

## **BE WISE AS SERPENTS AND HARMLESS AS DOVES (Continued)**

**Saturday, July 1, 2017**

**Text:** “And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.” - Genesis 20:1, 2.

**Comment:**When Abraham travelled to the land of Gerar. He, knowing the ungodly character of the people, told the people that his wife Sarah, was his sister. He did this because he knew that his wife was beautiful. Where people do not have any qualms about taking people's wives they could harm or kill him because of his wife. Just as he feared, Abimelech king of Gerar, sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and warned him that the woman was someone's wife, warning him to return the woman lest he dies. - Genesis 20:1-10.

It is instructive that Abimelech quickly complied with the command from God to return the wife of Abraham to him besides showering him with gifts in cash and in kind. While the high moral code of the people at that time in regard to adultery is in line with the law of God, we should bear in mind the fact that Abraham took steps as his reasoning could carry him, to avoid unnecessary danger, hence he introduced his wife as his sister.

The truth is that when people are given to doing the righteousness of God to the best of their abilities, God Almighty gives them the wisdom to know what to do in difficult situations and helps them out of difficulties by His grace. “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.

## **MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

The book of Revelation was written by Apostle John under the inspiration of God, while he was on exile in the island of Patmos. The letters to the seven Churches in Asia start with commendations of the good qualities of each congregation before corrections are given so that they may correct the lapses highlighted and walk in harmony with Christ. Evidently, while a number of believers were demonstrating strong faith in the face of persecutions, there were those who were compromising their faith by deviating from the standard laid down by Christ and the Apostles. The letters to the seven Churches show how closely Jesus Christ is watching over the Church and highlights the fact that when believers fail to correct themselves by means of the judgments written in the Scriptures, God Almighty, through Jesus Christ intervenes to set things in order and cleanse His Church.

## **Sunday, July 2, 2017**

**Text:** "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." - Revelation 2:2.

**Comment:** It is comforting, even reassuring to know that God Almighty takes account of our works of faith by His grace. In the Scriptures, St. Paul declares that "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 6:9,10) At the time the book of Revelations was written, the reigning emperor (Domitian) had decreed that he should be referred to as "Lord and God". That meant that faithful Christians who insisted that only God Almighty and Jesus Christ should be worshipped were subjected to extreme persecutions. There was therefore the need for them to be exhorted to continue in the faith in the face of tribulation and to be commended for their patience in steadily doing the will of God until God will remove the source of their troubles from the earth. That the Church at Ephesus had been standing up to false prophets and opposing and exposing them was also commended. It is required of true Christians to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints". (Jude 3; Galatians 1:8) It goes without saying therefore that believers must be well grounded in the faith by being knowledgeable and courageous so that they can counter falsehood and evil. We must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them" - Ephesians 5:11.

## **Monday, July 3, 2017**

**Text:** "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." - Revelation 2:3, 4.

**Comment:** Our Lord Jesus Christ continues with the word of praise for the patience of the Church at Ephesus. The devil will bring troubles on the Church, as individuals and as a body, so as to sway them from the true faith. But when true worshipers of God show determination to remain on the Lord's side, He will help them to overcome whatever challenges they face. (Matthew 24:12, 13) That we have difficulties from time to time does not mean that God is not with us or is not seeing us but that He wants us to go through them to build up our faith and understanding in the way of life. Apostle James wrote "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," (James 1:2-4) The letter further states, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" - Revelations 2:4,5

That some believers had backslided is evident from the statement that some had left their first love, that is, they were not exhibiting the same degree of faith, knowledge and good works as when they were newly converted. We must pray continually to be able to carry on the faith until the end. - Hebrews 10:38-39.

## **Tuesday, July 4, 2017**

**Text:** “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” – Revelation 2:9

**Comment:** Genuine faith is demonstrated, not in periods of ease and plenty, but in times of crisis, perils, tribulation and poverty. The widow of Zarephath had just enough food for herself and her son and yet she had the faith to give to Elijah the prophet who had spoken to her in the name of the Lord. Because of her faith, she and her household did not lack throughout the period of famine. (1 Kings 17:8-16) We should also recall that it was the coins donated by the poor widow into the temple treasury that was commented by Christ. who noted that “this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” (Mark 12:43-44) The Christians at Corinth did not have much by way of material wealth but as St. Paul said, “in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” (2 Corinthians 8:1, 2) Those who exercise strong faith in God and keep striving to please their Maker, who oppose the enemies of God and all unrighteousness at all times, are rich towards God even though they may be relatively poor. Solomon stated: “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.” - Proverbs 13:7. See also James 2:5.

## **Wednesday, July 5, 2017**

**Text:** “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” -Revelation 2:10.

**Comment:** The exhortation to the Church at Smyrna regarding the persecutions that may meet them “for ten days”, that is throughout their lives, is meant to strengthen them to hold fast and not be swayed as to doubt whether God is with them or not. In the case of the disciples in Smyrna some of them would be thrown into prison and some would be killed for refusing to deny their faith. The text for the day spotlights the fact that the difficulties being experienced by the believers are at the instance of the “adversary the devil, who as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”. (1 Peter 5:8) The devil will do everything to frighten the convert into thinking of going back to his old ways. But the tribulations are allowed by God to test or try the genuineness of the faith of the believer. Readiness to continue in the way of God despite odds means that the person is firm in his belief in God and understands the essence of his call which is to learn righteousness and obtain eternal life in the end. St. Peter had to exhort us thus, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of

Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."- 1 Peter 4:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

#### **Thursday, July 6, 2017**

**Text:** "And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." - Revelation 2:12, 13.

**Comment:** "The sword with two edges" refers to the word of God which judges both the speaker and the hearers. (Ephesians 6:17) St. Paul stated, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) The disciples at Pergamos, were praised for their steadfastness and for not denying the faith. This indicates that they had met several hard conditions which would have made those who were weak in faith to backslide but they did not.

We should refuse, by the grace of God, to be swayed by the devil's onslaughts, knowing that in the end we shall have the reward of eternal life. (1 Thessalonians 3:3, 4) Another point is that the Church of Pergamos was situated where Satan's seat is, that is, where he was most active (at that time). Historical accounts of the city show that it was well-known as a centre of worship of various gods. The firm resolve not to compromise with the perversions that surround us is the cardinal principle of every true Christian. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." - Philippians 2:15.

#### **Friday, July 7, 2017**

**Text:** "And unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." - Revelation 2:18,19.

**Comment:** A number of godly virtues are highlighted in the text for today for us to cultivate and nurture by the grace of God. One of them is charity. In his famous treatise in 1 Corinthians 13, St. Paul said that charity, the spiritual love of God, is the greatest virtue. Charity is the sum total of all a person has to do in the way of righteousness. Another quality mentioned is faith, which is strong belief or trust in God, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". (Hebrews 11:5,6) Patience means the quality or habit of enduring quietly under pain or annoyance; or the state of being able to await events without worry or complaint. Jesus Christ said: "In

your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21: 19) Rather than diminishing in godliness, as some do over time, the Church should be growing in the practice of righteousness. Unfortunately, the Church at Thyatira was allowing the woman called Jezebel, "which calleth herself a prophetess" to lure men into committing fornication and idolatry at Thyatira, as stated in verse 20, This is as it should be; we should be improving in standard of righteousness every day. The Bible says, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."- Proverbs 4:18.

## **DIALOGUE**

The Encarta Dictionary has these definitions for the word dialogue: "a formal discussion or negotiation, especially between opposing sides in a political or international contest"; "a conversation: talk of any kind between two or more people". Dialogue has been an effective means used by civilized people in preventing conflicts, conflagration or war. This process involves a meeting of minds by parties involved in negotiations to bring an end to hostilities.

### **Saturday, July 8, 2017**

**Text:** "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." - Genesis 18:24-26.

**Comment:** Because of their unbearable atrocities, God Almighty sent angels to move against the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. (See Romans 1:26-28) However, one of the angels, identified as the 'Lord' thought it wise to reveal their mission to Abraham, whose nephew, Lot, with his family, inhabited one of the cities. Lot was totally opposed to their homosexual conduct. (2 Peter 2:7, 8) It was out of concern for Lot that Abraham asked the angel saying: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23) In this emotive and sobering dialogue, Abraham kept reducing the number of people for whose sake the cities could be saved from 50 at first, to only 10 at the sixth time. (Genesis 18:32) It is instructive that though the angel is far superior to Abraham in everything, yet he still bore with him in answering his questions. Abraham on his part was humble and used soft words to talk to the angel. For dialogue to be effective, the atmosphere must be right. King Solomon truly says: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger". (Proverbs 15:1) As people of God, it is very important that we discuss among ourselves whenever there are issues and come to mutual understanding and settlement. The Bible exhorts that communication from us should be "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers". - Ephesians 4:29.

### **Sunday, July 9, 2017**

**Text:** “And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.” – Joshua 2:14.

**Comment:** After the death of Moses, God chose Joshua, the son of Nun as the next leader of the Israelites. In this thrilling dialogue between a wise and courageous woman, Rahab, the harlot, and the two men Joshua sent from the city of Shittim for espionage activities at Jericho, they swore in the name of God Almighty that she would come to no harm as long as she kept the matter of their visit to the city, secret. She kept to her words. Earlier on, she had not only refused to produce the men, but had gone ahead to hide them in her roof among the flax. (Joshua 2: 9-11) In olden times, this is called pledging which means to put down one's life for a friend or neighbour. In reference to the Jewish spies, one Bible scholar says: “It was prudent to make her life depend on her secrecy; had it been otherwise she might have been tempted to give information, not only concerning the spies, but concerning the designs of the Israelites. But her life being at stake, added to every other motive, she kept the secret for the sake of her own personal safety and that of all her relatives”. Rahab's, hospitality, courage, wit, faith in God and in His people brought favour to her. Also, people of God should be faithful by keeping to their promises. In the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “... let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”. - Matthew 5:37.

