truth is that it is not the quantity of food eaten that makes man happy, contented and healthy but knowledge of and faith in God and His blessings on the individual worshipper. Moses told the children of Israel in those days that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live". - Deuteronomy 8:3; see also Matthew 4:3,4

Worshippers of God derive joy from the knowledge of the laws of God, His purpose of creation and His Kingdom and the assurance of His protection and guidance by His grace. Deeper insight into the word of God gives joy and comfort to the Christian. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3) Even though there are troubles in the world, the Christian believes that when he puts them in prayer to God, he has assurance that God will take care of it. (Philippians 4:6, 7) The favour which God shows to His people from time to time also gives them joy. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly." (Psalm 118:15) Isaiah the prophet declared: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." - Isaiah 61:10

Sunday, November 30,

Text: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." - Romans 14:19

Comment: It has been said that peace is one of the scarcest commodities in this age. This is because many people in this age are very selfish, "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) These are not behaviours that make for peace on earth, hence the times are called perilous times. But those who will be given to these behaviours are not the true worshippers of God. The duty of those who know God is not to copy those who are doing their own will, walking in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes. The Bible says, "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." (Psalm 34:14) As the text for the day says, we should always work to promote unity, brotherliness, happiness among people. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall

be called the children of God” said our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:9. St. Paul exhorted: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” - Colossians 3:12-15

Monday, December 1, 2014

Text: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” - 2 Peter 3:9

Comment: Some people deliberately violate the laws of God because they have convinced themselves that God is so merciful that He will not punish them for their sins. In any case, if he would punish it would not happen in such a long time to come that they would be dead and gone by then. But the truth is that those who do evil still suffer for follies while alive and will also give account of themselves on resurrection day. before they will . Such ones are haunted by fears, guilty conscience, suspicions and are constantly in search of protection. (Jeremiah 2:19; Acts 17:30,31) The fact however is that God Almighty is longsuffering and is patient, as the text says, so that those who have been led astray may realize their faults and turn to God. (Romans 2:4) It is this quality of longsuffering Christians are required to cultivate. They keep doing the work even though the devil may be buffeting them in various ways, believing that God would show Himself strong on their behalf in His due time. (1 Chronicles 16:9) They are also longsuffering towards those who are opposed to righteousness, continuing to pray for them and do good to them so that God “may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will”. (2 Timothy 2:26) “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” - Hebrews 10:35,36, 38, 39

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Text: "...And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible..." - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Comment: The disciple who is in the race of salvation must be highly disciplined and be able to exercise control over his bodily desires or appetites. Just as athletes deny themselves from all things that would prevent them from winning at the race, such as certain types and quantities of food, drinks other bodily pleasures and distractions so the Christian has to control his bodily passions, what he eats, drinks, his temper, his language, his interests and remain on the track, continuing in the race until the end so as to win the prize by the grace of God. Warning Christians not to allow themselves to be overcome with evil desires and habits, St. Paul stated: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16) Some people get angry over mark. Some talk too much. Others eat and drunk too much. Everything should be done in moderation. (Philippians 4:5) Slavish interests in bodily desires, apart from the health risks involved, creates room for the devil to use it to trouble the person and turn him out of the way. The Bible says that he who "hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28) It should be understood therefore why the prophet Solomon advised: "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." - Proverbs 25:16

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Text: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." - Hebrews 4:1, 2

Comment: This is a stern warning of God not to repeat the mistakes made by the natural Jews in taking the word of God lightly or outrightly disbelieving it. When Moses sent 12 men, one out of every tribe, are sent to examine the land of Canaan, they

came back after 40 days to report that although the land was good there were giants among the inhabitants which they not hope to confront successfully. Despite valiant efforts of faithful men as Joshua and Caleb .This evil report based on lack of faith, frightened the whole congregation and they propose to make themselves a captain, to go back to Egypt. They even wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb who were trying to allay the wrong impressions from the other spies. Consequently, God decreed that not one of that generation that was 20 years and above shall reach the promised land save Joshua and Caleb. The Jews had to spend 40 years to reach the promised land. They did not believe that God is Almighty, that with Him nothing is impossible. (Jeremiah 32:27,17; Genesis 17:1) Those who do not have firm confidence in the ability of God Almighty to fulfil His promises will always come short of God's righteousness. This is because trials will come now and then but it is by faith we shall overcome by His grace. (1 Peter 1:7; 5:8,9) And apostle John declared: "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4) We are exhorted not to be slothful but to follow the examples of the faithful people of old "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." - Hebrews 6:12

Thursday, December 4, 2014

Text: "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." - Isaiah 1:17

Comment: This charge to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah came at a time of desolation and ruin into which the nation had been plunged because of their sin. In the midst of the chastisement they were suffering they were undergoing God in exercise of His mercy used his servant to call them to retrace their steps, reorder their ways to be in harmony with the will of God. That God tells them to learn to do well shows that those who had become used to wayward behavior could realize their faults and turn to God. Some of the things they needed to do which passage lists are that they should seek judgment, that is they should strive to know the laws of God and do things in the way acceptable to Him. They should relieve the oppressed, in whatever way they can, not contribute to his burdens. They should support, assist and defend the weaker categories in the society, the fatherless, the widows, etc. (Proverbs 19:17) These ones cannot pay them back, but their reward is sure. The charge God gave the Jews in those still applies to people of God today. The admonition is so important that God Almighty declared that multitude of sacrifices, attendance at festive occasions, donations, amount to nothing when the people cease to do evil, by being washed by His word. "And when

ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” (Isaiah 1:15) But those “who are willing and obedient” shall eat the good of the land” – Isaiah 1:19

Friday, December 5, 2014

Text: “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.” - Psalm 25:8-10

Comment: Because the entire human race were born in sin, they cannot understand the purpose of God or do His will without His intervention. David the prophet said “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalms 51:5) To bring man close to Him, God Almighty has been sending His servants to direct the people in the way of righteousness. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8, 9) But who are those who accept the clarion call to walk in the Lord’s Highway? Those who think they have all the knowledge in the world, who feel sufficient of themselves, who are convinced they have more than enough and therefore have no need for God will not honour the invitation. It is the humble one who feel they know nothing and want to understand the most important questions facing man, how life came, how it was lost and how man can live for ever. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” (Isaiah 28:9) It is to these people of goodwill who are grossly dissatisfied with the conditions in this world, the dishonesty of many politicians, company executives and business barons and religious leaders that Jesus Christ came and died for that they may live. The Bible says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” - Luke 4:18-19

Saturday, December 6, 2014

Text: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." – Romans 12:4-8

Comment: In the text for today, St. Paul lists these gifts of the spirit, which are enablements or abilities given by God through His holy spirit to members to build up the Church. St. Paul talks of proper gift, the one which the person has to the highest degree relative to other people. (1 Corinthians 7:7) To prophesy is old English which means to preach the word of God so that people would learn righteousness. To minister is to serve. Some people have the ability to willingly and cheerfully give practical assistance to leaders and fellow members in the church. Some people are gifted as teachers. They are able to clarify, defend and proclaim the truth so that others may grow thereby in the Lord. Exhortation is the ability to use the word of God to move people to positive action in the way of God. Giving is the willingness to share one's resources with others who are in need. It does not depend on how much one has but is a matter of one having the gift of giving. It is not everybody that can rule or exercise leadership. It is a gift that is nurtured over time. Such ones lead by example and not for their personal benefits. There are those who have mercy as a special gift. They are able to forgive when wronged and help intercede for others who have erred. Nobody should be puffed up because of the gifts he has. nor should anyone look down on himself for being relatively less endowed. Apostle Peter exhorted: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." -1 Peter 4:10

Sunday, December 7, 2014

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Text: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" - Luke 11:13

Comment: This text shows that one can pray for more of the spirit of God. It is true that by the spirit of God one gets converted. (Acts 16:14) But it is as the person gives himself to the work of God that the spirit will be growing in him and God will be closer to the person. (2 Chronicles 15:1,2; Zechariah 1:3) Christ exhorts us to pray for the holy spirit and that our ever-loving Father would fulfil the prayer so that the person will not only do the work with greater diligence but will also grow in spiritual gifts and be able to “approve things that are excellent”; that we “may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God”. (Philippians 1:10, 11). Our Lord Jesus Christ makes us to understand that if a father will not give his son a stone instead of bread or a serpent in place of fish or even a scorpion instead of an egg, then how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:11-13) Writing on the faith of the converts at Colossae, St. Paul said: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” - Colossians 1:9,10

Monday, December 8, 2014

Text: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. - John 4:22-24

Comment: This statement was made by our savior in that famous discussion he had with a woman who was a Samaritan. Christ told the woman to give him water to drink, eliciting surprise from her as to why Christ who was a Jew was asking a favour from a Samaritan. He then told her of the spiritual water he would give her which would lead to eternal life. When Christ told her she has had had five husbands and the one she was staying with was not her husband, the woman realized she was talking to a prophet and proceeded to ask a question of her own, that their fathers worshipped in the mountain, how come that there is the teaching that Jerusalem was the place to worship. The Scriptures show that the central place of worship at that time was Jerusalem.(De 12:5-11; 1Kings 9:3; 2 Chronicles 6:6) It was then the Lord revealed that the era in which all

were required to have a central place of worship in Jerusalem was past, people no longer needed to go to the mountain she was referring to or to Jerusalem to worship. (John 4:23) In telling her that 'Ye worship ye know not what', Jesus Christ spoke of the ignorance and shallow understanding of the law God and mixed worship of the Samaritans. He pointed out that God is a spirit and those who worship Him must have His spirit and understand His truth. Wherever such people gather, His attention would be focused on what they are doing and He would accept their services. (Matthew 18:20; Philippians 3:3,9) It is important that Christ stated that it is those who know the truth that God seeks to worship him. People of God must pray earnestly for His spirit to direct them from day to day, to enable them to identify the truth and practise it and to serve Him with faith and understanding so as to qualify as "true worshippers" whom the "Father seeketh such to worship him". Psalm 145:18; John 1:47; 1 Peter 3:10-13

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

Text: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Comment: The holy spirit is the power of God by which He does His work and by which He empowers His servants to carry out His will. When the burden of ruling the people of Israel became too heavy for Moses, God chose 70 elders from among them to assist him. God "took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." (Numbers 11:16-25) In course of time, God endowed Joshua with His spirit to enable him take over the leadership of the natural Israelites from Moses and complete the journey to the Promised Land. (Numbers 27:18) When there arose complains by the Grecian Jews, (Jews who grew up abroad and spoke Greek) against the Hebrews over partiality in the sharing of provisions, the apostles directed them thus, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost (holy spirit) and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:3) Evidently, one should have the spirit of God to carry out leadership duties at various levels in the Church. Truly, whether one has the spirit of God or not, as shown in his character over time, should determine the choice of individuals for leadership in the Church. Apostle James, in exhorting Christians to pray for the spirit of wisdom, said we should believe that we shall receive what we ask for, in that faith is an essential

ingredient to prayer. He added: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." - James 1:5-7

SEEK YE OUT OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW AND READ

Wednesday, December 10 2014

Text: "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it." - 2 Kings 22:8.

