

FOREWARD

During the Feast of Tabernacles of 2007, precisely on Thursday, December 13, 2007, the Executive Board of the GKS, directed Brother Felix Adedokun, then a member of the Board, to launch the first Daily Devotional Guide of the Church, entitled "God's Word, a Lamp to my feet". So enthusiastic was the response of members that they donated no less than N300,000 on the spot to support the publication. In the foreword to the first issue, we stated inter-alia, "In the Christian context, devotional literatures are meant to enhance spirituality by focusing the mind of the individual on the word of God, thereby strengthening one's trust in the promises of God Almighty. In this age of distress and perplexity, when men's hearts are "failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth", (Luke 21:26) such spiritual armour is an invaluable asset. It is for this reason that there has been a persistent yearning, even a clamour, among members and non-members alike for this booklet, which we have entitled, God's Word – A Lamp to My Feet."

The groundswell of support for the Daily Guide, we are glad to say, has continued to rise even as the publication has been growing in quality and variety of content by the grace of God. However, the major challenge has been the cost of production which has far outstripped the selling price. The Lord's Ministry has had to come in to defray part of the production cost in order to keep the selling price at the present level by God's grace.

The emphasis on the spiritual benefits of this devotional and the fact that it has continued to serve as a source of spiritual nourishment to members and even non-members have been the impetus that have sustained the production by the grace of God. We thank our readers for the suggestions, observations and words of encouragement over the years and promise to continue to take their views into account in our continuing drive for excellence. We pray God to continue to help us to produce materials for the spiritual well-being of our readers on a daily basis and for our blessings by the grace of God.

The points in the various topics in this edition are largely drawn from past sermons of the Church. They are "Coping With Stress"; "Look To Yourselves"; "A Good Name Is Better Than Riches"; "Living A Godly Life In Christ"; "Walking As Children Of Light"; "Minding The Things That Are More Excellent In Our Christian Vocation"; "The Acceptable Year Of The Lord" We are highly indebted to the members of staff of GKS Press as well as all those who played their part in the production of this edition by God's grace.

May God continue to use His words to wash us so that we would be at peace with Him always by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The Lord's Ministry,
God's Kingdom Society,
Salem City,
Warri.

December, 2016

COPING WITH STRESS

Sunday, January 1, 2017

Text: "O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield." - Psalm 115:9-11.

Comment: Some people, are so frightened by the scale of the difficulty that confront them sometimes, that what they see before them is a mountain which they must climb to the top to reach the other side. It is as if the problem is insurmountable. The words of Scripture admonishing believers to fear God and to continue to trust in Him is vital in such times of crisis. The Bible contains not only the laws and instructions from God but also examples of how human beings like us faced even worse situations and overcame eventually by the power of God. The Bible shows that there were those who felt so disturbed by the devil's harassments that they cursed the day they were born. We are assured however to continue to have faith in God in that "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Peter 2:9) It is important for people not to give in to their negative feelings but to give themselves time to reflect and to seek guidance from the word of God. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5) Moreover David the prophet stated, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word." - Psalm 119:15-17.

Monday, January 2, 2017

Text: "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." - 1 Kings 19:4.

Comment: The statement in the text for today was made by Elijah the prophet when he saw that Jezebel had sworn to eliminate him for ordering the killing of the 450 prophets of Baal who had been roundly defeated in a contest the terms of which were mutually agreed. The Bible says, "Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time." (1 Kings 19:2) Whatever may be our situation we should continue to have faith in a better tomorrow by the grace of God. As the Bible says, "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion." (Ecclesiastes 9:4) Indeed, it is only the living that can continue to do righteousness, and spread the truth to others and to hope and strive for a better tomorrow. (Isaiah 38:19) King David further exhorts us thus, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." - Psalm 62:8.

The Bible says, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts." ¹ - Psalm 125:2, 4.

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Text: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." - John 14:1, 6.

Comment: At the time his ministry on earth was drawing to a close, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gave his disciples a very important exhortation to encourage them to continue in the work of God without being anxious or fearful of the future. It is noteworthy that the reason they should not be troubled is because of their trust in God Almighty and he himself, Jesus Christ. These are the two "Higher Powers" to whom all mankind must be subject and Who determine the course of history.

It is worthwhile to recall that the exhortation was important because the disciples were already in sorrow that the Master was about to leave them. This meant that they would, as it were, be left alone to face the world. They needed exhortation to firm up their mind that all that they had suffered with the Master and the hopes they had cherished would not be in vain. That God is always with them and would fulfil the promises he, the son, had made to them.

The admonition from our Saviour is very relevant in this age, the last days, a time of universal turmoils, distresses and uncertainties. (Luke 21:25, 26) People should seek the mercies of God through His son Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and men. St. Paul enjoined us to look "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 12:2, 3.

Wednesday, January 4, 2017

Text: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." - Isaiah 26:20, 21.

Comment: As the last days progress, many people would not know what to do in order to free themselves from the troubles facing them. Matters would not be helped by the fact that each succeeding crisis would appear to be worse than the preceding one and people would be terrified by the approaching calamities. So upset are people over the exploitation by big multinational companies that some years ago, people gathered in more than 900 cities around the world to "express their outrage at corporate greed and social inequality" as seen in the rate of unemployment, inadequate housing, inequities in education, austerity measures, high interest rates, food prices, cutbacks in welfare benefits, the concentration of economic wealth and power in the hands of a few corporations "or a just declaration that they had had enough

of wasteful and corrupt leadership". It is noteworthy that in December 2011, Time magazine named "The Protester", its "Person of the Year". These problems are mounting daily today. People should seek God and do His will so as to be protected and saved by Him. "If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous." - Job 8:5, 6.

Thursday, January 5, 2017

Text: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 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 21:34-36.

Comment: The day that would come upon people unawares, as stated in the text is the day of decision, when God Almighty will put an end to satan the devil and his followers so that a righteous new theocratic order will hold sway over the earth.

In a world threatened every second with the danger of nuclear war, plagued by so many cold and hot wars, the AIDS pandemic, SARS, cancers, suicide bombers, hostage taking and so on, is it surprising that many people today are asking where we are going from here? People are afraid of the future. In many parts of the world, people are so disenchanted with their leaders that they are asking them to leave.

To watch in this context means to study the Holy Bible diligently so as to understand the signs of the times and to conduct ourselves in a godly manner in the light of the Scriptures. Those watching must study the Scriptures diligently, study the signs of the times, prove all things they hear, believe the truth and thereby identify, by God's grace, the Lord's established Kingdom, (known as Mountain), so as to flee into it for protection and salvation. – Acts 17:10-12; Isaiah 2:2, 3.

Those who do not watch and pray are sleeping spiritually. They are ignorant of the scriptures and are not bothered by the events around them. That is dangerous. - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Romans 13: 11-14.

Friday, January 6, 2017

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: Bible understanding shows that the present world crises are at the behest of satan the devil who is using the ruling factors in the world to carry out his scheme of causing maximum distress in the world so as to cause the death of as many people as possible. It is because the devil and his agents have been cast down from heaven that he is hyperactive in

this age, using wicked men to brazenly commit iniquity with impunity. St. Paul describes the age as “perilous”. In other words, greed, selfishness, arrogance, hypocrisy, carnality – in short, godlessness - will be the order of the day. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) We are seeing these fulfil to the letter. In Luke 17:26-29 Christ said people will be as indifferent to spiritual matters as they were in time of Noah and Lot until sudden destruction met them. This indifference we are increasingly seeing in the world today, but particularly in the so-called developed world. Apostle Peter exhorted: “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” – 1 Peter 4:7.

Saturday, January 7, 2017

Text: “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.” -Psalm 57:1, 2.

Comment: This psalm of King David instructs us to continue to trust in God Almighty, and do His will, believing that the difficulties facing us would be a thing of the past by the power of God Almighty Who performs all things for us. In time of difficulty one has to contend with such feelings as loneliness, helplessness and fear. In such a state, some would say like King David, “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul”. (Psalm 142:4). But God cares for His children and will not forsake them. The Bible says, “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” (Psalm 36:7) Those forced into undesirable conditions by the difficulties that ravage the world today should make amends in whatever area they had erred. They should realise that the devil's alternative, would certainly lead to ruin, even if things appear to be rosy at the beginning, Those who continue to trust in God would in course of time declare like David the prophet, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” - Psalm 56:3, 4.

LOOK TO YOURSELVES

Those who profess to serve God Almighty must constantly reflect on how they conduct themselves in the light of the Scriptures. It is by constant checks on ourselves that we can, by God's grace, be able to judge if we have been measuring up to the standards required of us to enable us to remain on the right track and abide in God's Organization by His grace. Our Redeemer exhorted, “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, January 8, 2017

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. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” - Exodus 19:4-6.

Comment: After the Israelites had left Egypt, Moses the prophet charged them not to forget the wonderful manner God delivered them from the oppressive hands of Pharaoh. But to continue to enjoy Jehovah's benefits, the priests and the rest of the congregation must be obedient to His laws, thereby keeping to their own side of the agreement to serve God Almighty exclusively. The priestly order was set apart to preserve and impart the knowledge of God to the people. They should be united in carrying out this task and do what they preach as examples to others. (Malachi 2:7; 1 Timothy 3:1-10) We should have strong faith always in Jehovah's guiding care. Eliphaz the Temanite declared, “I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.” (Job 5:8, 9) True worshippers must examine themselves and do what is pleasing to the Almighty God so that they will continue to enjoy His blessings by His grace. David the prophet stated, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.” (Psalm 33:12) Such are “not slothful in business” but are “fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”. (Romans 12:11) They do not hesitate to declare the truth when the opportunity comes. (1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3) They show strong, unbending determination to carry out the Lord's purpose. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) They obey God rather than men. – Acts 5:29.

Monday, January 9, 2017

Text: “The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.” - Psalm 111:2, 3.

Comment: The earth abounds with the manifestations of the power of God Almighty. Who else but the Almighty “hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” (Isaiah 40:12) The created things we see should fill us with wonder and admiration and make us to fear the Creator. “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.” (Psalm 104:24; 92:5) But since it is not everybody who will bother to reflect on the wonders of creation, King David says it is those who are wise enough to “observe these things” that “shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD”. (Psalm 107:43) When we meditate on the works of God and muse over the works of His hands, we will stretch forth our hands to embrace righteousness and do His will with willingness and joy by His grace. The Prophet David declared: “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...” – See Psalm 84:1,2,10,11; Psalm 143:5, 6.

Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Text: "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.

Comment: People of God should be able to weigh their utterances and actions with a spiritual scale so as to know whether they are doing well or not. When one corrects oneself, one does not need to be corrected by someone else. And it is a sin to see another person committing sin and fail to correct him. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." (Leviticus 19:17) The point is that if the person who is in the wrong continues in the path of error he would come to ruin.

Wise people do show gratitude to those who correct them. (Psalm 141:5) Some people however are afraid to correct someone openly where other people would have the opportunity to learn from the correction, but would only do so secretly - apparently because of what they are gaining from the person; or because they want to show that they love the person and so do not want to embarrass him. Others would not even complain at all but would keep quiet and could even be praising the person in spite of his misdeeds. It is when the person falls into the pit they loosen their tongues to speak. The Bible says, "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." - Proverbs 27:5, 6.