### **Monday, July 10, 2017**

**Text:** “And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place” - Genesis 18:32, 33.

**Comment:** In his dialogue with the angel, Abraham was consistent and unrelenting in his appeals for mercy by the LORD. The Angel of God displayed the virtue of patience as he was not worried by Abraham's persistent appeals for the cities to be spared if some righteous people could be found there. (Genesis 18:23, 24) In this dialogue, we also learn the virtue of mercy from the LORD Who promised Abraham to spare the cities for the sake of at least ten righteous people. (Genesis 18:32) Experience has shown that difficult matters can be resolved through dialogue in a calm atmosphere. In this master-servant discourse, there was no intimidation by the angel on Abraham. Leaders in the world and those entrusted with leadership in the way of God are expected to be humble and listen to the complaints of the people assigned in their care. The quality of intercession was seen in Moses, the prophet of God, who prayed for his people to be delivered from the scourge of serpents which God allowed to bite them because of their faithlessness as they travelled to the Promised Land. For us to get the favour of God we must be patient and wait for His due time to answer us. Our Lord Jesus Christ “spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”. Drawing from the lesson of the parable he stated, “And shall not God

avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? - Luke 18:1, 7, 8.

### **Tuesday, July 11, 2017**

**Text:** “And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” – 2 Kings 5:13.

**Comment:** Dialogue is a persuasive way of getting the other party to agree to one's line of thought. In the narrative from which today's quotation is drawn, Naaman, captain of the host of Syria, having been told that Elisha had the power to heal him, came down to Israel to be cured of his leprosy. But instead of coming out to effect the cure as Naaman expected, Elisha sent him a message that he should go and dip himself in River Jordan seven times. The record in the Scriptures shows that Naaman felt insulted and in his angry mood, he saddled his mule to return to Damascus. (Verses 11,12) It was James, the Apostle of Christ who stated: “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20) But his dutiful servants who would not want their master to continue to live with the disease mustered the bravery to engage him in a sober conversation, throwing in a mild rebuke as well, as in the text above. Persuaded by their superior argument, the cocky Naaman, stripped himself of his pride and dipped himself in the river as instructed “and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean”. (Verse 14) King Solomon was inspired by God to say: “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.” (Proverbs 11:2) Also, Scriptures say: “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” – Proverbs 11:14.

### **Wednesday, July 12, 2017**

**Text:** “And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.” – 1 Kings 12:10.

**Comment:** When Rehoboam was about to be installed as king of Israel, the people appealed to him to reduce their burdens in terms of heavy taxation and tedious labour. Rehoboam was prudent to ask for time to meditate over their demands and possibly make consultations. He met the grave and experienced men of his father's time who counselled him to accede to their demands and speak kindly to them as that would make them serve him willingly throughout his reign. (2 Chronicles 10:7) But Rehoboam, unfortunately displayed lack of wisdom in that “he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him” (verse 8), as stated in the text for today. The consequence of his arrogance and insolence was a split in the kingdom as 10 out of the 12 tribes revolted against him and made Jeroboam their king. (1 Kings 12:20) One should accept godly

counsel, not the advice that suits one's fancy. God Almighty, speaking through King Solomon said, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil". (Proverbs 3:5-7) King Solomon also said, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger". (Proverbs 15:1) We should pray for wisdom and courage to accept godly counsel at all times.

#### **Thursday, July 13, 2017**

**Text:** "And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God" – Exodus 18:17-19.

**Comment:** Jethro was the father of Zipporah, the wife of Moses, who bore him two sons - Gershom and Eliezer. Jethro was concerned for the health of Moses, his son-in-law, when he discovered that he sat all day attending to the complaints of his people. He knew the management style adopted by Moses was cumbersome. Therefore, Jethro spared no effort in engaging Moses in a conversation that would relieve him of the pressure. Moses, the Bible says, "hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. He chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens". (verses 24,25) All those who occupy leadership positions should borrow a leaf from Moses who accepted the wise counsel of Jethro. Effective governance involves the delegation of duties to people, as no ruler can do it all alone. Leadership goes with a high degree of humility, honesty, trust, self-denial and so on. God Almighty, speaking to David the Prophet said: "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God". (2 Samuel 23:3) Leaders should be broad-minded to accommodate the expectations of the people on whose mandate their authority is established. The Holy Bible says, "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established." – Proverbs 15:22.

#### **Friday, July 14, 2017**

**Text:** "Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness" – Numbers 14:15,16.

**Comment:** Following the evil report brought by 10 of the 12 spies Joshua sent into the land of Canaan, many of the people murmured against God and their leaders saying it would have been better for them to have died in Egypt. (verses 2,3) In the heightening hue and cry, the efforts of Joshua and Caleb to abate their wrath proved futile. In response to their lack of faith, the Almighty God wanted to destroy them. But the ensuing dialogue between the Almighty Father and Moses, His prophet, averted what

would have been a calamity for the rebellious children of Israel, in that Moses pleaded, "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word". (Verses 19, 20) Consequently, the Almighty God did not destroy the people at once but said He would do so gradually such that none of those who were 20 years and above, who were guilty of murmuring against Him, would reach the land of Canaan. Moses showed himself as a good leader who interceded for His people despite the unjustifiable anger the people had against him. The story also pointedly highlights the dangers that befall people who had known God when they lack faith which our Saviour said, could move mountains. Scripture says "Jesus answered and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." - Matthew 21:21, 22.

### **Saturday, July 15, 2017**

**Text:** "Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send" – 1 Samuel 25:25.

**Comment:** While David was in the wilderness, hiding from King Saul, he treated the herdsmen of Nabal kindly, as if the flock were his own. Thus, when he heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, at which time a lot of feasting took place, David sent 10 of his servants to Nabal requesting for some victuals for their upkeep, But Nabal's response was rude and did not show appreciation of the services he had rendered to him. (1 Samuel 25:10,11) The remarks irritated David, who instantly got his hosts ready for a showdown with Nabal. When Abigail, the good-natured wife and clear opposite of her husband heard of the matter, she made haste to placate David with kind words: "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid". (verse 24) King Solomon says that a soft answer turns away wrath. (Proverbs 15:1) After listening to Abigail, David put back his sword into its sheath, thanked her for her initiative and wisdom. (verses 32,33) The Bible states: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Proverbs 18:21). Truth is, in time of conflict, someone should seize the initiative for peace. A meeting of minds, right choice of words, serene moods are always vital tools for peace and reconciliation.

### **Sunday, July 16, 2017**

**Text:** "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." – Matthew 18:15,16.

**Comment:** Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ used the text under reference to set the stage for dialogue as a means of crisis resolution between two or more people. This

significant admonition by the Good Master, to his disciples, is necessary for all Christians who desire to live harmoniously with people. It is indeed true that the Scripture has given indication that, "it is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!". (Luke 17:1) And it is also true that when these offences arise they should be resolved amicably. This underscores the importance of dialogue between people. Dr. Henry Brandt in an online article Escaping Difficult Situations says: "You can either have a wonderful time underneath your skin, or a miserable time underneath your skin, and it's all up to you. The question is: Do you want to experience true peace, or are you more content with being angry, with bearing a grudge, with complaining, with being cranky?" To interface with each other is the basis of King Solomon's admonition when he said: "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another." (Proverbs 25:9) Dialogue makes room for peace and for bygones to be bygones. Theories on conflict management reveal that fairness, concession, apologies, retractions and forgiveness are essentials for offences to recede. See Ephesians 4:31, 32.

### **Monday, July 17, 2017**

**Text:** "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 12:47, 48.

**Comment:** While our Lord Jesus Christ was teaching and explaining the word of God to the people, a message from somebody elicited a sharp rebuke from him as stated in the text for today. This reaction from our Saviour Christ shows that we should uphold the truth at all times, and not allow fleshly concerns to dilute our dedication to the work of God. (Luke 14:26) Another occasion which underscores the primacy of the work of God over material concerns was when Martha complained of her sister's apparent disinterestedness in caring for Christ. (Luke 10:40) But the answer of Christ was very clear, "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (verses 41,42) On another occasion he declared, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34. Compare Job 23:12) We should learn to always give priority to spiritual matters. Christ stated, "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

### **Tuesday, July 18, 2017**

**Text:** "And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." – Matthew 8:6-8.

**Comment:** The exemplary faith shown by the centurion as stated in today's citation, stemmed from his conviction that Jesus Christ was the son of God. Earlier, the

centurion had stated, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented". Yet when the Lord offered to accompany him to his house to heal him, the man declined, saying that he was a sinner and believing that by merely making a pronouncement from a distance, the servant would be cured. This unassuming officer, in control of over a hundred foot soldiers, knew that wherever and whatever the master said would have profound effect in the life of his ward. Christ said, "... blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed". And St. Paul defined faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". (Hebrews 11:1) He also said, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) The lesson we learn from this story includes the compassion which the centurion had for the soldier placed under his care, and the faith he demonstrated that with God all things are possible. We should pray to be among those, who because of their faith, would be in the kingdom of God with the ancient worthies by the grace of God. - Matthew 8:11-13.

### **Wednesday, July 19, 2017**

**Text:** "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." – Acts 5:38, 39.

**Comment:** In those days, when the apostles were spreading the word of God in Jerusalem, some of the elders of the people, the Pharisees and Sadducees, directed them not to preach with the name of Christ in their localities. But the apostles defied the order which was given at the instance of Satan. They insisted that, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29-31) The Jewish leaders saw this open defiance as an affront and therefore hatched a plot to put these disciples of Christ to death in order to stop the spread of the everlasting gospel. But from among them rose a respected lawyer named Gamaliel, who reminded them of past teachers who ended as monumental failures and cautioned them to exercise restraint in how they dealt "with these men". (Acts 5:40). That Dr. Gamaliel asked the apostles to be put aside for him to dialogue with the Jewish elders prevented them from shedding blood. He presented undeniable facts of history and warned them against acting rashly out of anger, thereby running the risk of fighting against God. Dialogue must be based on facts, reason, with primacy being placed on the laws of God. We should be bold in doing the work of God knowing that He would protect us from the powers of the enemy, no matter how powerful they may seem to be. That God delivered the apostles is proof that He is indeed mighty to save. – Isaiah 45:21, 22; John 10:28-30

### **Thursday, July 20, 2017**

**Text:** "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." – 1 Samuel 1:16, 17.

**Comment:** This is the emotion-laden but stirring account of a childless woman called Hannah, one of the two wives of Elkanah, who went into the temple of God to pray. She was in “bitterness of soul”, weeping sore before the LORD. The divine record states, “And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.” (Verse 11) As she made her supplication, Eli the priest who was present in the temple, meticulously observed that there was no sound from Hannah, just movement of her lips. The priest misjudged the situation and charged her with drunkenness. (Verse 14) But when it dawned on him that Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, was waiting on the LORD for the fruit of the womb, he blessed her saying, “Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him” (verse 17) God Almighty was merciful to Hannah, as was the case with Rachel in that He remembered her and opened her womb. (1 Samuel 1:19, 20; compare Genesis 30:22 ) Our Saviour admonished, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” - Matthew 21:22.