□ Comment This happened in the 18th year of the reign of king Josiah. For several years before his reign, many of the people had fallen from the true worship. Josiah was therefore saddled with the work of national reformation, restoring true worship, rebuilding the temple, The king directed Hilkiah the high priest to give him a report of what would be involved for the completion of the work. See also 2Chronicles 34:8.

□ Was during the repair of the temple it was now found by Shaphan the scribe (2Kings 22:8) Those who do not want to do righteousness do not want to hear the word of God as it aches their ears. See Proverbs 28:9; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; Proverbs 29:27.

□ The distress felt by Josiah when he heard the law read to him shows clearly that the Jews had deviated from the law of God in several respects. Josiah was really terrified as it is written: "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded ... Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us." (2 Kings 22:11-13) God declares, "but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." -Isaiah 66:2.

□

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Text: "Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the

book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” - Nehemiah 8:7, 8.

□CommentFollowing their return from Babylonian captivity, Ezra, the priest, and the Levites, gathered all the people, men and women “and all that could hear with understanding” and read and interpreted the laws to the people so that they would all understand what was being read. The people were struck to the heart by the extent of their deviation from the law and fearful of the consequences - “For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law”. But their leaders exhorted them not to mourn or weep, as the essence was for them to repent of their sins to obtain forgiveness of God, and face the task of rebuilding Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 8:9) One of the laws they discovered they had not been keeping was the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. The zeal or eagerness with which they celebrated it was proof of their willingness to turn a new leaf. The leaders told the Jews that the “joy of the Lord is your strength”. (Nehemiah 8:10) The people in response made great mirth “because they had understood the words that were declared unto them”. (Nehemiah 8:12) From time to time, God Almighty provides the right leadership and a people prepared to hear the word – in this case the Jews who had become humbled by the experience of exile. For the word to have effect, or for the generality of the people to turn to righteousness, they must be ready to hear by being attentive and they must have faith in it and show their conviction by practical action. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” - John 13:17.

□FridayDecember 12, 2014

Text: “For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.” - Malachi 2:7.

□CommentThe duty of the priests who were drawn from the tribe of Levi was to study the law so as to give proper understanding of it to the people and make decisions based on the law of God when issues are brought before them. God commanded Aaron and his sons not to take any strong drink when they want to enter the tabernacle so that they could effectively discharge their duty of putting a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, “And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses”. (Leviticus 10:10, 11) In the time of Jehoshaphat he sent out Levites into the country “And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.” (2 Chronicles 17:8, 9)The people were required to obey the decisions of the priests who also served as judges. “And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man

shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 17:12,13

□ The priests are to do the work with “in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart”. They are to warn the people that they trespass not against the LORD, lest wrath come upon them. To discharge this duty they have to be courageous, with strong faith in God. - 2 Chronicles 19:8-11. How many ministers of God are diligent in studying the Bible and teaching it as written? How many are exempt from preaching to please men for material gain? How many people are willing to hear the truth and not heap for themselves those who will tell them what they want to hear.?

□

Saturday, December 13, 2014

Text: “And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” - Luke 2:46-47.

□ Comment When Jesus Christ was 12 years old, he and his earthly Guardians went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, one of the three annual festivals gave commanded the Jews to keep.

□ On these journeys, historians say whole villages and districts travelled in groups, partly for protection and partly for company. Thus, on their way back Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, his mother and Joseph thinking he was in one of the groups going back. It was later they found him in the temple in Jerusalem after three days, To show that the spirit of God was already moving him at that age, the Bible says he was “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions”. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. In spite of having spent so many years studying the Scriptures the doctors could not answer the simple questions put to them by Jesus Christ. We too should copy the example of Christ who used every opportunity to expound the truth to people. It also shows that the knowledge of God cannot be gotten by academic research but the spirit of God. “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” ~1 Corinthians 2:13, 14

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□ Sunday December 14, 2014

□Text: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. “ - Acts 17:2, 3.

□Comment: It was the custom of St. Paul to attend services in the synagogue and to debate with the Jews on the issue of the dawn of a new era in the relationship of God with His people. His reference point was the Scriptures. In Corinth where he stayed with Aquila, and his wife Priscilla “he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks”. (Acts 18:1-4) At Ephesus St. Paul “went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.” (Acts 19:8) While testifying before Agrippa he declared, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22, 23) Within three days of arriving in Rome, having appealed to Caesar, St. Paul held a meeting with the leaders of the Jews. The record in Acts states that many of the Jews came to his lodging “to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening”. (Acts 28:23) It was from Rome Paul asked Timothy to ensure that he comes with “the books, but especially the parchments” - 2 Timothy 4:13. We too should cultivate the habit of studying, of proclaiming the truth with zeal and defending it whenever we have the opportunity. See Jude 3; psalm 68:11; Revelation 22:17.

□

□Monday, December 15, 2014

□Text: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” - James 1:25.

□Comment: It is for the benefit of man that the Scriptures have been written and compiled under the inspiration of God. It is not just any other book on the shelf but one that should be read constantly so as to be reminded of the purpose of God and our duties to Him.

□After Joshua destroyed Ai, the Bible says he gathered the people “And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which

Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.”