Wednesday, January 11, 2017

Text: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." - Revelation 1:3.

Comment: The time we are living in, the last days, calls for seriousness in acquiring the knowledge of God so as to judge properly whether what one is doing is right or not in the eyes of God. St. Paul exhorted us thus, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (1 Timothy 4:13) To show his zeal to get knowledge, the Eunuch of Ethiopia, while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was reading the book of the prophet Isaiah along the way, even though he did not understand what he was reading. (Acts 8:26-39) God Almighty, seeing his heart condition, sent Philip the apostle to teach him. We too should be diligent in studying the Bible so as to rightly divide the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15) We are enjoined in Isaiah 34:16, thus, "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." Being words of God, the Scriptures enliven and enlighten, they make one to be spiritually minded so that the devil will not find room to come in. Our Saviour 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.

Thursday, January 12, 2017

Text: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." - 1 Corinthians 1:18, 19.

Comment: Academic knowledge is good for opening our eyes to what mankind has been able to gather over the years in various fields by way of knowledge. But this knowledge is not greater than that of God because it is the knowledge of God that makes people to do righteousness and to be saved. If worldly knowledge could teach righteousness, the world would have been in peace by now. Again it is not everything that is called "knowledge" in the eyes of the world that is true. That was why St. Paul described such knowledge as "foolishness" with God. He added: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:18-21) Many people today place a premium on worldly knowledge as they have scant regard for the word of God. They show gestures of nonchalance or apathy when sermons are on. How can the word of God then impact on the person's conduct? The Bible says, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." - Ecclesiastes 5:1.

Friday, January 13, 2017

Text: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." - 1 Corinthians 13:1, 2.

Comment: What St. Paul is saying in the text for today is that even if one has wide knowledge of the Scriptures and can dispense same effectively but does not have the spiritual love of God, it is of no profit to him. It is very important to note that it is not by talking smoothly or eloquently like angels that matter so much in the sight of God as putting the knowledge into practise. This is where many people are failing. Did Apostle James not say: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty"? (James 2:12) And did Jesus Christ not ask: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46) True worship has no room for hypocrisy. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (1 Timothy 1:5) Each person must always ask himself if what he is doing in the work of God is done with the sincere mind of honouring God Almighty and His son Jesus Christ or if they are for personal interest, to make favorable impression on people, gain influence and so on. Christ said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." - Matthew 7:21.

Saturday, January 14, 2017

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: The religious leaders in time of Christ were diligent in teaching people the Scriptures but the problem was that they themselves did as they pleased. Such outward show of

righteousness by way of preaching the word and being active in religious services, festivals and ceremonies whereas one behaves otherwise is totally abhorrent to God. Scripture says, "For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit." (Job 15:34, 35) Wholesome, undivided service is what is required of us. The Bible says "...And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31) It is when we serve God with sincerity that we would be blessed not only in this world but in the world to come be granted eternal life with other attendant blessings, by His grace. (Joshua 24:14,15; John 4:22-24) Our Saviour stated, "...Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." - Luke 18:29, 30.

Sunday, January 15, 2017

Text: "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." - Luke 16:15.

Comment: In the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, the religious leaders did everything to exalt themselves in the eyes of the people. Concerning them our Saviour stated, "...But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments." (Matthew 23:1-5) These "frontlets" or "phylacteries" were strips of parchment or paper, on which were written passages of Scripture. This was to give the impression that they were more diligent in keeping the law than others. As for enlarging the borders of their garments, it should be recalled that God directed the Jews to make fringes upon the borders of their garments, to remind them to always keep the laws of God. (Numbers 15:38-40) But the Pharisees made theirs larger than that of the common people, just to impress. The gospel records say that when the Pharisees return from the market, "except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables". (Mark 7:4) Jesus Christ made them to understand that one should not just have clean hands but more importantly, they should have clean hearts. Mere outward cleanliness where the person is steeped in sin is of no spiritual benefit. - Matthew 23:5, 25-28.

A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN RICHES

Our Lord Jesus Christ asked: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36) It should be recalled that in his epistle to Timothy, his son in the Lord, St. Paul highlighted the danger of placing money above spiritual values when he stated: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all

evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” -1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

Monday January 16, 2017

Text: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.” - 2 Timothy 3:1-3.

Comment: In his second letter to Timothy, St. Paul made a prophecy about the conditions people have to face in the last days, stating that it is a time people would be exposed to very great dangers or perils. It would be a time which would be characterized by worsening social, political and economic difficulties, due to the greed, self-will and selfishness of many people. Having neither faith in God nor regard for their fellow men, many would be godless and would not hesitate to hurt their fellow men to satisfy their greed for money, power and pleasure. We are now in the age when the standard of morality had so degenerate that people are judged, not on the content of their character, or on the basis of their inclination to that which is good, but by how much money they can muster at each point in time. This emphasis on money rather than on good name has ruined many a promising and blossoming career, brought disgrace to families, resulted in the collapse of even multinational companies and businesses, and generally stifled development in many countries – leaving in its wake, high rate of unemployment, pervasive poverty, ill-health, high mortality rate and generally, distress and anguish among the people. The Bible says, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.” - Psalm 37:16.

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Text: “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” - Proverbs 22:1.

Comment: “Good name” here means a reputation that inspires respect, high esteem, admiration, even reverence. “Riches” refer to material wealth - money in cash and in goods, property, and other assets. Solomon the prophet here exhorts and warns us against violating the laws of God in the quest for material things. (Proverbs 16:8) The point is that if one is wealthy but does not have a good name, that is, if his lifestyle is not in harmony with the will of God, he would be despised by godly people and even by some of those who may be praising him outwardly just because they are benefiting from him. But a man or woman, boy or girl who departs from evil, will be in favour with God and with men of goodwill and will in the end get salvation by the grace of God. In addition, the good name of such a person will open doors for him, his children, particularly those who follow his footsteps, and those associated with him. He will be preferred above others in many circumstances and his word will be given serious attention in his community or society. Solomon the prophet, who was also the richest man in his days, declared under the inspiration of God: “A good name (with God) is rather to be chosen than great riches, (of the world) and loving favour (with the Lord) rather than silver and gold.” - Proverbs 22:1, Parentheses ours.

Wednesday January 18, 2017

Text: "But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him." - 2 Kings 5:20.

Comment: The offer of money and clothes by Naaman, captain of the host of Syria to Elisha the prophet, exposed the vice of greed that was in Gehazi, by reason of which he suffered the humiliation of being cursed with leprosy. He thereby acquired a bad name for himself. Seeing that his master refused to accept the gifts from Naaman, Gehazi ran after him and collected some of the silver and clothes by lying that his master had sudden need of them. Elisha reproved him thus, "...Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?" (2 Kings 5:26) He then placed a curse on him which took immediate effect. "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." (2Kings 5:27) Many people today shamelessly lie and cheat because of money. Truly, "the unjust knoweth no shame". - Zephaniah 3:5.

Writing in a Nigerian newspaper, The Guardian, of Saturday February 16, 2013, a columnist, lamenting the sharp decline in value system among people, stated, "Nobody cares about his name and reputation any longer. Everyone wants to make it the fastest way. The women are also not helping our men. We all want to get married to multi-millionaires. We don't care how the wealth was acquired." The Bible says, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right." - Proverbs 16:8

Thursday, January 19, 2017

Text: "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things." - Ecclesiastes 10:19.

Comment: The point being made here is that money, is the means by which we can procure whatever goods or services we need, even if it is to buy wine or to do a feast. No one can deny that a number of people in positions of authority had acquired bad reputations for themselves through fraudulent practices, extortion, oppression, injustice, murder, ritual practices, etc. Corrupt judges have freed the guilty and punished the innocent because they had been bribed. This is contrary to the Bible. (Exodus 23:6-8) One should not put trust in money as one's source of protection rather than on God Almighty and thereby stretch the meaning of the phrase "money answereth all things", beyond limits. Money should be used as means to godly ends; not as an end in itself. Money cannot teach one the fear of God, give one strength of character, good reputation (that would even outlive one), good health or eternal life. See Psalm 49:6-10, 16,17; Mark 8:36; etc.

When Simon the sorcerer saw that when St. Peter laid hands on the members, they received the holy spirit, "he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost (holy spirit)". But Peter corrected him sharply telling

him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter..." - Acts 8:18-24.

Friday, January 20, 2017

Text: "Those who trust in their wealth, And boast in the multitude of their riches-- None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their life is costly, No payment is ever enough,..." - Psalm 49:6-10 World English Bible.

Comment: The danger in emphasizing riches over any other consideration is that one will be tempted to commit crime thereby breaking the laws of God. It is because of the lure of riches that some women are no longer ready to start life from the scratch with a man while some who are already married readily commit adultery or abandon their marriages. Solomon the prophet stated: "A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." (Proverbs 28:20, 22) David the prophet warns us in the text for today that money cannot restore the life of another, in that no wealthy person can use his material wealth to save anyone's life, no matter how dear such one is to him.

The rich but godless ones want to live for ever "and not see corruption". But since that is not possible, they put up several physical structures as monuments to themselves. As for their wealth, who can tell whether the person to inherit them would be a wise person or a fool? We should strive to have a good account with God laying up for ourselves treasures "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" so that He would remember us in the day of judgment. - Psalm 49:7-11; Ecclesiastes 2:17-20; Matthew 6:19, 20.

Saturday, January 21, 2017

Text: "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich." - Proverbs 28:6.

Comment: Some of those who are rich do not care about God and righteousness and so feel they can do whatever they like since with money they can buy influence, popularity and power. (See Proverbs 10:15; Luke 12:20, 21) There are those who have joined secret societies because of the quest for wealth. It is common knowledge that some politicians, businessmen, religious leaders have had to go through oath-taking rituals to be assured of sponsorship by their godfathers. This stress on position, power, riches has led to mediocrity, abuse of office, corruption, and even assassinations. It accounts for the brazenness and sheer audacity with which public funds are stolen and have reduced several countries or people in the sight of other nations. King Solomon, under the inspiration of God, stated, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." - Proverbs 14: 34.

Those who are already trapped in satan's web of deceit should pray God to help them to pull out from the captivity they have found themselves. The Bible says,

“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? ... 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 6:14-18.

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Text: “Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” - Isaiah 56:11.

Comment: Many religious leaders, believing that “gain is godliness” preach the doctrine of prosperity, openly extorting money from their members under various guises because of greed. “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you” said St. Peter, who added that by reason of the “damnable heresies” and “pernicious ways” of these false prophets they make the way of truth to be evil spoken of. (2 Peter 2:1-3) They believe “that gain is godliness”. These false religious leaders are not bothered about knowing and preaching the truth; they do not present matters as they are, and so are blind spiritually; they would not speak out to condemn evil but show favours to people due to respect of persons, especially individuals they hope will pay them back in kind, sooner or later. - Proverbs 29:25; Galatians 1:10; Isaiah 56:10.