## **JEHOVAH, A PRESENT HELP IN TIME OF TROUBLE**

The Almighty God – JEHOVAH – is the only place of safety and trust for His people. This fact is clearly attested to by His Supreme power and complete control over the entire forces in the universe. By reason of our implicit trust that God Almighty is “our strong hold in the day of trouble”, (Nahum 1:7), we, as His faithful worshippers, need not be unduly anxious or worried about how to sort out the troubles or numerous problems we face in life knowing that He is always there to handle them for us. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” - Jeremiah 29:11; Philipians 4:6,7.

**Friday, July 21, 2017**

**Text:** “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” – Psalm 46:1.

**Comment:** Many people today do not know that JEHOVAH is the sacred name of God Almighty, and that they should call on Him when they are in trouble. Rather, they look to their wealth, military strength, spiritual powers, false gods, false prophets, and so on, contrary to the Bible. (Deuteronomy 18: 10-12; Psalm 33:16-19) Some even look to mortal man for help (Isaiah 31:1, 30:1-3). The Bible enjoins: “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” – Psalm 146:3, 4; Compare Jeremiah 17:5,6,7,8.

Speaking through Isaiah the prophet the Almighty God said: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” (Isaiah 45:22) Also, King Solomon declared “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” (Proverb 18:10) As a high fortress or place of refuge, a

tower is a symbol of protection and safety. Those who serve God in truth and do His will enjoy His protection at all times in His Holy Organization which is his secret place or pavilion. David the prophet stated: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock." – Psalm 27:5.

### **Saturday, July 22, 2017**

**Text:** "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble: and he knoweth them that trust in him." – Nahum 1:7

**Comment:** The lovingkindness or benevolence of God Almighty towards mankind is emphasized in the text under reference. As a loving Father, He is compassionate, pitiful, merciful, and sympathetic (Psalm 103:8-14; Isaiah 63:7-9). He does not take pleasure or have delight in seeing anyone suffer or die but that they should turn to Him and live. – Ezekiel 18:23,32; 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9.

A "stronghold" is a fortified place, a place of safety where people run to for refuge in time of distress or danger. God Almighty "is greater than all", hence He could protect His people under any circumstances. (John 10:29; Genesis 17:1; Jeremiah 32: 27, 17) God Almighty takes account of the faith of His true worshippers and will show Himself strong on their behalf always so that they, like David the Prophet, can readily declare: "But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge." (Psalm 94:22) The person who expects the protection of God must also be given to the doing of righteousness as enjoined in the Holy Scriptures: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" - 1 Peter 3:12,13.

### **Sunday, July 23, 2017**

**Text:** "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." – Psalm 91: 1

**Comment:** This passage is an assurance and an encouragement to the people of God to always exercise implicit faith in His power to protect, guide, sustain and deliver His people at all times and in every situation. The "secret place" here mentioned is God's Organization or kingdom on earth, symbolically called Mountain, where the sheep of God will flee to for refuge and protection in this last day by God's grace. Such ones will be under the protection of God which David the prophet meant when he said: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shall thou trust." (Psalm 91: 4) As one who had suffered diverse tribulations and had escaped death so many times, not by his wisdom or powers in battle, but by the mercy of God on him, King David said further: "I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God ; in him will I trust." – Psalm 91:2.

Stressing the fact that it is only those who diligently seek the Lord wholeheartedly that get His help in the time of trouble, the Psalmist stated: "Because thou hast made the

LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angel charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” – Psalm 91:9-11; 2 Chronicles 15:2; James 4:8.

### **Monday, July 24, 2017**

**Text:** “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” – Joel 2:32.

**Comment:** The name of the LORD referred to in the prophecy is JEHOVAH. Those who call on Him with faith are assured of deliverance and salvation by His grace. (Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 26:3, 4) The Almighty God dwells in Zion in the Heaven of heavens. From His dwelling place, God beholds the children of men and delivers anyone who exercises faith in Him or calls on Him in time of trouble. (Psalm 11:4; 48:2)

During the reign of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, he and his people were surrounded by their enemies, but they were saved because they trusted in God. (2 Chronicles 20:15-30) Goliath, a giant of the Philistines, came up in those days to mouth blasphemies against God. But young David told him, saying: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” - 1 Samuel 17:38-47

From “the cloud of witnesses” we have before us, let us always bear in mind that the Almighty God JEHOVAH is our stronghold in the day of trouble. Isaiah the prophet was inspired to state: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” – Isaiah 26:3, 4.

### **Tuesday, July 25, 2017**

**Text:** “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth”. – Psalm 121: 1, 2.

**Comment:** Wholehearted belief or faith and trust in the Almightyness of God Who is ever present to help His children is clearly expressed in the above inspired words of King David, a prophet of God. A hill is a natural elevation of the earth's surface; but the hill in this context symbolizes God's Organisation, the capital of which is Mount Zion in heaven. (Psalm 48:2) As people look up to see the top of the hill, so the people of God must look up to God in heaven for help in terms of provisions, protection, guidance and salvation. This calls for faith, knowledge and understanding. Our trust should not be in our wealth, academic achievements, power, or in mortal man but in God Almighty.

That mankind yearns for safety or deliverance from the dangers, harm or risk to which he is constantly exposed is common knowledge. The dangers include accidents (on road, air and sea), diseases, natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, hurricanes, bush fires,

drought, etc), as well as wars, armed robbery, terrorism, kidnapping, assassination, etc. Jeremiah the prophet declared: “The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD”. (Lamentations 3:24-26) With this understanding therefore, we should continue to exercise faith and confidence or trust in Him as our stronghold and wait quietly for His deliverance from the troubles of this life so as to have joy and peace in our hearts always by His grace.

### **Wednesday, July 26, 2017**

**Text:** “And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he shall shew to you to day : for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.” – Exodus 14:13.

**Comment:** At different times and in diverse manners the Almighty God repeatedly impressed it on His people that there is no way to get help in time of trouble than to trust in Him. A ready instance is that of the natural Jews shortly after their departure from the land of Egypt as mentioned in today's text. (Exodus 14: 10-12) Another example is that of the children of Judah under King Jehoshaphat, at the time three hostile nations pitched battle against them, causing great fright and anxiety in the hearts of the people of God. In answer to their prayers, the spirit of God came on Jahaziel the son of Zecharia, and he said to the people: “Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's .... stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed .... For the LORD will be with you.” (2 Chronicles 20:5-17) In the two instances cited, both Pharaoh and the three enemy nations with their hosts were woefully defeated by the Almighty God. (Exodus 14:21 -31; 15:1-21; 2 Chron. 20:20-30) His help for His people in such instances should teach us to remain calm in times of crises and to trust firmly in Him, no matter how extreme the circumstance may look like.

### **Thursday, July 27, 2017**

**Text:** “Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” – Daniel 3:29.

**Comment:** An astonished King Nebuchadnezzar made this declaration when he saw the power of the Almighty God in the miraculous manner He delivered His servants, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who trusted in Him. The three faithful Jews had been thrown into a fiery furnace at the command of the king, for refusing to bow down to an image against their true faith. King Nebuchadnezzar openly admitted that by this deliverance, the Almighty God “have changed the king's word” hence the new decree as in the text under reference.

The Almighty God uses His angels to give His people protection and deliverance from their troubles at all times, like as He did with the three faithful Jews. King

Nebuchadnezzar himself declared: "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:25) A similar example is that of Daniel the Prophet who was thrown into the lion's den but the angel of God closed the mouth of the lions and he was not harmed or devoured. (Daniel 6:20-28, Hebrews 11:33) We should therefore believe that the Almighty God can deliver us from any situation, according to His will. The Psalmist declared: "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." – Psalm 34:7.

### **Friday, July 28, 2017**

**Text:** "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." – Psalm 34:19.

**Comment:** Indeed, the woes or troubles of man from which he needs deliverance from the Almighty God – JEHOVAH – are many. One phenomenon that reminds us of our insufficiency and dependence on Him is ill-health. Sin, from which man needs deliverance, is responsible for the health problem man is facing today, hence Jesus Christ told the man who was disabled whom he healed in the temple, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" - John 5: 14.

Ahaziah, King of Israel fell sick, but instead of seeking help from JEHOVAH, a present help in time of trouble, he consulted with the god of Ekron, as a result of which he died. (2 Kings 1:1-17) But when Hezekiah, King of Judah was "sick unto death", he earnestly sought the face of God for help and was healed. – Isaiah 38.

Ill-health came as a result of imperfection. But God Almighty will help those who have implicit faith in Him and are prayerful. Whatever medication we take, we should believe and trust that it is by Jehovah's power that the drugs will be effective – Jeremiah 17: 14; 32: 27, 17; Psalm 103:3.

### **Saturday, July 29, 2017**

**Text:** "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." – James 1:6, 7.

**Comment:** A strong and unwavering belief in the Almightyness of God is faith. Nobody should expect any help from God if he lacks faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". (Hebrews 11:1) In the text for today, Apostle James enjoins the children of God to make requests based on strong faith in Him, "nothing wavering". The Almighty God whose Holy Name is JEHOVAH, is ever ready to help us, but He hates faithlessness or disbelief in His ability to save. He made a clarion call to His people to exercise faith in Him at all times so as to be protected from the assaults of the devil, as it is written : "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: For I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22) People of God look to Him by exercising faith in His promises and by doing His will. Such ones will be guarded by Him as He will continue "to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose

heart is perfect toward him". (2 Chronicles 16:9 See also Psalm 18:1-3) David the prophet further states, "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." - Psalm 9:9, 10.

### **Sunday, July 30, 2017**

**Text:** "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." – 1 Corinthians 10:11.

**Comment:** Remembering and recalling of miraculous acts of God in ancient times do build and strengthen the faith of worshippers in the Almightyness of our Creator. The understanding should be built on the premise that, "since God did such things in the past, there is every reason to believe He could still do so today".

Some occasions when God Almighty showed Himself to be "a stronghold in the day of trouble" to His worshippers include: His miraculous deliverance of King Hezekiah and his people during the time that Senacherib, King of Assyria, besieged Jerusalem, (Isaiah 37:33-38), and His Wonderful deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, that made the King to declare: "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Daniel 3:1-7; 16-18; 28, 29) Also, God's deliverance for Paul and Silas who had been imprisoned on false charges resulting in the conversion of the jailer and his family. (Acts. 16:16-34) From these instances, it is clear that God Almighty is willing and able to save us from any adversity, as long as we show faith in Him. Truly, "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." – Nahum 1:7.