□ In the time of King Josiah, he gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem and all the people, both small and great and “read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD”. (2 Kings 23:1,2)

□ Moreover God Almighty directed that during the Feast of Tabernacles, all the people should gather to hear the law read out to their hearing, as it is written, “Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.” (Deuteronomy 31:12, 13) It is worthy of note that not only the men but the women and children and even strangers were required to gather to hear the word of God. God has one law for the Israelite and the stranger as were under the same obligations to obey the laws of God. – Numbers 15:15,16. The Bible says, “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” - Proverbs 28:9.

□

□ Tuesday December 16, 2014

Text: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” - Luke 4:18, 19.

□

□ Comment This was a prophecy from the book of Isaiah and it fulfilled on him. The English word gospel means good or joyful message or glad tidings. The poor are not just those who lack the comforts of life, but all those who acknowledge their need for God and are ready to do His will. They are humble or poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3) Those who have become broken hearted, who labour and are heavy –laden he gives reason for hope and cheer. Just as those who are taken captive by enemies experience a joy that know no bounds so would even greater joy be experienced by those Christ frees from satan’s prison houses and breaks off the chains in which they are held by the devil. During his days on earth, Christ freed people from physical blindness but even more importantly from spiritual darkness. ((John 9:11, 30; Matthew 9:28-30; John 9:39-41) Concerning Christ a prophecy God Almighty states in prophecy: “I the LORD have

called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” (Isaiah 42:6, 7) The proclaiming of liberty to the captives, and the acceptable year (or year of acceptance) of the Lord, is a picture drawn from the proclaiming of the year of jubilee by sound of trumpet. (Leviticus 25:9-13) The year of jubilee was a year of general release of debts; of granting of freedom to bond-men and women; of lands and possessions. Jesus Christ grants freedom for His people not only in this world but in the world to come. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36) And since the time is now fulfilled, people should repent and believe the gospel. Mark 1:15.

□

Wednesday, December 17 2014

Text: “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.” - Isaiah 34:16

□ Comment This is a direct command from God Almighty that we should make the reading of the holy Bible our preoccupation. Apostle Paul enjoins Timothy thus: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) Timothy was a minister of the gospel. Not being anointed, he needed to be studying to be able to discharge his duties of expounding the word of God to believers and unbelievers so that it would be clear to one and all that he is actually a minister of God. what he is doing is a good work for which he should not be ashamed of doing. (1 Timothy 3:1) He therefore has to be serious in it to be able to defend what he is doing. He also enjoins him to “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”. (1 Timothy 4:13) and that he should meditate upon them give himself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” -1 Timothy 4:15.

It is when one is constant in study and application of the word that the benefit of his exertions would be seen by all, in that the word would become part of him and reflect in his thoughts, words and actions. God Almighty charged Joshua that his success lay in being faithful to the law of God, as it is written, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” - Joshua 1:8.

□ Many of the prophecies in the Bible have fulfilled, some are in the course of fulfilment and some would come to pass in future. Knowing this therefore, we should serve God

with sincerity and in truth, so that the good part of the Scriptures will fulfill on us by the grace of God. Indeed Christ, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." - Matthew 5:18.

□

Thursday, December 18, 2014

Text: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." - Luke 24:25-27.

□ Comment Our Lord Jesus Christ spake these words to the two men who were travelling to a village called Emmaus, which was about threescore furlongs - about seven or eight miles from Jerusalem. Christ met them after his resurrection and asked them what they were talking about. They were obviously distressed, saddened and disappointed by the fact that "Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" had been betrayed by the leaders of the Jews and killed. They said "we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" because they thought Jesus Christ, will deliver them from the iron rule of the Romans - that he had come to establish an earthly kingdom. Another cause for puzzle they said were the reports they had received that he had risen It was then Christ uttered the words in the citation for today.

□ Our Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the two disciples going to Emmaus for being slow to understand scriptural prophecies about the messiah. This is another charge to disciples or believers to read the Bible and pray for understanding of what they are reading and to also know from the events happening around them how Bible prophecies are fulfilling. Jesus Christ then "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" beginning from the books of Moses and then all the prophets. Captivated by the extensive discourse by Jesus Christ and as a demonstration of hospitality, the two men appealed to him to spend the night with them as it was already evening. It was while he sat with them for a meal that their eyes were opened to know who had been talking with them, following which he vanished. They then dashed to report what they had seen to others. The words in the Holy Bible are "true and faithful". Jesus Christ had promised to "give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely". - Revelation 21:5,6.

□

Friday, December 19, 2014

Text: "And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." - Acts 8:30, 31.

□ Comment The purpose of the anointing given to the apostles is for them to preach the truth, the saving gospel to all people so that those who are the sheep of God among them may identify the truth and follow. One was one of the 12, this account gives highlights the fact that it is God Almighty who calls His people using His servants as mere instruments. An angel of God directed Philip to meet the Eunuch of Ethiopia who was sitting in the chariot reading aloud a part of the book of Isaiah. Asked if he understood what he was reading the man quickly replied "How can I, except some man should guide me?" The text he was reading was Isaiah 53:7,8. After inviting Philip to join him in the chariot, the eunuch asked Philip, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" the apostle then explained that scripture to him and explained the mission of Christ to him. So convinced was this Ethiopian high official that he requested to be baptized (Acts 8:25-38) God enlightens those who sincerely long for an understanding of His truth. The Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13, 14) God Almighty invites those who are thirsty for the refreshing waters that flows from the fountain of life, those who desire the bread, wine and milk that comes from God to come and buy and eat "without money and without price". The text continues with a denunciation of those "spend money for that which is not bread? (Isaiah 55:1-3) We should pray for God to teach us out of His word so that we can read and understand. See Psalm 119:18; Isaiah 12:3; 2 Timothy 2:7

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Saturday, December 20, 2014

Text: "Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words." - Jeremiah 36:32.