True Christians will not believe just anything that people preach but will strive to get knowledge so that they can judge between truth and falsehood and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) By their understanding of the word of God they are able to “try the spirits whether they are of God”, knowing that “many false prophets are gone out into the world”. (1 John 4:1) we should pray to be delivered from false prophets.

Monday January 23, 2017

Text: “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” - Proverbs 13:11.

Comment: Certainly, pursuit of riches without regard for God and His laws leads to nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit - and even death. King Solomon warns in the text for today that wealth acquired through crooked means shall not last. Some become rich by falsifying the measures for things bought from them. The Bible says, “But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” (Deuteronomy 25:15. See also Proverbs 11:1; 16:11) Some people fail to pay their workers who had rendered services to them while others do not repay loans or whatever other items they had borrowed, whereas the Bible says, “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.” - Leviticus 19:13.

Another point to be noted is that riches acquired through wicked means are under curse and will not last. The person may even die untimely. The warning by God Almighty through

Jeremiah the prophet is also very relevant in this discourse. The Bible declares: "As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." - Jeremiah 17:11.

Tuesday January 24, 2017

Text: "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?" - Matthew 19:24, 25.

Comment: Our Lord Jesus Christ made a certain rich man (a certain ruler, Luke 18:18) to understand that his main hindrance to attaining the kingdom of God were his love of material possessions. Christ said he must deemphasize the material for the spiritual. "...But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions". (Matthew 19:21, 22) What the rich man did in response to the challenge of choosing between the kingdom of God and his riches elicited the comment from the Saviour, to the effect "That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven". The point is that those who are rich without God put their trust in their wealth. The Bible says, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." (Proverbs 18:11) Along the line, the major concern becomes how to preserve and enlarge one's treasures - and this distracts one from the way of God. The Scriptures therefore warn, "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them." (Psalm 62:10) St. Paul stated, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." - 1 Timothy 6:9-10

Wednesday January 25, 2017

Text: "The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends." - Proverbs 14:20

Comment: Many people today make the mistake of thinking that material riches are synonymous with wisdom, righteousness, happiness, long life and so on. They despise those who are upright in character but are poor materially. Scripture says, "All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him." (Proverbs 19:7) It is to avoid the neglect, derision and ridicule with which the poor are held by those who are carnally minded that some people throw virtue to the winds in order to seek wealth. An example of such people was Achan, who, contrary to divine command, took from the spoils at Jericho "a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" as a result of which Israel was defeated in the battle against Ai, losing 36 men. He and his family were stoned to death. The family was guilty because they connived with him in committing the trespass.- Joshua 7:21-25.

We should, like David the king, pray to God thus, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy

way. (Psalms 119:36, 37) From the Scriptural point of view, spiritual riches are far more important than material wealth. The Bible says, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." - Proverbs 13:7.

Thursday, January 26, 2017

Text: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." - Luke 12:15.

Comment: During his earthly ministry, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ warned us of the danger of accumulating material wealth without cultivating the qualities that make one to be in favour with God. He went on to give a parable of a man who obtained a good harvest from his farm such that he did not have enough space in his warehouse or granary. Without acknowledging the goodness of God on him and thanking Him for the bountiful harvest, he ascribed the credit for his prosperity to his own efforts and decided to build a bigger store after which he would say to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry". Consequently, "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Jesus Christ rounded off the parable with the lesson he wants us to imbibe. He said : "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:15-21) The moral or lesson in the parable is clear: It is better to have a good name with God than to be materially rich without God.

Friday, January 27, 2017

Text: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." - Revelation 3:17, 18.

Comment: In his letter to the Church of the Laodiceans, Jesus Christ made a clear distinction between spiritual wealth and material riches, pointing out that the Christians there were poor spiritually because of their lukewarmness, inactivity or lack of zeal in the work of God. Though they were materially rich, they were poor and blind and naked (spiritually), in as much as they lacked spiritual qualities, including the knowledge of God and His righteousness.

Applied literally, one cannot deny the fact that wealth and honours acquired through fraudulent means do not endure as they soon wither away, aside from the fact that the person would be exposed in due course. These include those who attain academic success by paying teachers or using "mercenaries" to write examinations or even buying degree certificates. Others become rich through crime. But "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." (Luke 12:2) Christians should not be part of the "get-rich-quick syndrome" knowing that, as they say, "easy come, easy go" God blesses people gradually as they labour patiently over time. (Proverbs 13:11; Proverbs 20:21) Moreover, there is a saying that, "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost, when health is lost something is lost and when

character is lost, everything is lost". But what one acquires through honest labour will not give him trouble. Scripture says: "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." - Proverbs 10:22.

Saturday January 28, 2017

Text: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." - Hebrews 11:24, 25.

Comment: Moses, the son of Amram and Jochebed, and the younger brother of Miriam and Aaron, was brought up by Pharaoh's daughter as her son. That Moses was brought up as a prince in the Egyptian court did not diminish his love for God and His people. When he saw two Hebrews quarrelling and tried to settle them by correcting the one who was in error, he got a surprising reply, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" - Exodus 2:10-14; Acts 7:28.

St. Stephen later stated that at the time of the incident, Moses was 40 years old. (Acts 7:23) Moses had to run for fear of his life to the land of Midian where he got married to Zipporah, daughter of Jethro and had two sons. After living the lowly life of a shepherd for 40 years, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush and gave him the commission to go back to Egypt to lead the Hebrews back to the land of Canaan. (Acts 7:30) The man who had been rejected by his brethren had now been sent to lead them. (Acts 7:35) For choosing to suffer with the people of God, rather than living a life of luxury with the Egyptians, Moses has since then been highly regarded by the people of God. "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." - Ecclesiastes 7:1.

Sunday January 29, 2017

Text: "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD." - 1 Samuel 2:12, 16, 17.

Comment: Though Eli was the high priest, his children did not have the fear of God. For example, the rule was that when a sacrifice was being offered, the breast and shoulder, were by the law of God given to the priests, the fat was burnt upon the altar, while the rest of the flesh belonged to the person who gave the offering. (Exodus 29:27; Leviticus 7:29-32) But the sons of Eli forcefully claimed not only the share for the priests but also that of the offerer. This behaviour provoked a lot of people. Eli as high priest was in a position to stop the perversions that were going on, but his love for his children did not allow him to do that. A true worshipper of God, must not allow the love for his family members to lead him to sin. - Matthew 12:46-50; 10:37-39.

God Almighty then sent word to Eli, saying that though he would have established his lineage in the priesthood, He would no longer do so, "for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed". (1 Samuel 2:29, 30) For making people to talk ill of the work of God, Eli and his sons later died in dishonourable circumstances to serve as a lesson to others. – 1 Samuel 4:11-20; 1 Corinthians 10:6-11.

Monday, January 30, 2017

Text: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." - Proverbs 29:2.

Comment: When some people find themselves in positions of authority they are carried away by power and become impervious to advice. They set people against one another and do not want the people to love themselves and be united. They employ every crooked and deceitful way to entrench a structure of dictatorship or tyranny over the people. They would not humble themselves to do the righteousness of God. Such was Jehoram the king of Judah. He succeeded his father Jehoshaphat, yet he did not follow his father's footsteps, in that he greatly corrupted the morals of the people and dragged them into idolatry. He even killed his brothers who were more noble in character than himself. Despite warnings from the prophet Elijah, he would not amend his ways until God struck him with a strange disease from which he died. "And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers." (2 Chronicles 21:19) The Bible adds that the king died "without being desired" and that he was not even buried in the sepulchres of the kings. What a shameful end for a man who had a golden opportunity of making a good name for himself! No wonder the Bible says "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot." - Proverbs 10:7.

Tuesday January 31, 2017

Text: "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it." - Proverbs 11:26.

Comment: Instead of labouring to make a good name for themselves by judiciously using the resources of their countries for the benefit of their people, some leaders prefer to divert such money into their own pockets, forgetting that "the place at the top is reserved for the person who is willing to live for others and if need be, die for them".

The names of several former rulers today occupy prominent positions in the roll of infamy and they themselves ended up in disgrace because of the violence, terror, destruction and murder they visited on millions of people. The word of God is always true. "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." (Job 4:8) David stated: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." - Psalm 37:35-37..

Moreover the account of Job the prophet states, "Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he

shall have no name in the street. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.” - Job 18:5, 17, 18.

Wednesday February 1, 2017

Text: “Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.” - 1 Samuel 12:3.

Comment: Right conduct compels obedience and respect. One of the ancient patriarchs who stood out in this regard was Samuel the prophet. He was revered by his people for his impartiality, honesty, courage and fear of God. After God had acceded to the request of the people to be given a King, Samuel the prophet openly requested that anyone whom he had maltreated knowingly or unknowingly should say so, assuring them that he would make amends immediately. But the people answered: “Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.” (1 Samuel 12:4) He further told them, “... The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.” (1 Samuel 12:5) How many people today can openly challenge members of the public to expose them if they misused or abused their offices during their years in service? Samuel the prophet had a clear conscience and so could do so. St. Paul said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” - Acts 24:16.

The good name that Samuel the prophet had with God Almighty and the people and with which he died is far more precious than money. Scripture says, “The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.” - Proverbs 10:7; Psalm 112:6.

Thursday, February 2, 2017

Text: “Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.” - Nehemiah 5:7, 8.

Comment: While serving as Governor of Judah, Nehemiah distinguished himself - and he is still being favourably remembered in Jewish history. He fought against the exploitation of the poor by the rich, restored true worship and refused to take advantage of his office to enrich himself. There was a great cry of the people and of their wives who were appealing for supply of grains; others had mortgaged their fields, vineyards, and houses for food; some had borrowed money to be able to pay the taxes demanded by the king of Babylon; and their sons and daughters were already serving as slaves. Unfortunately, those who were taking advantage of their hard economic conditions were their fellow Jews. (Nehemiah 5:1-5) Nehemiah the Governor was appalled by this and he told them “It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?” (Nehemiah 5:9) To show that he was conscious of the importance of having a good name with God he prayed thus,

“Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.” (Nehemiah 13:14) Such charitable spirit is what is expected of leaders in society in that privilege bespeaks responsibility. “The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.” - Proverbs 29: 7.

Friday February 3, 2017

Text: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” - Hebrews 11:1, 4.

Comment: The good name obtained by the ancient worthies as a result of their faith is still being spoken of today long after they had died. One of them was Abel who practised righteousness and was killed for it. Another man mentioned by St. Paul was Enoch. Even at death God honoured him in that he was translated, that is changed to nothing by God rather than for his dead body to be interred in the ground. (Compare Genesis 5:24) St. Paul went on to list some other ancient faithfuls who distinguished themselves in the work of God because of their faith: “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” - Hebrews 11:32-37.

Saturday, February 4, 2017

Text: “Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” - Matthew 26:13.