### **Monday, July 31, 2017**

**Text:** "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." – Job 5:6, 7.

**Comment:** As imperfect or mortal beings, trouble and afflictions are what we have all reason to expect in this world of sin under the influence of Satan the devil. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble", declared Job the prophet. (Job 14:1) Right from the time man fell from the favour of God in the Garden of Eden and the sentence of death was passed upon him, he has not known peace. (Genesis 3:16-19) These troubles have become more intense in this time known as the last days, an era which started in 1914 when the devil was driven down to this earth and which event was signaled by the First World War of 1914 – 1918. (Revelation 12:7-12; 2 Timothy 3:13) The hard economic, political and social conditions in the world will continue to get worse and worse until the time of the great tribulation when the devil and his hosts will be destroyed by God through Jesus Christ, Jehovah's 'battle axe and weapon of war'. Only those who have remained faithful to God will be saved to inherit the New World – God's Kingdom fully set up by His grace, as it is written, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and

at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book". - Daniel 12:1; Proverbs 11: 4, Jeremiah 51: 20-23.

### **Tuesday, August 1, 2017**

**Text:** "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." – Jeremiah 32:17.

**Comment:** In revealing Himself to Abraham, God told him "..... I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect". (Genesis 17:1) Because He is Almighty, our heavenly Father Whose Name alone is JEHOVAH is able to bring His promises to fulfillment. There is no circumstance in which He cannot save us from. Truly, He is the God of Salvation. (Psalm 68: 20) In Jeremiah 32:27, God Himself stated: "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?"

The miraculous acts of God that demonstrated His Power to save were written to teach us vital lessons of faith, patience, obedience and other qualities that He requires from His worshippers. (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). God declared through Isaiah the prophet, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." – Isaiah 46:9-11

### **Wednesday, August 2, 2017**

**Text:** "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength." – Isaiah 26:3, 4.

**Comment:** To continue to draw strength and sustenance from the Almighty God, our Strong hold and Helper in the time of trouble, His worshippers should maintain their trust in Him always for He alone can give protection in this evil world and in the world to come, everlasting life. As the Sole Giver and Sustainer of life, the King of Eternity enjoins us thus: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." – Isaiah 45:22.

Those who are protected by God from the assaults of the devil, would of course be in peace, a condition in which one is free from fears, anxieties or worries. (In this evil world however, one can only have relative, not perfect peace.) Albeit, those who put their trust in JEHOVAH, in whatever situation they find themselves, will have settled minds. They shall not be afraid of sudden fear, or be overly anxious over anything. The Bible says: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." –Psalm 119:165; Proverbs 3:25,26.

The LORD God, JEHOVAH, has the ability to save or deliver His people at all times. We should not be worried by the fury of the adversary and his forces, visible and invisible.

Rather, we should continue in the service of God no matter what happens by way of wars, natural disasters, tumults, commotions or any kind of danger, for our God is mighty to save! – Exodus 15:11, Job 5:8,9.

### **Thursday, August 3, 2017**

**Text:** “In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.” – Psalm 62:7

**Comment:** The text for today attests to the fact that the Almighty God, JEHOVAH, is the Saviour and strength of His people. (Psalm 18:2, 3) The Psalmist refers to Him as God of “my salvation,” “the rock of my strength” and “my refuge”. Based on accurate knowledge and faith, this is also true for all children of God of all ages, hence he added: “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.” (Psalm 62:8) King David stresses the fact that God Almighty is the hope of His people and that they should cast their burdens on Him at all times through prayer. He will not fail them or forsake them. This however requires faith, humility, patience, understanding and so on. We should pray for strength to withstand temptations and other troubles from the archenemy of God and man – Satan the devil. St. Peter exhorted, “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.

In the service of God, certain unfavourable situations may be allowed by Him to meet us as trials of our faith, after which He will manifest His power by delivering us “out of them all”. - Psalm 34:19; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

### **SEE THEN THAT YE WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY**

The word circumspect according to good dictionaries means “careful to consider all circumstances and possible consequences, (before acting); taking everything into account; cautious, done after much thought.” The importance of vigilance or careful planning had long ago being highlighted by St. Peter when he stated, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” - 1 Peter 5:8, 9.

### **Friday, August 4, 2017**

**Text:** “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. – Ephesians 5:15, 16.

**Comment:** It is unfortunate that some people do not have the patience or experience to reflect deeply before they do things. Thus, they act impetuously or impulsively with confidence on the basis of limited knowledge. The consequences are usually adversely felt in decisions about our relationship with God, intra-personal and inter-personal relationships, careers, marriage, business, etc.

The world is sinking deeper and deeper into sin and wickedness. The Bible says: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." - 1 John 5:19; See also 2 Timothy 3:13.

Worshippers of God must exercise extreme vigilance spiritually so as not to walk "as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind". (Ephesians 4:17) They should study the Bible regularly to understand the signs of the times and give themselves to prayerful meditations in order to be blessed and saved by God in the end by His grace.

The text for today emphasizes the need for us to use our time well and not for frivolities or evils. In the words of VanHorn, "To the philosopher, time is one of the fundamental quantities. To the average man, time has something to do with dinner." The Bible in Basic English renders Ephesians 5:16 thus: "making good use of the time, because the days are evil." Thus, we should avail ourselves of the opportunity we have now by doing right and the Almighty God will bless us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Saturday, August 5, 2017**

**Text:** "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." – Daniel 12:10.

**Comment:** Daniel the prophet under divine inspiration prophetically highlighted the character of people in this age of the end of the world. If there is any time when people must be circumspect in all things, it is now.

The text for today also highlights the fact that wickedness will be on the increase in these last days. Apostle Paul said: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13) To use Adam Clark's paraphrase of 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Saint Paul prophesied that people will be selfish, studious of their own interest, and regardless of the welfare of all others. They will be covetous. Lovers of money, (because of the influence which riches can procure); boasters, that is vain glorious, self-assuming, valuing themselves beyond all others, they will be proud, (that is, people who like to show off their importance); blasphemers, who speak impiously of God and sacred things; disobedient to parents, headstrong children, whom their parents cannot persuade; unthankful, in others words, persons who think they have a right to the services of all men, yet feel no obligation, and consequently no gratitude for good done to them; and unholy, that is without piety; having no reverence for God.

Therefore, we should be wise and not allow these vices and wickedness to be seen in us. Everyone must endeavour to live righteously and godly and remain unspotted in this evil world by God's grace. – James 1:27; 1 John 2:15-17; Titus 2:11-13.

## **Sunday, August 6, 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:** In recent times, a number of people and groups who indulge in nefarious and sinful acts have been vociferous in their campaign to reverse public perception about their activities. Some of them even claim to be Christians or Christian groups. They entice the people by promising them wealth, power, success, sexual attractiveness, etc. True Christians should not be carried away by the rosy pictures being painted by these ungodly people or groups.

Apostle Paul in the text for today is warning worshippers of God to disassociate themselves from any ungodly union or association no matter how gratifying they seem to appear. Such gratification being temporary and superficial, only leads to shame and death. The Bible says: “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death”. – Romans 6:20-22. See also John 3:16-21.

Saint Paul said: “... 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.

King Solomon warned: “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” – Proverbs 4:14,15.

## **Monday, August 7, 2017**

**Text:** “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body”. – 1 Corinthians 6:18.

**Comment:** Worshippers of God are charged in today's text to be circumspect in the area of sexual immorality, (adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, etc.) A number of people are easily enticed into committing immoral acts while some have adopted immorality as a way of life. The sin of fornication is one of the sins which made God to destroy the Jews in ancient times. “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” - 1 Corinthians 10:8.

The sin of sexual immorality is a grievous one in the sight of God. The Holy Bible warns: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” – 1 Corinthians 6:15-18.

The essence of the gospel message is to transform the people from their ungodly inclinations and associations to the truth and righteousness of Christ. Saint Paul declared: "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, August 8, 2017**

**Text:** "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." – Matthew 10:16.

**Comment:** Jesus Christ, knowing the character of the ungodly in this age, gave the warning which is our citation for today. The people of God are harmless but the people of the world are cold, hostile and cruel. Serpents are emblems of wisdom and cunning. (Compare Genesis 3:1) It is said that no animal equals them in the rapidity and skill with which they escape danger. While being harmless, like doves, which are emblems of innocence, we should be alert to the dangers that surround us. In the words of Apostle Paul we should be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." – Philippians 2:15.

But how many people pay heed to this admonition by Jesus Christ as stated in Matthew 10:16? Just a few persons. Many people have no regard for name or for religious obligations and so feel at liberty to say and do what they please without wisdom and circumspection. In whatever sphere of human endeavour Christians find themselves, they should continue to do what is right and exercise wisdom and discretion. (Titus 2:11-14) Saint Paul exhorts that we should "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." - Colossians 4:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 4.

### **Wednesday, August 9, 2017**

**Text:** "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." – Deuteronomy 4:6.

**Comment:** The Almighty God gave this charge through His servant Moses to the children of Israel which also applies to the children of God who are now living in this age of the end of the world. God Almighty through His prophets and the apostles, caused His will, purpose or desire to be clearly expressed in the Book of books – the Holy Bible.

The Holy Bible contains records of important events, which served as types of future things that God would do and which were designed to teach great lessons for the spiritual benefit of Christians in these last days – the most turbulent age in human history. – Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11 & 2 Peter 1: 19-21.

Therefore, it is pertinent for worshippers of God to study and have a good understanding of the word of God as contained in the Holy Bible. This will enable such

ones keep and put into practice what they read. Herein lies the wisdom and understanding of the word of God which will be manifest in the eyes of the people. The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. - 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

#### **Thursday, August 10, 2017**

**Text:** "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." – Psalm 40:8.

**Comment:** The doing of the will of God should be the focus of every true worshipper of God. It calls for the keeping of His commandments and working according to His purpose. The declaration in the text for today which was made by King David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, was prophetic and typical of Jesus Christ's determination to fulfill his mission on earth as purposed by the Almighty Father. – Hebrews 10:7-10.

While Jesus Christ was on earth, he lived up to expectation, and his resolution to do his Father's will was manifest both in utterances and deeds. He said: "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 5:30. See also John 6:35-38.

Following the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in keeping with the text for today, we should meditate on the laws of God in our heart, derive pleasure in doing His will. Early in his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ took up a portion of the book of Isaiah which reads: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." - Luke 4:18-21.