□ Comment In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, God directed Jeremiah the prophet to write his judgments against Judah with the mind that they may repent and be forgiven. When Jehudi, an officer of the King had read three or four leaves, he cut the scroll with a penknife and threw it into the fire. "Yet they were not

afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.” (Jeremiah 36:24) Even though three other officers had appealed to the king not to burn the roll, he did not listen to them. He even commanded that they should arrest Jeremiah and Baruch “but the LORD hid them”. (verse 26) Consequently, God pronounced woe on the king and punishment for Judah by way of conquest, desolation and exile. Though the king had burnt the first roll which prophesied that Judah would be conquered by the king of Babylon, God inspired Jeremiah to dictate to Baruch the same words that were contained in the roll burnt in fire and even more things. Those who are of evil inclination, are never at ease when the truth is being declared “they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”. They even try to stop the word from being published. But nobody can do that because the Lord has set an open door. (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 3:8; 3:20). We should therefore persist in spreading the word in spite of odds for this is the time to do so. Paul exhorted Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears....” - 2 Timothy 4:2-5.

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□ Sunday December 21, 2014

□ Text: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” - Revelation 22:18-19.

□ Comment: Jesus Christ knew that in course of time, some persons, would at the instance of the devil add and subtract from the truth which he had inspired his servants to put down in writing. Some would add to the written texts words, sentences that were not there before while some would dare to remove words that are in the Scriptures and replace them with their own. Some have added a number of books and made them part of the Bible. These actions are usually done so as to make what is in the Bible to conform with their false teachings to, so as to accommodate the mixture of Christianity with paganism, as well as immoral lifestyles and prevailing circumstances or customs. But such ones would continue to be exposed. - Ecclesiastes 3:14.

□ Then the holy act of adding and subtracting from the word of God would be rampant in the last days, hence St. Paul stated, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” (1

Timothy 4:1, 2) St. Paul also urged Timothy to shun profane and vain babblings, like the teachings of Hymeneus and Philetus, “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:18) As true Christians who know that it is the truth that gives freedom, we should be alert and not allow ourselves to be led by the nose by people who are spreading their own opinions and preferences rather than what is stated in the Holy Bible. - Matthew 7:15-21; 15:1-14; 1 Timothy 1:3.

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□ Monday, December 22, 2014

Text: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” - Romans 1:28.

□ Comment: God does not punish people without giving them a full and fair opportunity of hearing His word so that they may repent of their sins and be pardoned. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (Ezekiel 33:11) It was for the purpose of reconciling man to God that Jesus Christ came, and he himself declared, “for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matthew 9:12, 13) But those who refuse to accept the truth as to repent of their sins will remain in their sins. “for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”. (John 8:24) Christ told the Pharisees, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” (John 9:41) When the spirit of God is not in one, it is the spirit of the devil that will lodge in him. This is the sense in which the Bible says “But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.” (1 Samuel 16:14) Such ones who have deliberately and flagrantly rejected the word of God, will have what St. Paul called a reprobate mind, a mind that is opposed to God and righteousness, that will indulge in sinful or immoral acts openly without shame. When corrected with the word of God, such ones will boldly be justifying their actions. This is a pitiable situation, and such ones are dead while they are living. (Luke 9:59, 60; 1 Timothy 5:6) As Christians we should not copy such people, in that they need prayer, but should continue our march through the way of holiness by His grace. – Isaiah 35:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

□

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

Text: “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” - Luke 24:45-47.

Comment: In the work of God there is time for everything. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) The time had come for the apostles to move up in the progressive revelation of divine truths to them. It is evident therefore that unless God opens one's heart, he cannot accept the truth. (Compare Acts 16:14) It is also clear that it is to those who are humble and willing that God will teach knowledge in due time. - Psalm 25:9,14; Isaiah 28:9.

The text also shows that the words of God in the Old Testament, consisting of the books of Moses, the Psalms, Proverbs, the Prophets, etc are very important to the Christian faith or doctrine. Christ indeed said he did not come to destroy but to fulfil. (Matthew 5:17) It is the Old Testament that leads us to the new. Some of the prophecies in the Old Testament are now being fulfilled in the last days, while some are yet to fulfil. St. Paul confessed before Governor Felix that he believed the Old Testament which he referred to as "the law and the prophets". He said: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they (the Jews who accused him) call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets."-Acts 24: 14.

Right from the days of our Lord Jesus Christ the gospel is being preached, beginning at Jerusalem. Our blessing lies in playing our part in spreading this gospel. Christ said, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." - Revelation 22:17.

Be strong and let not your hands be weak

This theme is drawn from the words of king Jehoshaphat in which he exhorted the children of Judah saying, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded." - 2 Chronicles 15:7.

Certainly it is only by the mercy of God that we live from day to day, as Jeremiah the prophet declared. (Lamentations 3:22, 23) The fiery trials which people of God face now and then at the instance of the devil have given this declaration by Jehoshaphat fresh resonance. It is to give hope and comfort to the people of God that this topic has been chosen.

Wednesday, December 24, 2014

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□ Text: "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." - Joshua 1:6,7.

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□ Comment: After the death of Moses God Almighty gave this charge to Joshua, Moses' minister. He needed to be strengthened because territories in the promised land had not all been conquered. God had assured him that every place that the sole of his foot shall tread He would give to him. He was told that no man would be able to stand before him all the days of his life. He needed courage not just to fight wars but also to insist on the enforcement of the laws of God without fear or favour. The children of God have been promised blessings in this world and eternal life in the world to come. But each disciple must have the courage to, by God's grace, face the trials the devil will bring on his way while still keeping the laws of God. (Luke 21:19) We need to be totally dependent on God based on the conviction that He has the power to deliver or save us from Satan's tribulations. In the words of St. Paul, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." - 2 Timothy 1:7.