Comment: Right from time of old, leprosy had been regarded as an unclean, hideous and disgusting disease. (Numbers 12:10; 2 Chronicles 26:19; Leviticus 13, 14) That Jesus Christ and his disciples, while in Bethany, went to the house of Simon the leper, along with other people, meant that he had been healed, though he was still identified by the disease. It was in the house of Simon that a woman poured very precious ointment on the head of our Lord Jesus Christ, an act of the highest piece of respect in those days. “When his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.” (Verses 8 and 9) The gospels by Mark and John record the disciples as saying the ointment could have been sold for 300 pence; that is, for about 40 dollars. The murmurs of the disciples also imply that they felt our Saviour should not have allowed her. Our Saviour then gave the charge that wherever the gospel would be preached in

the whole world, what she had done should be told as a memorial to her sacrifice, self-denial and faith. St. Paul assures us thus, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." - Hebrews 6:10.

Sunday, February 5, 2017

Text: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." - 2 Samuel 12:13, 14.

Comment: When King David committed adultery with Uriah's wife, the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to reprove him, using the parable of the greedy man who seized the only sheep his neighbour had to entertain his guest whereas he had a large flock to make his choice from. David was so angered by what the man did that he pronounced death on him not knowing that he had pronounced his own condemnation. (2 Samuel 12:5, 6) It was then Nathan told him "...Thou art the man..." (2 Samuel 12:7) David repented so thoroughly that God forgave him. But the prophet told him that the child of their adulterous union would die because by his deed he had "given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme", as in the text for today. The name of God Almighty must always be exalted; and one of the marks of true worshippers is that they strive to always do things that will make people to praise the name of the Creator. David the king declared, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously." - Psalm 96:8-10.

Monday February 6, 2017

Text: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." - Malachi 3:16.

Comment: Those who had given themselves to sinful acts in the quest for riches, power and positions, should not continue to exalt themselves in their pride, blasphemies and acts of wickedness. Rather, they should refrain from such actions and repent of their sins so as to be forgiven. King David said, "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." - Psalm 38:18.

God Almighty assures us that He takes perfect record of the good deeds by His children. He will bless such ones in this world but more importantly, grant them eternal life in His Kingdom fully established. "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." - verses 17,18.

In the book of Isaiah the prophet, we are given further assurance of Jehovah's providence, by way of a question, as it is written, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." - Isaiah 49:15, 16.

LIVING A GODLY LIFE IN CHRIST

The theme "Living a Godly Life in Christ", serves to remind us to be diligent in keeping to the tenets or requirements of the Christian faith so as to enjoy the benefits of the coming of Jesus Christ to the world. He himself declared: "...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Truly, it is by sincere dedication to doing the will of God that the converts will learn to live a godly life in Christ. St. Paul stated: "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.

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

Text: "Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." - Isaiah 45:24, 25.

Comment: This proclamation would no doubt continue to be made by true worshippers as God Almighty shows Himself strong on their behalf by sustaining them and granting them victory over temptations brought on them by the devil. There are those who are weighed down by the burden of having to keep so many rites and traditions of men. So many people have so often been disappointed by false prophets that they do not know who to turn to or believe anymore. Some are held captive to various sinful lusts. Many are weary of the deceit, oppressions and injustices in the world today at the instance of the devil. Such ones will by the power of God be able to break free from satan's stranglehold by looking to Jesus Christ whom God has appointed to lead us to salvation. See Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; John 5:46. But those who remain opposed to the truth will reap emptiness and death in the end. St. Paul charged us thus, "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...For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." - Hebrews 12:1-3.

Wednesday, February 8, 2017

Text: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." - Matthew 15:7-9.

Comment: These words, quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ in one of his encounters with the Pharisees in those days, was used by God Almighty in describing the character of the unfaithful Jews in time of old, in that they were mere lip worshippers. The true believer must worship God in sincerity and in truth. The guideline, as clearly stated in Mark 12:29-31, is that each worshipper must love God with his heart and might and love his neighbour as himself. One who truly loves to serve God Almighty will have such virtues as faith, diligence, love, tolerance, humility, etc. as taught and demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Christians at Ephesus exhorted us thus, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." - Ephesians 4:24-29.

Thursday, February 9, 2017

Text: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 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 10:26-29.

Comment: Though we have been called into the way of eternal life, we can only have life or salvation on the conditions God has prescribed. That being so, we cannot be doing our own will or be serving God as we please. We must be as humble and obedient as the sheep, the animal to which Christ likened his followers as in the text for today. Jesus Christ himself did not do his will when he came on earth but stated: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (John 6:38; 5:30) If Jesus Christ, in spite of his high position did not do his own will while on earth, who are we to serve God according to our own pleasure? Such vices as hatred, selfishness, arrogance, greed, immorality, false teachings, etc. should not be found among people who claim to believe in Christ. Because Christ knew that a significant number of those who claim to be his disciples would be mere lip-worshippers, he warned, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." - Mathew 7:21.

Friday, February 10, 2017

Text: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" - John 3:3, 4.

Comment: During his days on earth, one of the leaders of the Jews came to Jesus Christ secretly by night. His name was Nicodemus. The Master, addressing him, told him of the spiritual rebirth that every believer must experience to be counted among the children of God, as stated in the text. The understanding of the Scriptures show that Christ was expounding the fact that it is imperative that those who claim to be converts must shed the perversions and errors that they were used to before they came to Christ. They must, after conversion, learn to express in conduct the new life in Christ. The change so radical that it is likened to a rebirth or regeneration. According to the Black's Bible Dictionary the discussion Christ had with Nicodemus highlights the fact that, "There are two orders of life open to men: One natural, the other, spiritual. Membership in the natural order comes with the gift of life itself. Membership of the spiritual is a result of a decision. The experience may be sudden or may be gradual, the result of a long period of discipline, meditation, instruction, and moral uncertainty." Truly, it is by sincere dedication to doing the will of God that the converts will learn to live a godly life in Christ. St. Paul stated: "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.

Saturday February 11, 2017

Text: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." - Titus 2:11, 12.

Comment: Apostle Paul in this text charged us to place the highest consideration to our call to salvation by putting aside our personal desires so as to properly fulfil our duties to God. He went on to state that Jesus Christ, who is the grace of God personified, came to teach us not to be governed by the lusts of the flesh but to live godly lives, he himself giving us the example. - Titus 2:11-15.

It is with this understanding therefore that St. Paul exhorted the Christians at Ephesus in those days that they should no more walk "as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart". He pointed out that the ungodly "being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness". He then admonished: "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." - Ephesians 4:17-24.

Sunday, February 12, 2017

Text: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." - John 14:21.

Comment: Our Lord Jesus Christ made it abundantly clear several times in the gospels that those who are his disciples indeed must immerse themselves in His word, which is the truth, so as to know His will to be able to practise godliness. To this end he declared: "...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". (John 8:31, 32) The freedom he is talking about is freedom from sin, ignorance and their consequences, including death. The truth comes from God through Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation. Hence he declared: "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". (John 14:6) The knowledge of the truth is therefore crucial in resolving the issue as to whether one is living a godly life in Christ or not. David the Psalmist stated: "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." - Psalm 145:18.

It is the truth that teaches one how to serve God in an acceptable manner and be in close fellowship with Him. It frees one from superstitions and false notions regarding God's purpose of creation and His Kingdom. Overtime, sincere adherence to the truth frees one from the grip of the lusts of the flesh so that righteousness becomes a relatively easy thing for the believer. See Romans 12:21; Galatians 5:1; Romans 13:11-14; Proverbs 14:6; etc.

Monday, February 13, 2017

Text: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD." - Joshua 24:14.

Comment: When the children of Israel had reached the promised land, Joshua the prophet gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, where he reminded them of their history: how God led their fathers in all their places of sojourn, including Egypt where Moses and Aaron were sent to deliver them and how they had been given lands they did not labour for, cities they did not build, vineyards and oliveyards they planted not. He then went on to exhort them with the words in the citation for today - that by virtue of the abundance of the goodness of God on them, they should serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and not go back to the gods their forefathers served before God called out Abraham and made from him the Israelite nation.

Those who serve God in sincerity are the "true worshippers" whom Christ said the Father seeketh to worship Him. (John 4:23) Such ones do not preach one thing and do the opposite. (Luke 6:46-49) They do not make promises just to please or deceive people but their communication is, "Yea, yea; Nay, nay". (Matthew 5:33-37) They will not take what does not belong to them but will hasten to return such to their owners. The Bible warns, "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." - 1 Thessalonians 4:6.

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

Text: "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand

without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" - Matthew 12:46-48.

Comment: In one of the most graphic illustrations by our Lord Jesus Christ on the importance of practical Christianity, he rebuffed the request by his mother and brothers for him to leave his preaching work, to attend to them. The gospel record says, "And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." - Matthew 12:49, 50.

Moreover, Jesus Christ even at youthful age, gave notice to his earthly guardians, Joseph and Mary, that his primary concern was to do the work of his Father. It would be recalled that after the Passover feast at Jerusalem, he did not join his kinsfolk and acquaintances for the return journey but stayed behind in the temple. Joseph and Mary had to return and search for him for three whole days, before "they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions". (Luke 2:40-46) We should pray to have the faith or courage to insist on doing the will of God if parents or relations want us to do the contrary. Our savior declared, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." - Luke 14:26-27.

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Text: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:29-31.

Comment: According to Mark's account, it was one of the Scribes that asked our Saviour this question. No doubt this class of men educated for the purpose of preserving and expounding the sacred books, must have long been exercised by the question, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Those who want to learn would be taught by the Master himself, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." (Psalm 25:9) Christ explained that all other commandments hinged on the love of God and of one's neighbour. We should love God by way of worshipping Him and obeying His word for that is why He has made us and provided everything in abundance for us here on earth. (Malachi 2:10; Isaiah 45:12, 18) One who loves God will love what God has created on earth, including human beings and keep His commandments which are made for people to live happily with one another. - 1 John 4:20, 21.

In the words of St. Paul, "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." He added, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." - Romans 13:9, 10.

Thursday, February 16, 2017

Text: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.

Comment: It is unfortunate that in spite of clear admonitions in the Bible on the importance of godliness in the life of the believer, some still go about doing their own will, not bothering about the consequences of breaking the laws of God. Many professed Christians are coming short of the demands of God because of sexual morality. Though some claim to be Christians yet they indulge in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, cohabitation or trial marriage or even what some call "open marriage" - loose relationships in which the parties agree to have other sexual partners, contrary to the Bible. See Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; etc.

People who were indulging in sexual immorality before they became Christians are welcome to the faith but they must stop such practices if they want their services to be acceptable to God. (1 Corinthians 6:16-18) To emphasize how serious the matter is St. Paul warned the Corinthian Christians "...not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat". (1 Corinthians 5:11) He added: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." - Verses 12,13.

Friday, February 17, 2017

Text: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." - Matthew 19:9.

Comment: According to Bible scholars, over time, the reasons the Jews had for divorcing a wife expanded to include trifling matters or very slight pretences such as getting food burnt while cooking. That was why the Pharisees asked our Lord, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3) He explained that God Almighty Who established marriage made it to be a permanent union - not for them to separate for any ground except for the reason of adultery. - Matthew 19:9.

It is unfortunate that an increasing number of marriages are ending in divorce contrary to the divine order. Most divorces are caused by financial difficulties, infidelity, religious differences, distrust, disrespect or disregard for one another, among other reasons. All couples should live up to their marital vows and use the word of God to work on their problems with prayers to God with Whom all things are possible. We should not resort to divorce at the least opportunity or for flimsy reasons. See Malachi 2:14-16.