#### **Friday, August 11, 2017**

**Text:** "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." – John 4:34.

**Comment:** Throughout the life of Jesus Christ on earth he was at all times subject or obedient to his Father, the Almighty God. Even at the critical time of his crucifixion – that moment of supreme test of fidelity – he maintained his subjection to the will of the Father. Under the grip of human feelings consequent upon the persecutions of the wicked, Jesus prayed: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt..." – Matthew 26:38-42.

Christians are buffeted with various ills at the instance of Satan the devil. Therefore, any worshipper of God, who does not submit himself to the will of God like Jesus Christ, cannot be a true Christian. As a matter of fact, it will be impossible to attain the required degree of excellence in the practice of righteousness without following the example of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who attached great importance to the doing of his Father's will despite the persecutions he underwent. (John 8:29,31,32,36; Matthew 5:20; Hebrews 12:1-3) Likewise, we also should commit ourselves to doing the will of God and not our own will.

Speaking about Jesus Christ, Saint Peter declared: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." – 1 Peter 2:23. See also Hebrews 12:1-3.

### **Saturday, August 12, 2017**

**Text:** "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." – Romans 10:1-2.

**Comment:** It is because many people who claim to be worshipping God today do not really understand His will that they have set at naught His commandments and trampled upon the principles of Christianity. Many of the priests and pastors who ought to lead the people in the path of truth, having been overreached by Satan, do neglect their spiritual duties and are so spineless that they have become men-pleasers. There are also instances of some professed Christians who undergo pagan rites and ceremonies just to get some financial advantages to enable them obtain certain titles and fame in the society.

Such people practice their own righteousness instead of that of God. They are like the natural Jews who were enthusiastic in the service of God but did not know His will. Hence, Saint Paul added: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. – Romans 10:3.

True Christians should distance themselves from any fetish, immoral and other ungodly acts. Saint Paul warned: "Can light consort with darkness? Can Christ agree with Belial, or a believer join hands with an unbeliever? Can there be a compact between the temple of God and the idols of the heathen?" – 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, New English Bible.

### **Sunday, August 13, 2017**

**Text:** "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.

**Comment:** No one should deceive himself as to think that whatever he does in the name of God Almighty and Jesus Christ receives Their blessing. One may take high sounding religious titles and appellations yet be far from the truth as contained in the Holy Bible. What is important, as Jesus Christ said, is the doing of the will of the Almighty Father. Jesus Christ knew what false prophets and nominal Christians will do in his name simply to gain the praise of men and to deceive the gullible. Hence, he made the declaration in the text for today.

True Christians should beware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15) and pray not to become victims of who are after their own belly and not after the salvation of the sheep of God. They also need prayers not to fall prey to cheats and all sorts of deceivers, who because of covetousness, shall “with feigned words make merchandise” of them in that the judgments of such cheats “now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”. (2 Peter 2:3) Anyone who ignores this warning and remains in the enclave of false prophets will be destroyed with such false prophets. – Isaiah 9:16; Jeremiah 5:30,31; Matthew 15:12-14.

### **Monday, August 14, 2017**

**Text:** “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” – 1 John 5:14.

**Comment:** It is clearly stated in the Bible that our prayers cannot be answered unless they are said according to the will of God. Prayer, which is a solemn petition to the Almighty God, expresses our insufficiency and dependency on the Almightyness of God. - 2 Corinthians 3:5,6.

It is an indisputable fact of the Scriptures that God Almighty answers prayers. The psalmist declared: “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed: O thou that hearest prayer unto thee shall all flesh come.” (Psalm 65:1,2) The prayers of true worshippers of God are efficacious to the extent that they are said according to the will of God, as indicated in the text for today. Such prayers must be said “through Jesus Christ” (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5,6) Christians must avoid pharisaical manner of prayer, repetitious or vainglorious prayers, as Christ warned in Matthew 6:5-8. Absolute faith and patience must be shown no matter the circumstances or situation. There is no problem too difficult for God to solve. (Jeremiah 32:27,17; Matthew 21:21,22) We should have the confidence that our prayers will be answered according to the will of God. Saint John added: “And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. 1 John 5:15. See also 1 John 3:22.

### **Tuesday, August 15, 2017**

**Text:** “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”. – Ephesians 5:17,18.

**Comment:** It is of utmost necessity that a Christian should, in the first instance, know the will of God. Knowing the will of God and doing it is a condition to entering His kingdom fully established. This, as a matter of fact, emphasizes the vital importance of knowledge. Indeed, King Solomon stated: “Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good...” - Proverbs 19:2; see also Hosea 4:6.

The Holy Bible serves as a guide for Christians in determining what the will of God is. King David said: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” – Psalm 119:105. See also Proverbs 6:23.

Apostle Paul in the text for today also warns against the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages without discretion and moderation. “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.” (Proverbs 23:20, 21) Christians should show good example to others in all they do and say by the grace of God. Apostle John stated, “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 2:16, 17. See also Romans 12:1, 2.

### **Wednesday, August 16, 2017**

**Text:** “And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth. – Exodus 23:13.

**Comment:** Since the onset of the last days, the world is sinking more and more in the abyss of sin. Men love to gratify their own lusts, more than to please God by doing their honest and lawful duty. – John 3:19-21.

Thus, the text today warns us to be alert and spiritually cautious so as not to corrupt ourselves in any shape or form by God's grace. Some people compromise their faith by serving several gods while some people's god is their belly, their carnal desires, “Whose end is destruction... and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Philippians 3:19) Apostle Paul, exhorting Christians on the need to shun worldliness and to do the will of God, stated: “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 12:1, 2; Jeremiah 10:2.

Jesus Christ warned: “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.

### **Thursday, August 17, 2017**

**Text:** “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” – Matthew 12:50.

**Comment:** During his first advent, Jesus Christ, on a certain occasion, was preaching to some people when his mother and brethren sought to have audience with him and to interrupt his speech. But Jesus Christ answered them saying, “...Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 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 12:46-50.

Jesus Christ in the text under reference laid emphasis on the doing of the will of God than any fleshly or carnal consideration. His earthly mother (Mary) and his brethren, in seeking to interrupt him, did not show any understanding at this point. Jesus Christ, made it clear that relationships in the work of God are not based on fleshly considerations but on spiritual qualities: those who serve God in Truth and righteousness are those who are truly related, in the Lord. (Compare Luke 11:27,28) Christians should learn from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who by his action condemned nepotism, tribalism, favouritism in our affairs especially in the Church of God.

## **INTEGRITY**

integrity is defined by the Advanced Oxford Learners Dictionary as: “The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles”. Some synonyms for integrity include: Uprightness, trustworthiness, faithfulness, truthfulness, sincerity, etc. It can be seen that integrity incorporates the basic elements that make for good Christian character. A Christian who lacks integrity can rightly be regarded as a nominal Christian. For this reason, it is of great necessity that all Christians should be persons of integrity as was the case with the ancient worthies, the apostles and the early Christians. More importantly, the Almighty God Jehovah will save us in His Kingdom when we have integrity and hold to it to the end by His grace - as we shall see in the texts and comments that make up this theme.

### **Friday, August 18, 2017**

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

**Comment:** Integrity should be seen like a dress that all Christians need to wear every day because it facilitates the practice of holiness and the fear of God. The man or woman with integrity fears God and keeps His commandments with relative ease by God's grace. God Almighty and Jesus Christ have delight in those who live in integrity. Concerning Job, God Almighty, addressing Satan, asked: “...Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? and still he holdest fast his integrity....” (Job 2:3) In the same vein, Jesus Christ in the text for today challenged his disciples thus: “Ye are the salt of the earth”. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines “the salt of the earth” as “a very good and honest person that you can always depend on”. This is what Christ expects of all his followers. That we live in this corrupting and defiling world is no excuse not to have integrity, but rather we should affect the world with righteousness, truthfulness, integrity, fear of God, etc. (Philippians 2:15) The man Lot was a good

example to follow in this respect. Concerning him St. Peter wrote that God “delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” - 2 Peter 2:6-8.

### **Saturday, August 19, 2017**

**Text:** “And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.” - 1 Kings 9:4, 5.

**Comment:** God Almighty desires to see His children live in integrity, as was the case with Job. He found a similar quality in King David whom He described as a man after His heart. God Almighty therefore charged Solomon his son to be of the same character, as in the text for today. As Christians, we should constantly seek for ways of pleasing Our Maker, Jehovah, as our Lord Jesus Christ did. (John 8:29) Therefore, being a Christian with integrity is one of the sure ways of pleasing God. The Bible specifically encourages us to do that which is right always so as to enjoy Jehovah's protection. St. Peter admonishes us thus, “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.” He then added, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1 Peter 3:10-13) Not to heed to this admonition exposes us to satan's manipulations and harm, and also putting our salvation in jeopardy, God forbid! Rev 22:11, 12.

### **Sunday, August 20, 2017**

**Text:** “Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity...” - Psalm 26:1,11.

**Comment:** Despite the ugly moment of adultery involving Bathsheba, this great king and prophet (David) repented thoroughly and became a teacher and preacher of integrity, all the days of his life. Learning from what his eyes did to him, in staring at Bathsheba, he prayed: “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.” (Psalm 119:37) He also declared: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes....” (Psalm 101:3) God Almighty also used Job to teach men, to avoid looking at women in a manner that will lead to sin. He declared: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think of a maid? Doth not he see my ways and count all mine steps. If mine step has turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes.....If mine heart have been deceived by a woman or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door; then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this is a heinous crime, yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges”. (Job

31:1,4,7,9-11. Read also Isa 33:15) The lesson from the life of King David is that it is never too late to turn a new leaf and become a man or woman, boy or girl with integrity by the grace of God.

### **Monday, August 21, 2017**

**Text:** "My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." - Job 27:4, 5.

**Comment:** The things we do in secret, believing that no other person will find out, and the things we think, say and do when faced with difficulties or hardships are the best barometers for measuring the integrity of men and women. Many succumb or fail in these situations. King Solomon said: "If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10) Job the Prophet maintained his integrity all through his temptations and trials as stated in the text for today. This is an example for all Christians to emulate, especially in this perilous times, we now live in. It is noteworthy that Job had deep insight and understanding of his tribulations as shown in his response to the tempting question from his wife when he replied her, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10) Furthermore, he encouraged himself with the following words, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:10-12) These attitudes and philosophical approaches of Job can be adopted by us Christians when we find ourselves faced with tribulations and temptations.