□

□ It should be noted that God required Moses to have not just courage, but good courage - one that is firm and unwavering. Christians should not be hopeless should be bold, trusting in God and forging ahead with determination and hope, no matter the odds. Herein lies the importance of the charge Moses the servant of God gave to the children of Israel to wit: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the

LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” - Deuteronomy 31:6..

□

Thursday, December 25, 2014

Text: “Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”-

□Job 5:6-7

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□CommentThere are several elements in the world today that give people cause for fear and anxiety. The evidence is so glaring and palpable that no one can say he is not feeling the pinch. The data from 193 countries, the World Health Organisation (WHO) says that the leading causes of death have shifted to non-communicable diseases such as cancer, heart diseases, stroke and that these would account for 30% of all deaths by the year 2030. Besides, the world is beset with wars, famine, accidents, (on sea, land and air) terrorism, greed, armed robbery, kidnapping, (either for political reasons, money or ritual purposes) oppression, injustice, embezzlement, etc. These have created problems such as loneliness, anxiety, guilt, anger, depression, low self-esteem, fear of death, bereavement; marital instability, widowhood, single parenthood, unruliness, pandemics (Swine flu, HIV/AIDS, etc.), unemployment, high death rate, etc. There are those who lost their jobs, members who lost their properties due to fires, robberies, demolitions, etc; those who lost their loved ones, some others are suffering from ill-health, marital problems, and so on. We thank God however that there had been many other bright sides in our lives this year by way of deliverance as well as spiritual and material blessings by His grace.

□“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.” Psalm 37:3-5.

□

Friday, December 26, 2014

Text: “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with

wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” - Isaiah 40:29-31.

□

□ Comment It is those who trust in God that He gives spiritual and physical and material means to overcome the challenges facing them. Even if satan afflicts them and they are in distress for a while, God will enable them to gain victory such that they become refreshed and renewed in spirit. God satisfies His people with good things “so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's”. (Psalm 103:5) St. Paul stated, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-17) People who want the help of God must seek His face in prayer, and use their time and energy in line with His will or purpose for man, not do as they please. It is common knowledge unfortunately, that, not being able to cope with the challenges of the times, many people give themselves to sexual perversions, taking cannabis or Indian hemp, heroin; some to gambling, pornography and drunkenness, resulting in dependency or addiction.

□ Some involved in insurgencies, kidnapping, sea piracy, armed robbery, the 419 syndrome, cultism, among others, largely because of the feeling of desperation as they lack the proper direction as to how to escape the vicious cycle in which they find themselves. They should look to God by doing His will always. He will not fail them or forsake them but will provide for them even in time of famine or difficulty. “The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. {unto...: Heb. to the broken of heart} {of a contrite...: Heb. contrite of spirit} Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.” - Psalm 34:17-19.

□

□ Saturday December 27, 2014

Text: “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” - Revelation 12:12.

□

□ Comment This declaration which was made following the ouster of the devil from heaven explains the spiritual cause of the myriad of troubles facing mankind today. The devil is the cause of the troubles in the world today and his aim is to create fear, panic

and doubts in people's minds as to the existence of an all-powerful and all-wise God. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in his revelations to Apostle John stated that people living in this age would experience particularly difficult times as a result of satan's expulsion from heaven, (which signs of the times show has taken place) as his time to live thereafter is short. It is because of the "great wrath" which the devil has that the Bible describes the last days as perilous or dangerous times. (2 Timothy 3:1-5,13) However, no matter what the devil is doing, those who have the understanding that God protects and guides His people, will be able to withstand the inevitable misfortunes of these perilous times by His grace.. The Bible says: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him..." (2 Chronicles 16:9) The Bible further says: "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." - Nahum 1:7.

□

□ Sunday December 28, 2014

□ Text: Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." - Psalm 147:1-3.

□

□ Comment: Because the devil is still alive, people will from time to time, see things that will make them to be downcast or wounded in spirit. But they should turn to the Scriptures for guidance and strength in the promises of God to His people. God who "comforteth those that are cast down" (2 Corinthians 7:6) knows how to revive their spirit and bring them out of the valley. The Bible says: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14) The word of God also says: "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10) We should take the rough with the smooth in our stride bearing in mind the exhortation by King Solomon in which he stated: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." - Ecclesiastes 7:14.

□ Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had long ago told us what to do to enable us cope with the tribulations of this age when he exhorted us thus: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:36) Prayer opens up doors of

limitless possibilities for the people of God. The Bible says, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." (Psalm 65:1, 2) "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." - Psalm 102:17.

□

□ Monday, December 29, 2014

Text: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased." - Proverbs 9:10, 11.

□

□ Comment It is the knowledge of the Most High that teaches one to run away from evil, which is the definition of the fear of God. Naturally, those who avoid lying, cheating, fornication, adultery, stealing and so forth will keep themselves from lots of troubles and be in peace, relatively speaking with the rest of society. There are in addition the blessings from God, by way of long life which God has promised those who keep His laws. The benefits of obeying the word of God are therefore immeasurable. It is described as "bread" because it satisfies one's yearning for the truth. It is called "water" because it calms one down as cold water does to a thirsty soul and also because it cleanses one from sin. It is compared to "wine" because it gives one joy. (See Isaiah 55:1-3) The word of God does not only direct one in the path of life but it also builds faith or good courage. (Romans 10:17) Hence, the Bible says: "A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength." (Proverbs 24:5) We should not therefore be shy of making the word of God our daily companion so as to be renewed in strength day by day. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her." - Proverbs 3:13-18.