Marriage is used to illustrate the bond between God Almighty and His people, which bond could be broken only by unfaithfulness, or spiritual adultery. (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians

5:23-27) Apostle James stated, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." - James 4:4

Saturday, February 18, 2017

Text: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." - Romans 12:2.

Comment: In St. Paul's letter to the Christians at Rome, he pointed out that our lifestyle should not be dictated by the world but by the laws of God. An area where the peculiarity of the true worshipper should be readily seen is in his mode of dressing. Christians must dress in ways that portray their faith. They should not expose their bodies as if human beings have not moved on since the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:10,11, 21) Also, there should be sufficient difference, in dressing between the men and the women. (Deuteronomy 22:5) The Bible speaks of the attire of an harlot, dressing is designed to attract men. - Proverbs 7:10; Genesis 38:14,15.

As a Christian, one should not dress indecently, portraying oneself as loose in morals or wild in character or as a deviant just to be seen as fashionable. St. Paul enjoins the women to: "...adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ..." (1 Timothy 2:9,10) Just as proper dressing gives honour to God and man, so one should be clothed in righteousness, in honour to God and to ensure decency and order in society. Isaiah the prophet stated, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD ... for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness..." - Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:11,12; Revelation 3:17,18; 1 Corinthians 14:33,40.

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Text: "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." - 1 Thessalonians 2:11-13.

Comment: Christianity should not be professed by mere word of mouth but should be expressed in true Christian living. St. Paul in this text disclosed that he and his colleagues who preached to the people were glad that the believers paid serious attention to what they were taught as could be seen in their high moral standard. It is such ones that will have eternal life which is the ultimate reward of the people of God. Jesus Christ 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) What is more, St. Paul, stating that God will render to every man according to his deeds, added that, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man

that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.” - Romans 2:6-9.

Monday, February 20, 2017

Text: “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 reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” - John 3:19-21.

Comment: In his discussion with Nicodemus, one of the Jewish leaders, our Saviour told him that many people in the world do not like him and the truth he preached because they preferred to do evil. Christ told his brethren in the flesh “The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.” (John 7:7) Because many people are given to sin, they will certainly not like those given to upright conduct. (Proverbs 29:27; Luke 6:26) Jesus Christ exhorts us thus, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:18, 19) We should be assured that God is with us if we are persecuted for righteousness sake, as St. Peter explains, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” - 1 Peter 2:19-21.

WALKING AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

The Christian life is one of continuous self-examination. It is by so doing we are able to correct our mistakes in the onward march towards perfection by the grace of God. Has it not been said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Jeremiah the prophet stated, “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.” - Lamentations 3:39, 40.

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

Text: “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.” - Exodus 13:21, 22.

Comment: While the children of Israel were journeying to the Promised Land, there was a pillar of cloud to show them the way to go and a pillar of fire to guide them by night. These were

symbolic of His presence and His guiding hand which served to encourage and strengthen the people through the hard, tedious journey in the wilderness. Bible understanding shows that Jesus Christ in his pre-human days, was the One whom God Almighty sent to lead the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Canaan. - Isaiah 63:7-9; Exodus 14:19; 23:20, 21; 33:14.

Jesus Christ is the One leading the people of God In the Christian era. (Hebrews 1:1, 2. See also John 8:12; John 14:6)) But for us to be disciples of Christ indeed, we must be guided by his word. (John 8:31,32; Psalm 119:18) Indeed, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." (Psalm 37:23) It is those who submit to the leadership of Christ Jesus, the Greater than Moses, the Greater Solomon and the remnant God has chosen in this age that will be protected and saved in the world to come. Isaiah the prophet declares, "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." - Isaiah 25:4.

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

Text: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." - Ephesians 5:8.

Comment: It is due to the influence of the devil that darkness covered the earth at a time. Darkness stands for deceit, falsehood, error, woe and death. The Bible says: "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble". (Proverbs 4:19) But in course of time, God Almighty caused the truth, symbolized by light, to spring up to open the eyes of people of honest minds and serve as witness to the wicked. It is by following the laws, doctrines, instructions from God Almighty that man will have life and peace. - Psalm 36:9.

When St. Paul went to Athens he was disturbed by the extent of their ignorance. He told them to repent saying, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." - Acts 17:30, 31.

All through the ages and even until today, people of goodwill who hear the truth, and receive it with joy, readily give themselves to true worship. This means that they put their personal feelings aside and ensure that their thoughts, utterances and actions are in harmony with the will of God Almighty as taught by Jesus Christ. That is the way to go. See Isaiah 12:2, 3; John 1:12.

Thursday, February 23, 2017

Text: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." - Psalm 19:1, 2.

Comment: Many there are today who have been misled by the false philosophies about God, His purpose of creation and His kingdom. Some believe that the world did not come about by creation but by a "Big Bang" - following the massive enlargement and explosion, "about 13.7

billion years ago”, of what was hitherto a tiny kernel. The advocates argue that it is the parts that became stars and galaxies, including the planet earth and mankind! Another false teaching is the theory of Evolution, which says that the various types of animals and plants were not specially created but “evolved” from pre-existing, much simpler types.

It is most unfortunate and sad that some so-called learned men and women are using their influence to deride the Owner of the universe. Indeed, God made man such that the visible manifestations of His presence should inspire and convince our hearts that He exists and controls all creation as David the prophet says in the text for today. St. Paul told the Athenians, “God that made the world and all things therein, ... giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth...For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” - Acts 17:24-28.

Friday, February 24, 2017

Text: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.” - Psalm 53:1.

Comment: The Bible regards those who say there is no God as fools. This is because such ones have closed their eyes to the evidences of His existence that abound everywhere. In the book of Jeremiah God Almighty states that He is the One who made the earth and established it by his wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by his understanding. It is further stated that it is by divine arrangement that vapours arise from the ends of the earth to the sky, which of course causes rain to fall. He also made lightning to accompany rain, and is responsible for the movement of the winds. Concerning those who deny His existence and choose to worship the works of their hands the account states, “Every man is brutish by his knowledge... They are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.” – Jeremiah 51:15-18. See also Psalm 14:1; 53:1.

Those who reject creation and trust in their own vain imaginations are totally in error. In the words of St. Paul, “And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” (1 Corinthians 8:2) we should pray for deeper understanding of the fact that God created the world and all things therein for the ultimate benefit of those who love Him. St. Paul advised, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”. - Colossians 2:8

Saturday, February 25, 2017

Text: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” - 2 Timothy 2:22.

Comment: This admonition warns us against the lawless, carnal desires which people are tempted to indulge in because they are strong in health and could do as they like and exhorts us to cultivate godly virtues. Sexual immorality exposes people to venereal diseases, lowers one's fertility, induces youths to commit abortion, creates enmity among people, etc., and,

above all, incurs the anger of God. According to a newspaper article “virginity and/or abstinence is the surest and fool proof way to stay out of trouble that sexual activeness portends....If you are still a virgin out there, be strong. It is not outlandish to be one. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Watch the friends you keep...save yourself from self-destruction by keeping away from the carrot being dangled by proponents of sexual freedom. Beware, that carrot is poisonous.”

Some youths are also indulging in immoral conduct, including fraudulent practices through the internet. The internet should be used for learning useful things, not to dupe people (otherwise known as 419) or to watch pornography which excites people to immorality. It is common knowledge that some foolish girls are using the internet to seek easy money. No one should throw honour and integrity to the winds because of money which the Bible says is the root of all evils. “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...” - 1 Timothy 6:11, 12.

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Text: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” - Ephesians 5:11, 12.

Comment: The sheep of God who have known the truth, have taken a vow never to have anything to do with the works of darkness, or with people who do things in secret. Among those indulging in works of darkness are those in secret cults and societies. They have codes and symbols, clothes and objects which only they recognize and could have. They admit people only through rigorous and strange initiation ceremonies and observe laws that are unnatural. In their setting, there is no room for debate as laws and instructions, no matter how ungodly, are simply handed down to which all comply without complaining. They keep their inner workings secret from the non-initiates and relationships with one another is much stronger than that with people outside their fold, including that with parents, brothers, sisters, children. As the text for today says, it is a shame to speak of what things those in the dark arts do in secret. But now that the light of Christ is shining, those who had been deceived into joining such societies should pray to be able to leave them and take their stand on the Lord's side. It is only the wicked who persist in error till the end. The Bible says, “But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” - Ephesians 5:13, 14.

Monday, February 27, 2017

Text: “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 reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” – John 3:19-21.

Comment: It is unfortunate that so many people today still follow the devil's teachings in order to acquire money and power and the popularity that goes with it. This is in spite of the fact that spiritual and secular knowledge have now spread all over the world.

The declaration by our Lord Jesus Christ in the text for today pointedly highlights the fact that so many people prefer to follow their ungodly inclinations in defiance of the laws of God. Such ones do not want anything to do with true Christianity or when they claim to be converted, are Christians only by word of mouth – and some of them are even worse than unbelievers. Our Redeemer Jesus Christ said the scribes and Pharisees of his day would “compass sea and land to make one proselyte” (convert), but when a person eventually converts to true worship, they make him “twofold more the child of hell” than they themselves. - Matthew 23:15.

The children of God should pray God to help them show themselves as those who have seen the light. Apostle John charged us thus, “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.

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

Text: “In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)” - Proverbs 7:9-12.

Comment: In the citation for today, Solomon, a King and prophet in Israel, highlights the character and dressing of women of loose character and the kind of men who patronize them. Women who have greater regard for money than for God, their own reputation and that of their families, chose the time, place and attire to lure men. Because the more men she attracts the more money she gets, she is constantly on the move; puts in a lot of cleverness in the way she plies her trade and is loud about everything she does. The number of men she could count as her clients drives her self-esteem. Because of easy money she will not listen to warnings to desist from the practice. She knows it is wrong for a couple to cheat on one another and so she is secretive about it, telling her victim, “For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.” - Proverbs 7:19, 20.

The Bible warns: “Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” - Proverbs 7:24-27.

Wednesday March 1, 2017

Text: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." - 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Comment: Whatever people of God do must be guided by the word of God. This is the essence of the exhortation by St. Paul in the account for today. This instruction is frequently breached by many people in the world today. A number of those who say they are converts are not aware of the dangers inherent in following worldly fashion at the expense of salvation.

A newspaper editorial has this to say: "Dress and public behaviour also mirror the lack of decency that is now turning to become a national calamity. On most of our campuses, the lack of a dress code or civilized behaviour is an everyday occurrence. While girls now dress salaciously and provocatively to the point of going about half-naked, the boys have become only a shade better than hooligans..."... People of God should dress properly as people from decent homes who cherish their identity as Christians so as not to attract the wrong attention, especially from immoral men or women and from secret cult members. No true Christian will allow anyone to convince him to do what is contrary to his conscience because there is always a high cost to be paid for following the way of darkness. (1 John 3:20, 21; Luke 12:47, 48) St. Paul also exhorted, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." - Colossians 3:17

Thursday, March 2, 2017

Text: "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." - 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12.