### **Tuesday, August 22, 2017**

**Text:** "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him." - Proverbs 20:7.

**Comment:** The behaviours of children are a combination of traits, inherited from parents, and experiences from their environments. A trait is defined by the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary as "a particular quality in one's personality". Integrity is a quality that can be handed down by parents to children. Children naturally ape their parents instinctively and so a parent who speaks and behaves uprightly will most likely have children who do same by God's grace. (Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 1:5) As taught in the text for today, such children are blessed greatly by God, as they receive not only blessings for their personal integrity, but also receive overflow of blessings from their parents' integrity. A ready example is that of a disciple called Timothy "the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess...but his father was a Greek". (Acts 16:1) St. Paul said Timothy had strong faith in God like his mother, as he wrote in the following verse, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." (2 Timothy 1:5) As parents, living in integrity should be seen therefore as an investment in our children, besides the personal blessings, good name, honour and favours accruable from God and men. – Proverbs 22:1; 28:6.

### **Wednesday, August 23, 2017**

**Text:** "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." - Acts 6:3.

**Comment:** As the early Church grew and materials were shared among the needy, murmuring came from some of the Greek Christians against some Hebrew Christians, that their widows were being discriminated against. It was to address this issue that the Apostles made the request to the general Church in the text for today. We can see from this instance that whenever it matters in a Church or Country or community or business etc, when positive results are crucial, when it is crucial to deliver, men of integrity or "men of honest report" are often sought out for. The Bible says, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" (Proverbs 20:6) Indeed, integrity brings promotion and recognition from God and men. The case of Joseph readily comes to mind, he was a young man who maintained his integrity against all odds and in the long run was promoted by Pharaoh. (Genesis 39:7-9; 41: 40-42) What about the case of Hanani, the brother of Nehemiah. He was singled out of the crowd and made "the ruler of the palace, (and given) charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man and feared God above many". - Nehemiah 7:2, parenthesis ours.

### **Thursday, August 24, 2017**

**Text:** 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly". - Psalm 84: 11.

**Comment:** Integrity brings children of God closer to Him and He does not fail to shower blessings on them, even though they may suffer sometimes for holding unto their integrity. A striking example was Job. He maintained his integrity till the end in the face of myriads of trials and temptations - and for this God blessed him. The divine record states, "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found sofair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days." (Job 42:12-17. See also James 5:10,11) God has promised all His worshippers assorted blessings on the condition of being and remaining faithful or upright or with integrity. (Deuteronomy 30:19; 28:1-14) The failure of many of Jehovah's worshippers to meet the standard of integrity and faithfulness expected of him holds up blessings from God. - Isaiah 59:1, 2.

### **Friday, August 25, 2017**

**Text:** "Thou has a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." - Revelation 3:4.

**Comment:** To find favour with God, Christians must detach themselves from the corruption and defilement multiplying in the world today. This was the case with a few in the Church at Sardis, who, as the New Living Bible puts it “haven't soiled their garment with the world's filth”. (Revelation 3:4) Notice that the majority did contrary, a situation that is widespread today. Let us remember that the Bible warns us not to follow a multitude to do evil. (Exodus 23:2) .Unfortunately today, it is becoming more and more difficult to distinguish many Christians from non-Christians, judging from their way of speaking and behaving. This is because the Churches have given themselves to worldliness to a large degree. As time is running out, Christians need to take sober stock of themselves and be firm in living the life of Christ to the shame of the devil and his agents. (Romans 13:11-14) We should all like Job tell ourselves: “Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go...” (Job 27:5) We should take a cue also from Lot who found himself in a depraved world as we find ourselves today but refused to be like them'; rather he was 'vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.” – 2 Peter 2:7.

### **Saturday, August 26, 2017**

**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:** Being those entrusted with the word of God, the servants of God are required to speak the word faithfully. (Jeremiah 23:28) All other assignments given them by God they must discharge exactly as commanded. This did Moses for which God Almighty said “My servant Moses ... is faithful in all mine house”. (Numbers 12:7)

St. Paul also commended Timothy (Timotheus), whom he called “my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord”. (1 Corinthians 4:17) If we happen to be employees, we should not cheat or steal or tell lies or offer half-hearted services or be hypocritical etc. Rather, we should do our work with goodwill “as to the Lord and not to men”. (Ephesians 6:7) This, when we do, even though we receive salaries from our employers, we shall receive an extra reward from God, as Apostle Paul explained further: “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether it be bond or free”. (Ephesians 6:8). When entrusted with money, let us keep it or use it faithfully, when asked to purchase things for our employers or even for the Church, let us not inflate figures on receipts, but resist the temptation from traders who sometimes ask “what amount do you want written on the receipt”. Solomon warned: “Bread of deceit is sweet to a man: but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel”. – Proverbs 20:17.

### **Sunday, August 27, 2017**

**Text:** “Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they were faithful,” - 2 Kings 12:15

**Comment:** Men and women of integrity are often known over time in neighbourhoods, in communities, in workplaces, in government services, in Churches, etc. Such people are often called upon to take up special tasks or occupy higher offices to save ugly

situations and restore confidence. It was king Solomon who said: “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule”. (Proverbs 12:24) He also declared: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”. (Proverbs 29:2) This was the case with the men King Jehoash picked to receive money collected for the repair of the temple, a job earlier assigned to other people by the priests which they could not do because they were unfaithful. As Christians, our colleagues, employers, customers, clients, brothers and sisters should be able to have trust in us. The world is in dire need of men and women of integrity, and if this can not be found in us as Christians then we have failed. Christ stated: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” (Matthew 5:13) A renowned American businessman, Warren Buffet, once said: “Look for three things in a person – Intelligence, energy and integrity. If you cannot find the third do not bother looking for the other two”. Mark you he emphasized INTEGRITY.

### **Monday, August 28, 2017**

**Text:** “And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?”.- Genesis 25:32.

**Comment:** When Esau asked Jacob for some of his red pottage, Jacob asked him to sell his birthright to him. Esau did not hesitate, but rationalized his forfeiture of his birthright in a way that clearly shows that satisfying his need for food was more important than worrying about right of the first born, as stated in the text for today. He “despised his birthright”. (Genesis 25:34) In spite of Esau's knowledge of the value and status of the firstborn he “...for a morsel of meat sold his birthright”. (Hebrews 12:16) His lack of integrity was also evident in his failure to acknowledge before his father the forfeiture of his birthright, (Genesis 27:36) and also his inability to contain his passion for food. It is known that humans can live without food for up to about two weeks. But Esau, just because of few hours of hunger mortgaged his cherished status. Oh, what a pity! At the crucial moment when he was to inherit the blessing due to the first born, he desperately sought to regain it but failed. Concerning him Apostle Paul stated: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” - Hebrews 12:16, 17.

### **Tuesday, August 29, 2017**

**Text:** “Providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”. - 2 Corinthians 8:21.

**Comment:** Cultivating integrity is a must-do for all Christians, if we must be taken seriously. And the motive must be genuine, springing from the heart, and not to deceive others and worm one's way into gaining favours or gifts. What we say and do in the open should align with the things we say and do in secret. St. Paul said we should serve or work “...not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of

the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ". (Colossians 3:22-24) As Christians, we have a responsibility to truly represent Christ before the people we deal with in all social settings. (1 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:7) Christ charged all Christians in the following words: "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) Our consciences must be clear as to what we do and say. And Apostle Paul who was a great servant of God, endowed with enviable integrity and industry declared: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men". - Acts 24:16.

### **Wednesday, August 30, 2017**

**Text:** "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." - 2 Corinthians 2:17.

**Comment:** It is no longer news that many false prophets, presenting themselves as "men of God" are on the loose in most parts of the world, fulfilling Bible prophecies. (Matthew 24:11, 24) Today, the Truth (which consists of doctrines, judgments, instructions and divine promises) have been corrupted. As there are so many false doctrines today, so also are there many ungodly justifications and Scriptural misinterpretations that the simple and ungodly use today as excuses to continue in immoralities and other sinful indulgencies. This is part of Satan's overall plan to make people of the world, even Christians, to be careless, impenitent and indifferent to righteousness and holiness. Unfortunately, because people love darkness rather than light, they follow these false prophets because they preach what they love to hear. There is no firm rebuke of sin. They say to the "seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits." (Isaiah 30:10; 2 Timothy 4:3,4) The word of God is pure. (Psalm 12:6; 19:8). Ministers of God must handle it with sincerity and fear. They must not use it for other ulterior motives, as some do today. (2 Peter 2:1-3) Like the Apostles, they should be honest and always speak the unadulterated word of God, even if it will offend some. St. Paul stated "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." - Galatians 1:9-11.

### **Thursday, August 31, 2017**

**Text:** "And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart: for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffer I thee not to touch her". - Genesis 20:6.

**Comment:** When Abraham moved to Gerar, the King Abimelech wanted to marry Sarah whom Abraham made Abimelech to believe was his sister, an impression Sarah also confirmed. God however, directed Abimelech to release her to her husband after he took her into his palace that night. Really Abimelech was an innocent man, with genuine intentions. (Genesis 20:1-5). King Solomon declared: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." (Proverbs 11:3) God truly delights in the upright or one with integrity, to the extent that He even helps them to maintain their integrity by keeping such persons from falling into sin. "There

hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” declared Apostle Paul, “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) King David the Psalmist stated: “And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.” - Psalm 41:12.

A man or woman of integrity avoids sin and any thing that is evil. He or she is always careful in all his dealings with his fellow humans; male, female, strong or weak, rich or poor, etc. Romans 15:1-3.

## **REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE**

One significant event that happened in the time of old that has been recorded to serve as a guide and as a warning to those who have undertaken to serve God Almighty is the story of Lot's wife. So outstanding was it as an object lesson to worshippers of God that Jesus Christ underscored it with a terse admonition “Remember Lot's Wife.” - Luke 17: 32.

Who was she? What things did she do that brought her into the purview of Christ's teachings? What lessons are there to learn from this woman whose character has forever acquired the badge of infamy? All of these and lots more are for our consideration under this theme: REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE.

### **Friday, September 1, 2017**

**Text:** “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.” - 2 Peter 2:6.

**Comment:** The profound benefit of the virtue of obedience, the just recompense for disobedience and the transient nature of the pleasures of sin are highlighted in the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Holy Bible is replete with several instances of the manifestation of God's love, care, providence and deliverance on His children. Why then would a just, caring and loving Father turn His indignation on a people, to the point of destroying them from off the face of the earth? Moses the prophet under inspiration stated that God Almighty is a God of “judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he...” (Deuteronomy 32: 4,) That there was not found up to ten righteous souls in an entire nation is indicative of how far they had fallen in the pit of unrighteousness. Unfortunately, homosexuality for which God punished the people of Sodom in those days has become acceptable practice in a growing number of countries around the world. Thus, despite “knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death” some people in the world “not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”. - Romans 1:32.