□

Tuesday, December 30, 2014

Text: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." - 1 Peter 5:6, 7.

□

□ Comment To draw strength from God we should pray always, that is, show our trust in or dependence on God Almighty by earnestly and humbly thanking Him and presenting our needs to Him by way of worship. A thankful heart is not proud but humble and appreciative of the goodness of God and is positive in approach to life. This attitude settles the mind and thus puts away worries and anxiety as all burdens and cares are cast upon the Lord who cares for us. Because He cares for us, He knows what to do to lighten our burdens and help us out by His grace. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” said David the prophet in Psalm 55:22. The problem however is that a number of professed Christians want the help of God but are not prepared to do His will. Some even support the church with hefty donations but do not care about keeping His commandments. That amounts to despising God and refusing to learn from the maxim that “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”. (1 Samuel 15:22) It is those who keep His laws that God is near to. There are no two ways about it. God declared: “Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.” - Jeremiah 7:8-11.

□

□ Wednesday, December 31, 2014

Text: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” - Hebrews 13:5, 6.

□ Comment For us to “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”, we should always put our trust in God and live contented lives. This will surely remove many troubling thoughts from us. Contentment is a virtue required of us so that our faith in God will be absolute by His grace. Those who do not depend on the providence of God run the risk of being greedy, having an evil eye and of not placing God and Christ in their thoughts and actions. Jesus Christ admonished us to look to God for our needs and not to worry ourselves unduly because if God could preserve our lives, it is not the material needs such as things to eat or drink or wear that should be hard for Him to provide. If birds who do no work at all are provided for, what of human beings who have the faculties to be productive and thus able to improve their society and environment?

Worrying over material needs or of the future, believing that by our own efforts alone we can overcome life's problems, is only waste of time and energy. What to do is to have faith in God and do His righteousness. He will do the rest. (Matthew 6:25-34) Apostle Paul stated: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." - Philippians 4:6, 7.

□

Thursday, January 1, 2015

Text: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." - Acts 14:22

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□ Comment In those difficult days when the church was in its infancy, when the devil thought he could wipe out Christianity in its early stages, the converts faced horrible and frightening persecutions from the natural Jews, the gentiles, the Roman authorities and from false brethren. It was vital that Paul and Barnabas should go round to exhort them to continue. This is by encouraging them with the word of God so that they may be more strongly grounded to withstand the fiery trials that came their way. The apostles said Christians should not expect to serve God without having tribulations, even adding that there would be lots of them. The point is that it is by such conflicts we know we are of God. By it we are able to understand the Scriptures better by being compelled to read and understand. Experience is the best teacher. Again such temptations gradually cut one off from the sinful ways he had been used to before his conversion and enable us to show prove that we actually believe what we profess. St. Paul says, "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." - Hebrews 13:14, 15

□ Friday January 2, 2015

Text: "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." -Exodus 2:23-25.

□

□ CommentThe Holy Bible abounds with examples of how the people of God faced their trying moments with courage and gained victory to the glory of God. The Jews in the land of Egypt faced hard conditions under the “Pharaoh that knew not Joseph”. (Exodus 1:9-14) They endured until God sent Moses to lead them. When told of the directive from God Almighty that He should let Israel go, Pharaoh spoke blasphemously and commanded the task-masters to increase their work, and lessen their means of performing it. The king commanded that the taskmasters should no longer give the people straw to make bricks. They should gather it themselves and yet they would produce the number of bricks as they did in the past when all the necessary materials were brought to them. The people had to go over all the country to get straw or substitutes for it. See Exodus 5:12-18. Pharaoh even made a law that the midwives should kill any male child born to the Jews or throw into the river. The midwives refused to do this for which God blessed them. (Exodus 1:15-20; 5:1-23) After allowing the Jews to go following the death of the first born of the Egyptians, Pharaoh still pursued Moses and the Jews with a large army. When Moses saw the people panicking he exhorted them saying: “And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” (Exodus 14:13,14) However, it was they (Pharaoh and his men) who eventually drowned in the Red Sea as the LORD triumphed gloriously. – Exodus 15:1-21.

□ SaturdayJanuary 3, 2015

Text: “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.” - 2 Chronicles 20:17.

□

□ CommentThere was a time the people of Moab, Ammon and Mount Seir (Edomites) gathered themselves to war against Jehoshaphat. When the report came, “Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” (2 Chronicles 20:3) He went to the temple and prayed to God saying that God had promised that when evil or sword, judgment or pestilence came upon the people and they cry unto Him in their affliction, He would answer the prayer. He added, “...for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.” (2 Chronicles 20:12) Following this prayer God moved one of the Levites to words of encouragement as contained in the text for today.

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□ Having heard these words, Jehoshaphat went on to charge the people saying “Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2 Chronicles 20:20)
Something strange happened. The three armies fought one another and destroyed themselves. When the people of Judah came they saw only dead bodies. They took three days to gather the spoils of war. What Jehoshaphat did was quite instructive. He first went to God in prayer, and then had strong faith in the assurance given him by God. As evidence of his faith, he exhorted others to trust in God and then mobilized singers to sing in praise of God. True to the word of the Lord, the Jews did not fight at all in the battle. God fought for them. Psalm 21:1; 46:1; 56:4.9; Romans 8:31.

□ Sunday January 4, 2015

□ Text: Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. - Job 1:9-11.