Comment: St. Paul in this letter to the Christians at Thessalonica prayed that God Almighty would continue to help them to do things that would make people to glorify His name. When God says He created people on earth to show forth His praise, it is not only by word of mouth but also by their actions. Our Saviour charged us saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven". - Matthew 5:16.

When the word of God is preached to people of sincere hearts, they are so thrilled that they give themselves wholly to true and sincere worship. St. Peter declares that if Christian wives put the word of God into practice, they would win unbelievers to the faith. This is when they cultivate "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price". (1 Peter 3:3, 4) Persistence in doing righteousness will make God to bless one by His grace. We should like St. Paul, prayed to be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" so as to "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.

Friday, March 3, 2017

Text: "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." - Proverbs 20:4.

Comment: The meaning of the proverb is that the slothful man, under the pretence of unfavourable weather, fails to cultivate his land till the proper time had lapsed. But the fact is that one who will not plough in seed-time will have nothing to reap when others are harvesting. Such ones therefore have to depend on others and suffer the shame of begging. Otherwise they will steal to ensure their upkeep. The word of God enjoins worshippers of God to be hardworking and prayerful. St. Paul declared that if any will not work neither should he eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10) And in Proverbs 6:6-11, Solomon the prophet uses the example of the ant to admonish us not to allow laziness to prevent us from working when the time is favourable. He stated: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Those who work hard are able to take care of themselves and others by the grace of God. They are peaceful people who do not trouble the security agencies and the rest of society. See 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Saturday, March 4, 2017

Text: "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..." – Romans 13: 11-14.

Comment: Those who have taken their stand on the Lord's side must do the work of God with diligence and sincerity. They should not go back to the ungodly things they were doing before they saw the light - when they gave vent to the lusts of the flesh. Rather, they should be making steady progress on the King's highway. "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 " said St. Paul in continuation of the citation for today. True worshippers strive to overcome their weaknesses, not become hardened in them, so that they grow in righteousness each passing day. - Hebrews 12:12, 13.

St. Peter spoke of those who "count it pleasure to riot in the day time" saying such ones walk "in lewdness, lusts, drunken binges, orgies, carousings, and abominable idolatries". (1 Peter 4:3 World English Bible) Those who, instead of building up themselves and being contented with what they have, envy their neighbours and thrive in quarrels and controversies are not yet the children of light. Apostle James warned, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." - James 3:14-16.

Sunday, March 5, 2017

Text: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." - 1 Peter 1:22, 23.

Comment: What cleanses one spiritually is the truth, the word of God. (John 15:3; 17:17) St. Peter, stating in outline the character of a person who is truly converted to Christ, made us understand that the power or force of the truth, by the grace of God, lies in its ability to turn people from darkness to light. (Psalm 119:9-11) It is this love of the truth and for one another that distinguishes the Christian from an unbeliever. Apostle John wrote: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." (1John 2:9-11) Apostle John puts it more bluntly further down in his general epistle when he wrote, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." - 1 John 4:20, 21.

Monday, March 6, 2017

Text: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." - Isaiah 1:18, 19.

Comment: True Christians constantly take stock of themselves, using the Scriptures to reason with God, so as to judge how well they are measuring up to the standards required of the children of light. One should not delay in correcting oneself in any area one is coming short. God declared through Isaiah the prophet, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:16, 17) Learning to do well entails doing that which we know is right so that by constant practice we get used to it. Nobody was born perfect. We should set goals or time limits within which to totally replace whatever are our shortcomings with virtuous conduct. There is great blessing in doing so. The Bible says: "Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures." (Job 36:9-11) Above all, constant prayer is very important for God to help one to walk in the way of light. – Luke 18:1; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; Hebrews 12:14.

MINDING THE THINGS THAT ARE MORE EXCELLENT IN OUR CHRISTIAN VOCATION

The word mind means “to take note of” or “to pay attention to something”; excellent means “extremely good, of a very high quality” while “vocation” means “a strong feeling of being ...called to undertake a specific type of work, especially ... a religious work ...” Having vowed to do the work of God all the days of our lives, we must be serious so as to discharge our duties creditably to the glory of God. In his letter to the Christians at Phillipi St. Paul exhorted: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.” - Philippians 1:9,10.

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

Text: “(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” - Matthew 6:32, 33.

Comment: To understand and appreciate those things that obstruct a person from seeking first the Kingdom of God, let us reflect on the import of the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 6:25-32, in which he pointed out that the concerns of a man are for his life, what he would eat and drink, and what he would wear. He then exhorted that if the birds of the air, the lilies of the field which are way down in importance, relative to man, are so carefully and diligently catered for by God, then He would do much more for us who are created in His own image and likeness. God knows we need the necessities of life, but He wants us to show faith, by seeking first the Kingdom, and to practise righteousness in order to be blessed, not only manifold in this world, - but much more with eternal life in God's Kingdom when fully setup by the grace of God.

Jehovah, the Most High God, is good to all His creatures, including those who, for now, are ignorant of His will. Wherefore, struggling for our daily needs at the expense of our spiritual well being is sheer shortsightedness and shows lack of understanding. - Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Hebrews 13:5, 6.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

Text: “The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.” - Psalm 111:2, 3.

Comment: It is when we have the kingdom interest uppermost in our minds that God will provide our needs for us, and give us even the things we never expected. A ready example is the case of Solomon the son of David. When God asked him what he wanted, he did not ask for things that would enhance his personal well being, such as long life, riches, the elimination of

his enemies; but understanding, to discern judgment. God Almighty then gave him a wise and an understanding heart besides riches and honour. - 1 Kings 3:5-13.

The widow of Zarephath was gathering sticks to prepare the only food she had for herself and her son, when Elijah the prophet, after asking for water, raised the bar by requesting for food in addition. But she gave priority to the promise of God through His prophet even though starvation was staring she and her son in the face. And true to the word of the Lord the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil did not fail until the day that the LORD sent rain upon the earth. – 1 Kings 17:8-16.

We should always keep in view the words of Solomon the prophet, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” - Proverbs 3:9, 10.

Thursday March 9, 2017

Text: “For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.” - Ecclesiastes 7:12.

Comment: One of the strongest weapons satan employs against mankind in general is ignorance, especially of spiritual things. Whereas uncountable sums of money and immeasurable time and effort are expended by many to acquire the knowledge of this world, little or no attention is given to spiritual knowledge. The truth is that secular education is needful to face the harsh social and economic situation of the world, but it does not teach righteousness or lead to life as stated in the text for today. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:19-21, 25-29.

Children of God who had come to the knowledge of the truth must therefore strive to acquire His knowledge in order to seek after the Kingdom by practising righteousness. For a disciple of Christ not to have knowledge is not good. Lack of the wisdom of God makes one to fall easily into sin and shame. It is because the world has rejected the knowledge of God that so many heinous and abominable sins are committed; and unless they repent thoroughly, destruction awaits them. – Proverbs 19:2; Hosea 4:1-3, 6.

To this end it is written; “Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding....” - Proverbs 4:5-8; Romans 10:1-3.

Friday March 10, 2017

Text: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” - Ephesians 5:15-17.

Comment: The primary focus of God's people should be to strive to please our Maker in all things by the practise of His righteousness. They should not be spiritually careless but watch

and pray always. (Ephesians 5:15-17, Luke 21:36) The expression “redeeming the time” is old English meaning, “making full use of the time”. These are perilous times; no one knows tomorrow. Therefore the opportunity we have to do the work of God now we must use it well. Solomon stated, “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.” - Ecclesiastes 9:12.

The will of God Almighty is that His children should trust in Him implicitly in all things. It is His will that they be content with such things as they have, moderate their worldly desires, avoid the pollutions that are in this evil world, and not be unnecessarily anxious over material things. (Hebrews 11:6; Philippians 4:5,6; 2 Corinthians 6:4-18) The sober words of St. Paul should be our constant watchword; “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep...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...” - Romans 13:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9.

Saturday March 11, 2017

Text: “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” - Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

Comment: This popular text highlights the standards which people in the world use to measure human attainment and which determine their status in society. These include secular knowledge as acquired in educational institutions; physical power or strength or ability to control and influence other people and their actions; and wealth in terms of cash and property. However, worldly wisdom, wealth or physical strength do not teach one about God and His purposes of creation. Riches come and go and even if they remain, one would die and leave them one day. It is sound knowledge and understanding of the word of God, that makes one to know God and His purposes of creation and therefore to look at things from a spiritual perspective. Jesus Christ stated, “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 6:27) That “meat” is the word of God that teaches us that God Almighty is the Creator and Possessor of the universe; that He had purposed to create a new heaven and a new earth where there would be no more wickedness; that sin would not continue indefinitely as He had set a time in which He would judge the world “by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” - Acts 17:31.

.

Sunday, March 12, 2017

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: It is God Almighty Who raises people in due time; it is therefore not wise for people to be hasty and to exalt themselves above measure. (See 1 Chronicles 29:12; 1 Samuel 2:6-8) Abigail the wife of Nabal demonstrated humility in good measure when, in contrast to her husband's haughty nature, she brought herself low to pacify David, thereby preventing him from shedding blood. (1 Samuel 25:2-42) When the husband died, she got married to David and stayed by him in his various travails. (1 Samuel 27:1-3; 1 Samuel 30:1-31) She was there when David was made king. - 2 Samuel 2:1-4.

The humility of the Canaanite woman as recorded in Matthew 15:22-29 was no doubt included in the gospel account for us to learn from. When our Lord Jesus Christ told her that her request for her daughter to be healed could not be granted because she was not a Jewess, she was not provoked to answer in a rough manner but pointed out that dogs still do eat from the crumbs that fall from the master's table. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." (Matthew 15:28) Indeed "By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life." - Proverbs 22:4.

Monday, March 13, 2107

Text: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." - 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

Comment: Faithfulness has to do with keeping one's pledge; maintaining allegiance; showing a strong sense of duty or responsibility; conscientiousness. It is a very important quality required of people of God. St. Paul counted himself "as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful". (1 Corinthians 7:25. See also 1 Timothy 1:12) By his conduct he showed example that a Christian should be reliable or trustworthy. Unfortunately however, some so-called Christians speak from both sides of their mouths. This is highly embarrassing and shameful to say the least. A Christian should speak the truth always, be able to keep proper record of and jealously guard monies and other items entrusted to his care. (Ephesians 4:25) God Almighty commended Moses saying, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." (Numbers 12:7) When, in the days of Jehoshaphat extensive repairs were being done on the temple, the Bible says the supervisors of the work "reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully". - 2 Kings 12:15

Serving God Almighty faithfully in His holy Mountain entails amongst other things resisting temptations of the devil and insisting on doing the will of God. This we should pray to be able to do daily. The Bible says that our Saviour Jesus Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works". - Titus 2:11-14.

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Text: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we

wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” - Ephesians 6:10-12.

Comment: Worshippers of God need courage and encouragement to be able to do His will to the end. God told Joshua the prophet, “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 1:7) When Gideon was to go to war against the Midianites, God directed him to secretly go to their camp in the night where he heard a soldier narrating a dream to his colleague, the meaning of which was that God had delivered them into his hand. When he heard this he took courage. - Judges 7:10-15.