Let us therefore examine ourselves if we are on the Lord's side through the practice of righteousness so that "...we should not be condemned with the world". - 1 Corinthians 11: 31, 32.

### **Saturday, September 2, 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?" - Romans 2:4.

**Comment:** No doubt, Lot's wife partook of the favour of God on Abraham, she being the wife of Abraham's nephew. Unfortunately, she treated with levity God's wonderful provision of a place of safety for her from Sodom's inferno. Having brought them out of the city, the angel gave a definite instruction, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." (Genesis 19:17) But she disobeyed the order by looking back and so lost her life. The Bible enjoins us to be very careful so as not to allow anything to make us lose in the race of life, "lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." (Hebrews 12:15) Having seen what happened to Lot's wife, those who still deliberately disobey the word of God today will receive harder punishment because they have had several warnings by example and precept.

Apostle Paul exhorted us thus, "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.

### **Sunday, September 3, 2017**

**Text:** "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.

**Comment:** There is great gain in obeying the commandments of God. The sacred volume contains numerous accounts which show that God does not tolerate disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6) Having been forewarned of the dire consequence of flouting the instruction handed the family by the two angels, it was not a hard thing for Lot's wife to have simply obeyed, rather than allow herself to be carried away by the deceitfulness of material possessions. Indeed, the "commandments of God are not grievous." - 1 John 5:3.

In contrast, Lot and his two daughters were steadfast in their obedience to God's warning. Certainly, it is an easy thing for God to give them even more than they lost. Truly, so long as there is life, there is hope. (Ecclesiastes 9:4) For this show of obedience, they made it to the mountain, safely by the grace of God. The Bible says: "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." - Proverbs 11: 19.

Having made us free moral agents, we must bear the consequences of our choices, good or bad. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing" declared Moses the prophet, "therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." - Deuteronomy 30:19.

### **Monday, September 4, 2017**

**Text:** "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." - Psalm 106:3.

**Comment:** The need for persistence or continuity in the practice of God's righteousness cannot be overstated. (2 Peter 3:18) In his epistle to the Christians at Rome, St. Paul enjoined us to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord". (1 Corinthians 15:58) From the story of Lot's wife, we learn that a single mistake can attract fatal consequences. The knowledge of the eternal happiness that awaits us in the Kingdom of God fully set up here on earth, should instill in us the determination to serve God faithfully till the end. Nothing the devil brings in our way by means of perils, persecutions, trials, etc, should make us to lose our focus as was the case with the wife of Lot. Rather, we are expected to labour "to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief". (Hebrews 4:11, 3:12) Lot's wife failed to realize that the wealth she was leaving behind was nothing compared to her life: "yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." - Job 2:4.

And our Saviour asked, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36) We should pray to God not to be like Lot's wife who chose the pleasures of a sin-ridden world and material acquisitions above life and at the end, suffered the consequence of her misplaced priority.

### **Tuesday, September 5, 2017**

**Text:** "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." - Matthew 6: 21.

**Comment:** It is no sin for one to desire the good things of life. However, the knowledge of the fact that true and lasting blessings descend from above inspires the believer to always make the Almighty God his priority, seeking first "the kingdom of God, and (the practice of) his righteousness" so that all things shall be added unto him. (Matthew 6:33) To do otherwise would amount to being in opposition to God, in that "friendship of the world is enmity with God" and whosoever "will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God". - James 4:4

W.H. Griffith Thomas wrote: "A ship in the water is perfectly right, but water in the ship would be perfectly wrong. The Christian in the world is right and necessary, but the world in the Christian is wrong and disastrous." (Genesis: A Devotional Commentary, pg. 174)

Although Lot's wife started the race to flee Sodom with her husband and her two daughters, she did not reach the end because her heart was still behind; she had to steal one more gaze at the city; and she "became a pillar of salt". (Genesis 19:26).

We should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal". - Matthew 6: 20.

### **Wednesday, September 6, 2017**

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

**Comment:** In his detailed exposition on faith, Apostle Paul defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". In the verse following, he posited that it was by reason of this noble virtue that the patriarchs and matriarchs of old have been recorded in the positive side of history. - Hebrews 11:1,2.

That Lot's wife literally looked back in gross violation of the stern warning given her, as well as the consequence she was quite aware of, was an evidence of disbelief. Having put her hand to the plough, she looked back, and rendered herself undeserving of Jehovah's favour. - Luke 9:62.

With the fire already consuming the city as foretold by the angels, faith in God's providence could have propelled her to believe that God Who made them to prosper in a strange land would be able also to replenish what had been lost. We should recall that Job the prophet lost everything but "the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning". - Job 42:12.

It is expected of us therefore to set our hearts on things spiritual, prioritizing the progress of theocracy over material pursuits. (Hebrews 2: 1-3) In the words of Bildad, "If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, (early) and make thy supplication to the Almighty", "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." - Job 8:5, 7.

### **Thursday, September 7, 2017**

**Text:** "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." - Matthew 24:12, 13.

**Comment:** That we have been called to inherit eternal life does not mean that the race of salvation would be a jolly and rosy one all the way. There would be moments of anguish, unhappiness and misery. Scripture says that we are "not only to believe on him (Jesus Christ), but also to suffer for his sake". (Philippians 1:29. See also Acts 14:22) This suffering may involve the loss of loved ones or of personal property. There would

even be risks to our lives. To surmount the challenge requires faith in God, obedience to His word, prayers, and continuing in the way of life until the end.

Jesus Christ in his message to the Church at Ephesus commended their labour, patience and non-compromise with false teachers, etc. But the Lord chastised them for having forsaken their “first love”. He charged them thus, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” - Revelation 2:1-5.

Unlike Lot's wife, who initially obeyed and left the city only to become despondent as to lose focus, we should instead rekindle our zeal, re-ignite our faith and resolve to serve God the more, even better than when we started. “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...” - Romans 13:11-14.

### **Friday, September 8, 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, Having a form of godliness, but denying the power therefore: from such turn away.” - 2 Timothy 3:1, 2, 5.

**Comment:** Writing on the traits people will exhibit to an unprecedented degree in the last days, St. Paul in his letter to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 pointed out that people will give themselves to carnality than to spiritual things, that they would be preoccupied with gratifying their own lusts than doing their duty to their Creator and thereby edify their fellow human beings. Because many people will neither fear God or regard man, they would feel at liberty to say and do what they like. (Psalm 12:4) The inspired record also states that in this age, “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:13) But those to be so seduced and remain in seduction are those who do not know God, for it has been said that “a foolish head and a filthy heart make persons, especially women, an easy prey to seducers”. This is the time for all people of goodwill to turn to God lest the “Judge of all the earth” visits them with complete destruction as He did to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 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 5:14-17.

### **Saturday, September 9, 2017**

**Text:** “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.” - John 14:13-15.

**Comment:** True discipleship is synonymous with practical Christianity because the blessings of God shall redound on those who not only hear and read but “keep those things which are written therein”. - Revelation 1:3; Luke 11:28.

The Christian who is determined to practice God's righteousness will succeed by the grace of God. (1 John 5: 3) Our Saviour Jesus Christ describes the “burden” and “yoke” of obeying his commandments as “light” and “easy” by the grace of God. To those who are obedient he promised rest in God's Kingdom fully established. - Matthew 11: 28-30; 1 John 2: 25.

We should not make the mistake of Lot's wife, by hardening our hearts to the word of God. The knowledge of the gospel message teaches us to “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) Moreover, St. Paul stated, “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...” He added that we should look to Christ, “Who 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.

### **Sunday, September 10, 2017**

**Text:** “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” - 2 Peter 2: 20.

**Comment:** Apostle Peter in this text highlights the danger of deliberately violating the laws of God. This is a situation in which a believer knows that what he is doing is sinful and yet still continues in it. The danger in such presumptuous conduct is that the person may not get the chance of life again. As the text for today makes clear, the latter end would be worse for such people than when they had not known God. Said he: “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them but it happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog turned to his own vomit...” - 2 Peter 2:21, 22.

The sin of Lot's wife was a presumptuous sin in that she was told clearly not to look back; yet she flouted it due to self-will and lack of faith. – See Psalm 19:12,13.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, (Holy Spirit) And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” - Hebrews 6:4-6.

## **Monday, September 11, 2017**

**Text:** “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” – Ezekiel 16:49.

**Comment:** That an entire city was shamelessly drowned in sin, was an affront to the King of heaven, “all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” (Daniel 4:37) The Bible says, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34) The Almighty God speaking through His prophet Isaiah upbraided the children of Israel for their backslidings thus: “The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.” (Isaiah 3:9) Speaking through Jeremiah, He likened the heinous commitments of the religious leaders in time of old to the sister – cities of sin who “commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.” (Jeremiah 23:14) It is regrettable that this age of the end is nothing different from Sodom and Gomorrah, if not worse. As the world sinks deeper and deeper in unrighteousness, so is the Almighty Father “angry with the wicked everyday”. - Psalm 7:11.

We should endeavor to practice God's righteousness even the more as we see the day approaching for “it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger”. - Zephaniah 2:3.

## **Tuesday, September 12, 2017**

**Text:** “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” – Romans 15:4.

**Comment:** One of the most potent, dramatic and sobering illustrations used by the greatest teacher of all times is the tragic story of Lot's wife. In the words of Joe Crews “... one of the most deadly perils for God's people in the last days will be to slowly slip away from the truth as Mrs. Lot did.” Continuing, he wrote: “We still find many people exactly like Mrs. Lot. They also believe the truth, know what they ought to do, and want to be saved. Like Lot's wife, many of them wait until the pull of the world overpowers the will to act, and they are not able to let go of 'carnal things'. Those who have had the grace to be called into God's mountain should not be careless.

As it was with them, so it shall be also with this sin – ridden world. Having read and heard of these tragic events which He caused to be written for our own benefit, we would have no excuse on the day of God's wrath as we have had much greater enlightenment than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. St. Paul asked, “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” - Hebrew 10:29.

### **Wednesday, September 13, 2017**

**Text:** “When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.” - Ezekiel 33:13.

**Comment:** The need for continuity in the practice of righteousness lies more in the fact that it is the end that matters. The preacher admonishes, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” – Ecclesiastes 7:8.