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□ Comment: The name Job is said to mean "to return," (to God) or "greatly tried". He was a man who feared God and eschewed evil. In other words he was consistently sincere in the service of God. That God recommended Job as an example of righteousness in the earth speaks a lot about the high level of his integrity. The text shows that the devil creates troubles on earth to afflict people so that they will curse God and die. (Job 1:6-22) In spite of the loss of all his children and property, Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly. This shows that some people easily backslide when the devil brings adversity upon them. They accuse God foolishly. Rather than do so, we should adopt the attitude of Job who worshipped God in the midst of calamity saying “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath (allowed it to be) taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”. (Job 1:21, parenthesis ours) Seeing that Job still held fast his faith, Satan boasted that if Job was afflicted with sickness such that his life was threatened, he would curse God. ((Job 2:4) Though Job did not know of what took place in heaven that led to his illness, though his wife forsook him, seeing that he had lost all and was now down with ill-health, he believed God would see him through. We have lessons of faith, understanding, patience, self-control, etc. to learn from the trial of Job. Apostle James said, “ Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” - James 5:10, 11.

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□ Monday January 5, 2015

□ Text: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed..." - 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9.

□ Comment: Here St. Paul again uses images from sporting contests which the Corinthian Christians were familiar with. Just as a wrestler presses and is compressed together in a bout so he is hemmed in, on every side, by distresses, trials and afflictions. However he is not distressed, that is, not such that he could not move his body or stir hand or foot. He was perplexed, anxious about what to do about his situation "not altogether without help or means." He knows God Who does not forsake His people will intervene and save Him. He may be cast down or "thrown down" as happens in wrestling contests but he is not killed. He rose up as strong wrestlers or gladiators do, who recover their strength; and be ready to continue the fight or for another contest. Also he had stated "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair." (2 Corinthians 4:8) As St. Paul remained steadfast until the end and was rewarded by God, so every disciple should remain strong in the Lord and in the power of His might and do so until the end. God Almighty is The place of refuge for His children. "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge." (Proverbs 14:26) The exhortation by Apostle Paul that God would always help His people to overcome the odds that face them should be a source of strength to us. He wrote: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." - 1 Corinthians 10:13.

□ Tuesday January 6, 2015

□ Text: "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." - Psalm 23:4.

□ Comment: These words of faith that stresses the constant watch keeps over His children and by reason of which true worshippers go on doing righteousness without fear. Joseph was thrown into a well and later sold into Egypt to live as a slave among strange people by his own brethren. But God was with him and raised him from the valley to the mountain top, from a prisoner to second in command to Pharaoh. (Genesis 37:5-7; 39:7-13; 47:13,14; 50:26) Haman had convinced the King of the Medo-Persians to hang Mordecai and his children and kill all the Jews and seize their property, but turned the table against him. (Esther chapters 3-9) The King of Persia was tricked into signing a decree that anyone who would ask a petition from God or man

save to the king for 30 days should be thrown into the Lion's den. Daniel was found to be praying to God and had to be thrown to the lions. He was not hurt by them. But his accusers suffered what the evil they planned for him – and the name of God was glorified. (Daniel 6) These instances inspire and encourage the people of God as to the Almightyness of God and to forge ahead in spite of persecutions. God asserted through Isaiah His servant, "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." - Isaiah 43:1-3.

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□Wednesday January 7, 2015

□Text: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) which is given unto us." - Romans 5:3-5.

□Comment St. Paul was well placed to make this statement because he had gone through lots of tribulations. He could therefore advise and exhort others. Trials or difficulties are allowed by God to meet us to teach us patience, to learn how to endure difficulties and be praying and looking unto God until He grants us deliverance. It is from such hard experiences we gain experience, which strengthens our hope in the promises of God. By virtue of the strong confidence we have in God we are able to proclaim the truth of the love God has for us. The fact that suffering or hard situations make us stronger or better persons was highlighted by Dr. Patience Turtoe-Sanders, who writing in The Guardian, of Tuesday January 15, 2008, page 79, in which he stated, stated: "Suffering, sadness, loss, grief, heart-break, rejection, pain, teach inner strength. Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved". The writer quoted another author, Helen Keller, who after spending several years as a deaf and blind person declared: "...Life is all about experience. At the end all we have to draw on is experience. Experience sharpens our perception, teaches us not to repeat the same mistakes, and enables us to turn our pain into encouragement to help others keep their hope alive. When the storm of life is blowing hard, understand that it is not trying to knock you down but to teach you a lesson." We should mark the words of David, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The

LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.” - Psalm 138:7, 8.

☐ Thursday January 8, 2015

☐ Text: “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.” - Isaiah 35:3,4.

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☐ Comment: The hands are used for holding things, while the knee enables the person's leg to be firm on the ground so as to overcome the challenges that confront him. The hands and legs need to be strong for one to attain any measure of success in one's endeavours. But if both are in good order but the heart is weak then the situation is even worse. Thus it is vital that those whose hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after the things coming on the earth should be strengthened with the word of God.

☐ Text: To stay afloat despite the storms of this age requires strong faith or courage based on accurate knowledge and understanding of the word of God so that He will continue to help us by His grace. Let us recall the incident when Jesus Christ walked on the sea. St. Peter had the faith to also do the same, but “when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me”. Holding him by the hand Jesus said to him, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” – (Matthew 14:30, 31)

☐ We should exercise faith in God always and be patient so that He will continue to show Himself strong on our behalf. St. Paul admonished us thus: “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:35,36, 38,39) Exhorting us also to faith and patience, David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, stated: “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” - Psalm 27:14. See also 37:3-7

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