The text for today gives the understanding that people of God should be well-girded with truth, have righteousness as breastplate and have faith as their shield because with it, they can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (Ephesians 6:13-16) We should always bear in mind the words of God through Azariah the son of Oded: “Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.” (2 Chronicles 15:7) Moreover, King David declared, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” - Psalm 27:13, 14.

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Text: “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.” - James 1:26.

Comment: As Christians we should know how to control our tongues. We should be open to advice, and should not be rude to people, especially elders. (Proverbs 15:22; Colossians 4:6; 1 Timothy 5:1, 2) Believers should see themselves as partners in progress, and avoid the temptation of talking down on those who happen to be of lower status in the world. (Romans 12:16) They should not be talkatives, or gossips, who have no qualms spreading even confidential matters to everybody who cares to listen. Some even slander others, that is, give themselves to “saying something false or malicious that damages somebody's reputation”.

Those who are flippant and try to win the friendship of others through tale-bearing, blackmail and backbiting, are knowingly or unknowingly destroying when they should be helping to build. (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; Galatians 2:18) Definitely, matters will come to a point where people, knowing that the person cannot keep secrets, will not entrust confidential matters to him. They will not even believe whatever he says. (Proverbs 20:19) So serious is the matter of slander that St. Paul laid down the rule that those who should be appointed deacons must “be grave, not doubletongued,...” and that their wives should also “be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things”. (1 Timothy 3:8, 11) He also stated that the behavior of the aged women should be “as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things”.- Titus 2:3.

Thursday, March 16, 2017

Text: "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.

Comment: The people of God must do only those things that will give glory to God. A short hand method for knowing what to do and what to avoid is given by St. Paul in the text for today: we should do only those things that are right before God and that would make people to praise Him. Our Saviour stated, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) We should not give cause for offence in any thing, so that non-believers will not use that as excuse to talk ill of the Church. - 2 Corinthians 6:3.

To this end, any circumstance that could pre-dispose one to immoral conduct should be avoided. As St. Paul said, we should "cut off occasion from them which desire occasion". (2 Corinthians 11:12) Any professed disciple of Christ who gives cause for people to see the Church in bad light is doing a great disservice to the work of God. St. Paul stated, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. - Romans 2:21-24.

Friday, March 17, 2017

Text: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." - 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Comment: To be steadfast is to be firm and unwavering in purpose, loyalty, or resolve, to be firmly fixed or constant. St. Paul wrote these encouraging words to the Christians at Corinth to the end that they may remain true to their faith and not allow their high ethical standards to be diluted by the immoral lifestyle of many of the people of Corinth at that time. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, St. Paul listed the things which could move them away from the faith to include tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword (death). (Romans 8:35) There are several social, economic and political factors that could make people in this age to be in distress. A number of times financial difficulties crop up, sometimes unexpectedly, throwing people into unimaginable crisis. Sicknesses and even deaths occur, plunging people into sorrow; sometimes deaths multiply among a people due to epidemics and wars. We should pray for faith, understanding and help from God to face the hour of tribulation. (Revelation 3:10; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13) However, tribulations should not prevent us from being fervent in the work of God, knowing that when we continue, abundant blessings await us. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before" said St. Peter,, "beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." - 2 Peter 3:17, 18.

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Text: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." - 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 2.

Comment: The word abound means "to overflow, be plentiful; be rich, ...". St. Paul in this text exhorts us to abound in the work of God, which means, that we should, by action and words, be engaged in promoting and projecting the truth about God's Kingdom of perfect peace and happiness. There is no doubt that when we so do, as Noah and his family were saved in the ark, so we shall be saved from the catastrophe which God will soon visit on the nations of the world. (Isaiah 2:2-5; Matthew 24:15, 16) In Revelation 14:6, 7 Apostle John wrote: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." The words of the angel contain the charge, or duty entrusted to Christians, particularly in this age. We should depart from evil in every shape or form and also give ourselves to imparting the accurate knowledge of God to those "who sigh and cry" over the abominations going on in the earth so that they may identify themselves with the truth and walk according to it.

Sunday, March 19, 2017

Text: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 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 14:21, 22.

Comment: Once a person makes the decision to be on the Lord's side and is serious with the faith, the devil marks him as an enemy that should be harassed, humiliated, and killed. In the face of tribulation, loneliness becomes one's companion. St. Paul stated in another letter, this time to the Corinthians, that when they were in Macedonia, they had no rest, "but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears". He disclosed however that God Almighty comforted them in an unusual way. (2 Corinthians 7:5, 6) On the night our Lord was to be arrested all the disciples forsook him and fled. (Mark 14:27, 50) In the heat of his agony that night, he prayed God Almighty to remove the cup from him, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done". The Bible says an angel appeared to him from heaven, to strengthen him. - Luke 22:42, 43.

When these temptations arise we need to pray God for strength to overcome the trial. Said St. Paul, "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.

Monday, March 20, 2017

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: Jesus Christ severally told us to follow him with our own crosses. This refers to the suffering and self-denial we must endure, without which we cannot live up to expectation in the Lord. To attain excellence in the work of God requires a lot of sacrifice. Under no circumstance must we allow human or worldly considerations to override the demands of Jesus Christ. If the wishes of parents or wife or relatives or whoever it may be, are in conflict with the requirements of Jesus Christ, we must at all times hold to the one of God even if this would offend parents and so on. (Matthew 10: 37, 38; Luke 14: 25-27) We must do away with the lusts of the flesh and make serious efforts to live a quiet and sober life, and above all, a life of holiness. St. Paul stated that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts". - Galatians 5:24.

In the case of Moses the Bible says, he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward". (Hebrews 11:25, 26) The Bible also says, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." - Psalm 126:6.

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

Text: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." - John 13:34, 35.

Comment: Apart from knowledge of the truth, Christians must love one another and thereby "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ". (Ephesians 4:15). Our Saviour stated clearly while on earth that the mark of true disciples is the love they have for one another. The love is demonstrated in practical terms by way of seeking the interest of one another, sharing in the joy and pains of our fellow believers; (Philippians 2:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:26); supplying the needs of another believer or assisting him when he is in trouble, (James 2: 14-17; 1 John 3:17,18); not doing any harmful or injurious thing to the other person but treating others as one would like to be treated. – Romans 13:8-10.

St. Paul stated: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." (Philippians 1:9,10) Some of us have a long way to go in terms of love for ourselves. If we have the truth but do not love one another, then we are incomplete. We must work on this and do to others as we would want them to do to us. (Matthew 7:12) St. Paul wrote, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you..." -1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13.

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Text: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." - Hebrews 12:12, 13.

Comment: We have a lot to learn from the words of Apostle Paul in his letter to the Hebrews in which he exhorted them to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" as stated in the text. The word "lift up" signifies not simply to elevate, but to "rectify" or set right again, restoring them to their proper state, so as to apply them to duty. The text is talking of a situation in which one is becoming weak in faith, is fearful and perhaps, even set on taking a compromising course. Such ones should be exhorted so as to be enlivened and be strong in their trust in the power of God Almighty to help them out of their troubles in His own due time. Speaking through Isaiah the prophet God Almighty stated, "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. See also 1 Thessalonians 5:14) In the days of Asa when he carried out extensive religious reforms for the Israelites to turn fully to the true God, Azariah the son of Oded, the prophet of God was sent to encourage him, he declared "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded." - 2 Chronicles 15:7.

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Text: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." - 1 Timothy 1:12, 13.

Comment: St. Paul said he was called into the ministry because God counted him faithful. It is one's heart condition, which must be right with God, and one's ability by God's grace to translate the vital beliefs and the high ideals of Christianity into practice that are of greater importance than our verbal confession of the faith. (James 2:22-26) Those who count themselves as true worshippers must believe that God called them because they love truth and righteousness by His grace. Those who say they believe in Jesus Christ and understand the will of God but do the opposite of what they claim to believe are hypocrites. A good number of the religious leaders of the Jews in the time of Christ were like that hence our Saviour stated that since they sat on 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 23:2-4) Those who are crafty and insincere in the practice of the faith will not see life. Scripture says, "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." - Job 8: 11-14.

Friday, March 24, 2017

Text: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." - Galatians 5:22, 23.

Comment: The charge to all worshippers of God is to love God Almighty and His son Jesus Christ and to love one another as themselves. (Mark 12:28-31) In the words of Apostle John, those who love God would go about to practise His laws, "for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law". (1 John 4:7; Romans 13:8) Those who have the spirit of God will be joyful by reason of the divine promises and the mighty works He does for His children who trust in Him. - Psalm 67:4; 33:21

Our Lord Jesus Christ blessed those who are peacemakers saying they shall be called the children of God indeed. (Matthew 5:9) God rewards His people and answers their prayers in His own due time. Until then they have to wait, while continuing to do the will of God. That is patience. "In your patience possess ye your souls" said our Saviour Jesus Christ in Luke 21:19. A Christian must have self-control so that he would not be easily carried away by food, drinks, money, sex and other bodily pleasures. (1 Timothy 3:8) Writing also on the qualities that disciples of Christ should cultivate, St. Peter stated, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." - 2 Peter 1:5-8.

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

"The Acceptable Year of the Lord" refers to the era in God's plan of salvation when He would permit His word, the unadulterated truth, of the gospel to be preached to the people so that they would worship Him in spirit and in truth and be reconciled to Him by His grace. How are we, as Christians living up to the demands of Christ? How diligent are we in proclaiming the truth to others? How Christ-like are we in our words and actions? These are some of the issues to which we shall address ourselves under this theme by the grace of God.

Saturday March 25, 2017

Text: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." - Isaiah 55:6, 7.

Comment: This charge for us to call upon God at the time He will hear us shows that although He is longsuffering, God Almighty will not tolerate the sins of men indefinitely. The purpose of giving sinners a long time before He acts is that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". (2 Peter 3:9) It is when they fail to make use of the opportunity given them to repent that God acts. The Almighty states, "To me belongeth

vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.” - Deuteronomy 32:35.

The Bible says that God “...knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust...” (Psalm 103:8-14) It is because He knows the extent of our imperfection, that He forgives those who repent and do not go back to their old ways. “Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.” (Ezekiel 18:27, 28) Let each person therefore prayerfully purge himself of sinful thoughts and actions and “return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”, as stated in the text for today.

Sunday, March 26, 2017

Text: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” - Isaiah 61:1, 2.

Comment: The prophecy stated in today's citation shows that God is concerned with the condition of the meek, the brokenhearted, those being tormented in captivity, those that mourn. That was the case with the Israelites in time of old when they sinned against God; He had pity on them in view of their travails despite their stubbornness. (Isaiah 63:9) Thus, from time to time God sent them deliverers. It is the devil who has no love for people and therefore wastes human lives at will. - John 8:44;10:10.

God is now proclaiming liberty to the nations who for long had been harassed and bruised by the devil and his agents. This is the time He has permitted His word to be preached to all mankind so that they will worship Him in spirit and in truth for their blessing and salvation by His grace. St. Paul, in his letter to the Christians at Rome, said God had given the Apostles primarily the ministry of reconciliation, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them”. He then prayed the believers to be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) Because of the love God has for us, we are therefore exhorted “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.

Monday, March 27, 2017

Text: . “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” - Mark 1:14, 15.

Comment: God Almighty had spoken in prophecy about Jesus Christ as the One through whom the door of faith would be opened to the gentiles, (Isaiah 49:6-8) Thus, when Christ started his

Ministry his emphasis was on the Kingdom of God which could be attained by those who agree to serve God through His only begotten son.

Some Jews did not listen to Christ at that time. They called him names, made jest of him and looked for opportunities to fault him and even kill him. Things got to a point that, he cursed Jerusalem, saying: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee...Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:37-39) This prophecy fulfilled in AD 70 when Titus the Roman general destroyed Jerusalem, killed many of the people and sent the remaining ones into exile.

This should teach each person to repent and serve God diligently now because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31) St. Paul states, "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." - Romans 11:21, 22.

Tuesday March 28, 2017

Text: "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." - John 12:35.

Comment: Our Lord Jesus Christ told the Jews in those days that he is the light of the entire world and that those who follow him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". (John 8:12) In the text for today, he makes it clear he would not be physically present with the Jews for long, adding that they should make full use of the opportunity they had to hear the truth in that in course of time the devil and his agents would introduce lots of lies to adulterate the truth. This fulfilled years later after the apostles and faithful disciples had died, when "gross darkness" covered the earth. – Isaiah 60:2.

However, God promised that in His due time, the truth shall spring up again in that He will send to the people true pastors who will feed the people with knowledge and understanding. (Psalm 85:11; Jeremiah 3:15) The time when God will destroy the world is fast approaching. He who is sleeping should wake up before the day of decision comes. Jesus Christ the Revelator warned, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." - Revelation 22:11, 12.

Wednesday, March 29, 2017

Text: "But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." - Matthew 13:29, 30.

Comment: The feast of harvest, also called the feast of weeks, was one of the festivals God commanded the Jews to keep. (Exodus 23:15-19; see also Deuteronomy 16:9-12) To all true Christians however, the harvest in time of old pointed to the end of the world, the age of spiritual harvest, when God Almighty would be gathering His sheep into His fold through the preaching of the gospel. (Luke 10:2) This work will continue until the end as Jesus Christ said, while explaining the parable of the wheat and tares. He declared, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:24-30, 41, 42) It is also evident that the devil deliberately plants wicked people in the work of God to cause confusion. Such will be destroyed by the Lord Himself in his own time. Each person has to ask himself what kind of plant he or she is in the work of God, wheat or tares? St. Peter declared "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" – 1 Peter 4:17.

Thursday, March 30, 2017

Text: "These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." - 1 Timothy 4:11, 12.

Comment: Apart from the saints, there are others, of the "other sheep" class, who, though not anointed, God is also using as Ministers, study leaders and elders, who "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints". (Jude 3) These are those who are in the front-line of the evangelism work. Among ministers used by God in the time of the early Church was Timothy. St. Paul charged him not to only preach but ensure he practised what he preached, thereby showing example to the believers. In other words, they should not be like the Scribes and Pharisees in time of old, who "say, and do not". (Matthew 23:1-3) Apostle James stated, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." - James 2:12.

Certainly, it is those who respond to the call of God, who do what they preach and hear and who play their part in spreading the word that God will be with and bless by His grace. Where such sincere, humble and faithful disciples are gathered together in truth, Jesus Christ will be in their midst - in other words, his attention will be focused on what they are doing. (Matthew 18:20; John 4:23,24; Ezekiel 20:40)The Bible says: "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them." - Psalm 145:18,19.

Friday, March 31, 2017

Text: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." - Isaiah 35:8

Comment: The way of life is a highway which God Almighty has established for His people to march on to salvation without being obstructed by hills or valleys. It is the King's highway and so it is the laws of the King that will obtain. It is for those who want to practise holiness. Sinners are welcome to that highway but they have to learn righteousness along the way; or else they will not be able to pass over it or get to the end of it. Those who regard themselves as wayfaring men or sojourners; those who are not proud but serve God as fools by submitting themselves completely to His direction, will find that the road is plain and straight, and that they will not err therein. (1 Corinthians 3:18,19; Zephaniah 2:1-3) "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." (Psalm 25:9) Writing on the faith of the patriarchs, St. Paul stated, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." - Hebrews 11:13-15.

Saturday, April 1, 2017

Text: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." - 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

Comment: St. Paul here stresses the fact that high moral conduct, in line with the laws of God, is a cardinal principle in the work of God. That the apostle said we should not allow ourselves to be deceived shows that some people have been misled to believe in lies. Fornication is sexual intercourse between two consenting adults who are not married to each other. Idolatry is idol or "image-worship or divine honour paid to any created object" the show of excessive admiration or love for somebody or something. God also hates, adultery, which is "voluntary sexual relations between a married person and somebody other than his or her spouse". An effeminate is a womanish and weak man, a man who lacks manly qualities. Those who abuse themselves with mankind are homosexuals; the word applies both to men who marry men or women who marry women. Also abhorred by God are the covetous, the people who have a strong desire to possess something that belongs to somebody else. To revile is to make a fierce or abusive verbal attack on somebody or something while extortion is "the crime of obtaining something such as money or information from somebody by using force, threats, or other unacceptable methods". Those who want to live eternally must avoid these sins. "Let no man deceive you with vain words" wrote Apostle Paul, "for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." - Ephesians 5:6.

Sunday April 2, 2017

Text: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn..." - Hosea 4:1-3.

Comment: It is unfortunate that some of those who have come to the knowledge of the truth take things for granted and are not careful to serve God in the way acceptable to Him. Any land where the people are given to iniquity will know no peace. In fact they will be a reproach in the comity of nations, a fact that should teach one and all that it is an evil thing and bitter, to have forsaken God Almighty. - Jeremiah 2:19; 7:16, 17.

Anyone who is addicted to any of the sins highlighted in the text for today and others not stated here, and wants to change should prayerfully seek divine help. (Matthew 21:21, 22) He should replace the negative thoughts with positive ones by acquiring the knowledge of God and exercising faith in it. (Matthew 15:15-20; Ecclesiastes 7:12; Romans 6:16) Then he should avoid situations and people who lure him into such undesirable behaviours. (Psalm 1:1) That means attending services and being with people of God regularly. Solomon the prophet says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Proverbs 13:20) He should determine not to fall into that sin again. David stated, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." - Proverbs 28:13, 14.

Monday, April 3, 2017

Text: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" - 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2.

Comment: The grace of God spoken by Apostle Paul in the text refers to the call to obtain salvation in God's Kingdom fully established through Jesus Christ, the grace of God personified. Those who have been given the opportunity to have life in God's Kingdom should make good use of the opportunity because they have one life to live. - Hebrews 9:27.

Some are not able to get the benefit of the grace of God because of the sins that easily beset them. They keep falling back into sin. (Hebrews 12:1-3) Some become faithless or compromise their faith due to the devil's persecutions or the quest for long life, money, power. St. Peter admonished us against being "led away with the error of the wicked" and thereby fall from our steadfastness. (2 Peter 3: 17) There are many who misuse their time and are tale-bearers, backbiters and busybodies in other men's matters. "In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." (Proverbs 14:23) St. Peter exhorts, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." - 1 Peter 1:15-17.

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

.Text: "...To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err

in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." - Psalm 95:7-11.

Comment: David the prophet warns us not to be like the Jews who provoked God several times in the wilderness for 40 years because of their stubbornness. Shortly after the Israelites left Egypt, all the congregation murmured against Moses asking him whether he brought them out of Egypt, to kill them and their children and cattle with thirst. (Exodus 17:1-4) At another time, they wept bitterly because they longed for the fish, cucumbers, melons, "and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick" they were having in Egypt. (Numbers 11:1-6) In Numbers chapter 13, we read that God sent 12 of the leaders of the Jews from the 12 tribes to see the promised land and report back to Moses and the elders of the Jews. When they returned, after 40 days, ten of them brought an evil report to the effect that they would not be able to defeat the inhabitants of the land in that they had giants among them. On hearing this, they decided to make for themselves captains to take them back to Egypt. God then declared that all of them who were 20 years and above would not reach the promised land. And that was how they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, a day for a year. See Number 14:20-24, 29, 33, 34. Obedience is required of every worshipper of God. To obey is better than sacrifice. - Jeremiah 7:22, 23; 1 Samuel 15:22, 23.

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Text; "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." - Hebrews 3:12, 13.

Comment: St. Paul here admonishes people of God not to be faithless but to encourage one another to serve God diligently now that they are alive. It was unbelief that was the undoing of many of the natural Jews. For instance, after the Israelites had waited awhile for Moses, they compelled Aaron to make a golden calf for them which they started worshipping as the "gods" which brought them out of the land of Egypt.

God Almighty was very angry with them and told Moses, "...I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." - Exodus 32:9,10

Moses interceded for them. But when he found that they were dancing naked even in full view of their enemies, he declared, "Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me." All the sons of Levi came to him. He ordered them to "slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour". (Exodus 32:26, 27) That was how about three thousand men died that day besides those who died from a plague sent by God. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." - Hebrews 3:14.

Thursday, April 6, 2017

Text: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." - Romans 2:4, 5.

Comment: Nobody should mistake the longsuffering of God for slackness or weakness as to be emboldened to continue in sin without any prick of conscience. The fact is that God will act in His due time and there will be none to deliver the wicked. (Psalm 50:22, 23) St. Paul asked, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." (Romans 6:1, 15) That one continues to exist and to succeed in one's evil schemes does not mean that God does not exist and that such one will continue to succeed. Solomon the prophet stated, that "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." He added that though a sinner does evil a hundred times it shall not be well with them. "neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God". - Ecclesiastes 8:11-13.

God told the Israelites in those days, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. ... 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 18:30-32.

Friday April 7, 2017

Text: "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger." - Zephaniah 2:1-3.

Comment: The Bible shows that the opportunity God has given for people of goodwill to hear the truth and be converted, will not remain open forever. Time will come when the door will be closed. It is therefore vital for us to enjoin one and all to seek the Lord now, making full use of the time because these are evil days. (Ephesians 5:16). Our Saviour gave a parable to warn us of the danger of making light of the call to salvation. He said a man made a feast and bade many to come. "And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come..." - Luke 14:16-21.

The citation from the book of Zephaniah is urging people of God to seek the Lord now by learning His word, practising righteousness, so as to be preserved in the day of destruction. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the

assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” - Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Saturday, April 8, 2017

Text: “When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” - Luke 13:25-27.

Comment: This stern warning by our Lord Jesus Christ is a clarion call on us all to make the most of the opportunity we now have by responding to the call of God, for time will come when it will be too late repent. We should be sowing in righteousness now so as to reap in mercy, knowing that “it is time to seek the Lord” (Hosea 10:12). When St. Paul went to Athens he told them that the times of ignorance God winked at “but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” - that is Jesus Christ, Whom the Father raised from the dead. (Acts 17:30,31) As the Saviour said, merely seeing the ministers of God preach is no substitute for actually responding to the call. There is no time to delay.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” declared King Solomon, “for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”. (Ecclesiastes 9:10) He added, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter” declared King Solomon, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” - Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.