In the parable of labourers in the vineyard, one of the points advanced by Jesus Christ is that, it is those who remain till the end that will earn the penny reward. Therefore, the grace of salvation is not granted to the recipients merely on the basis of coming early or the duration they had worked or whether the person is rich, poor, young, old, male or female. Whereas Lot and his two daughters were saved, the wife was not saved. It is true that our righteousness even at its best is as “filthy rags”. (Isaiah 64:6) That notwithstanding, God Almighty being merciful will never ignore our efforts by His grace. Thus, He has promised forgiveness to those who truly repent of their evils and make conscious efforts to obey His commandments. Isaiah 1:16 – 19; 55:7

In contrast, all who claim to be worshippers of God but wallow in sin like the people of Sodom, or like Lot's wife; those who do the righteousness of God for a while and then “look back”, shall have themselves to blame at the end. - Isaiah 1:20; 3:11.

### **Thursday, September 14, 2017**

**Text:** “In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.” - Luke 17:31, 32.

**Comment:** Unlike the devil who kills people indiscriminately, God Almighty warns before He acts. Those who will be spared are those who heed the warning and place themselves on the Lord's side of favour. Lot and his family foreshadowed those persons of goodwill who hear the warning which is now being given to all nations, concerning the destruction that awaits the earth. The “mountains” they fled to symbolize God's Kingdom Organization where those who love the praise of God flee to for refuge and eventual salvation. (Matthew 24:15,16; Psalm 3:8) Lot's wife signifies those who after hearing the warning, are unable to remain steadfast to the end due to faithlessness and carnality unlike Lot and his two daughters who received the warning and heeded to it, represent the “Other Sheep”. So focused were they that the demise of Lot's wife did not deter their onward march. Salvation is an individual matter. Even family members cannot help one another. God declared through Ezekiel the Prophet, “Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they

should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD..." - Ezekiel 14:13,14,16,18; See also Philippians 2:12, Isaiah 26:21.

## **THE BLESSING IN KEEPING ONE'S VOW**

Vow, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 7th Edition, is "a formal serious promise, especially a religious one, to do something." From Bible understanding, a vow is a serious promise or pledge made by a worshipper to do something for God if He grants the person his petition. In most cases, a vow is personal, that is, it is between an individual and God Almighty alone. Vows can be in form of material promise or devotional pledge. As a material promise, a vow is a physical or tangible item we intend to give to God (especially for use in His service) in return for granting our humble request. A vow is also a resolve we make to be more committed and dedicated to His service especially after experiencing His goodness in incredible circumstances.

### **Friday, September 15, 2017**

**Text:** "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits towards me?... I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." - Psalm 116:12,14.

**Comment:** King David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, was a man who tasted the goodness of God in so many ways, even right from his youthful days. The evidences include the following: God sent Samuel the Prophet to anoint him when he was just a teenager; helped him to defeat and kill Goliath and protected him throughout the period that King Saul wanted to take his life. God later promoted him King over Israel at the death of King Saul, and helped him defeat the Philistines and other enemies that surrounded the people of Israel. In appreciation of God's goodness on him, King David never failed to publicly express his gratitude to God in the presence of His people, and one of the ways by which he did this was by paying his vows, that is, fulfilling the pledge or promise he solemnly made to God. These can be clearly seen from the way he willingly and wholeheartedly contributed resources such as gold, silver, brass and all manner of precious stones in abundance for use in the building of the temple where God would be worshipped. (1Chronicles 29:2-17) He himself declared, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him." (Psalm 22:25) We, as true worshippers of God, should not forget to fulfill our vows to God in appreciation of His goodness on us.

### **Saturday, September 16, 2017**

**Text:** "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." - Psalm 66:13, 14.

**Comment:** The text for today brings to light one of the reasons people make vows to God. Many people make vows to God when they are in difficult situations or facing

great challenges. These include educational problems, marital problems, unemployment, health problems and some other very personal problems, etc. St. Paul charged us to always show appreciation to God when he said, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers." (Philippians 4:6, Living Bible) To show that we really appreciate the goodness of God in answering our prayers, we should fulfill the vow we made to Him when we were in difficulty, as in the text for today. We should recall that our Saviour complimented and blessed the Samaritan who came back to say "thank you" on seeing that he had been healed of his leprosy. This was the case with King David. He prayed to God to deliver his soul from death, and God truly delivered his soul, and he said he would pay his vow to God. He declared, "Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. ... For thou hast my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and feet from falling... I will pay my vows unto to the LORD now in the presence of all his people ." – Psalm 116:4,8,18.

### **Sunday, September 17, 2017**

**Text:** "Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared." – Psalm 76: 11.

**Comment:** The text for today shows that vows can be in various forms, depending on what the individual solemnly promises to give to God for granting his/her desires. Sometimes vows can be in material, physical or tangible forms such as gifts or presents (in cash or kind) presented to support the work of God. In Proverbs 3:9, 10, King Solomon admonished worshippers of God when he said "Honour the LORD with thy substance, ... so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Having pledged in our minds to present such things in support of the work of God, St Paul enjoined us that we should go ahead to perform it when he said, "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have." – 2 Corinthians 8:11.

However, the most important vow which is common to all worshippers is that of the resolve to do the will of God all the days of our lives, as new creatures. (2 Corinthians 5:17) He also exhorted, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." - Romans 12:1, 2.

### **Monday, September 18, 2017**

**Text:** "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed." – Ecclesiastes 5:4.

**Comment:** In today's text, King Solomon advised that when we make a promise or pledge to God, we should not delay to fulfill it. Vows are words of commitment that should be treated with utmost seriousness because they are made to God Almighty. Moses charged the Israelites thus, "...This is the thing which the LORD has

commanded. If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, ... he shall not break his words, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." – Numbers 30:1-2.

A man who has become famous for fulfilling his vow, even though it was a very hard one was Jephthah. After consenting to lead the children of Israel to fight the Ammonites who had colonized them, he vowed that in the event of his success against the Ammonites he would offer up as a burnt offering whatsoever should come out to meet him. But as he returned victorious by the power of God, it was his daughter, his only child, who came out to meet him with timbrels and dancing. Though heart-stricken, he consented to her request to be given two months to "bemoan her virginity". She kept to her word and the Bible record says, he "did with her according to his vow". (Judges 11:30-35) Jephthah's faithfulness in keeping his vow, is one of the reasons for which he has been listed as one of the ancient worthies to be in God's Kingdom fully established. – Hebrews 11:32

### **Tuesday, September 19, 2017**

**Text:** "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." - Ecclesiastes 5:5.

**Comment:** To make a vow to God is good as it shows that one is making a serious commitment to God Almighty concerning an important issue that one totally looks up to Him for help. (Psalm 121:1) Jesus Christ our Lord, while teaching his disciples how to pray stated, "... for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him". (Matthew 6:8) Though God knows our needs, He still requires us to ask as it is an expression of faith in His providence. Jesus Christ himself went further to state "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matthew 7:7, 8) From this, it is clear that God will grant our desires or needs if we ask of him. However, if we decide to go a step further by making a commitment in form of pledge or promise to God Almighty because of how dear that need is to us, we should not fail to fulfill such promise after God has granted our desire, for it would be better if 'we do not vow than to vow and not pay. This was attested to by Moses the prophet when he told the children of Israel "But if thou shall forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee." – Deuteronomy 23:22.

### **Wednesday, September 20, 2017**

**Text:** "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?" - Ecclesiastes 5: 6.

**Comment:** In the text for today, King Solomon gives the understanding that it is spiritually wrong to make a vow to God Almighty Our Heavenly Father and not fulfill such vow. The book of Acts chapter five has the story of a certain man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who sold their land, and instead of keeping to their promise to give the entire money to God kept back part of the money for themselves. Thus, St. Peter declared in a burst of righteous indignation, "... why hath Satan filled thine heart to

lie to the Holy Ghost (Holy spirit), and to keep back part of the price of the land?" He added: "why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." On hearing these words Ananias fell down and died. (Acts 5:1-5) This is a stern lesson or warning to those who make promises to God and are dishonest in fulfilling them. The Bible says "Owe no man (i.e. God Almighty) anything..." - Romans 13:8.

Also, God Almighty charged us through Moses the Prophet "When thou shall vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shall not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee" – Deuteronomy 23:21.

#### **Thursday, September 21, 2017**

**Text:** "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shall glorify me." - Psalm 50:14, 15.

**Comment:** One of the sure blessings we receive from God for paying our vows is deliverance and protection in times of trouble. In the world today, man is constantly faced with dangers, troubles or harm. Though, all these dangers lurk around us, yet God Almighty gives us the divine assurance that when we offer unto him thanksgiving and pay our vows (in appreciation of His goodness on us), He will never leave us but would be with us and deliver us in times of trouble as so clearly stated in today's text.

The "great woman" of Shunem was hospitable to Elisha the Prophet in providing him with food to eat whenever he passed. Without being prompted, she sought permission from her husband and offered to "make a little chamber, ... on the wall" which she would furnish with "a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick" such that whenever he passed by he would go in there to rest. She actually did as she promised. For her kindness and support for the work of God, her womb was opened and she had a son. "And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life." - 2 Kings 4:8-17.

Certainly, if we prove God, He would open the windows of heaven and pour us out blessings even more than we have space to receive. – Malachi 3: 10-12; Mark 10:28-30; 2 Corinthians 9:7,8.

#### **Friday, September 22, 2017**

**Text:** "And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of host, If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." – 1 Samuel 1:11.

**Comment:** Here is the case of the woman Hannah. It is a very striking case of making a vow, paying the vow, and getting God's blessings for paying the vow. Hannah was one of the two wives of Elkanah, the other wife been Peninnah. Because she had children, Peninnah made derogatory remarks for her inability to bear a child. (1 Samuel

1:1 -10) It is sinful to laugh at people's inability to conceive and bear children because it is God Almighty Who gives children.– Genesis 30:1, 2, 22-23.

Hannah was shedding tears while she was praying in the temple. She made a vow that should God give her a male child, She in turn would give that child back to God to serve Him all the days of his life. (1 Samuel 1:9-11) God gave her a son, Samuel. (1 Samuel 1:19, 20) When the child Samuel was weaned, Hannah, accompanied by her husband , went to fulfill her vow by taking Samuel to Eli the Priest in the temple to serve God in the sanctuary all the days of his life. (1Samuel 1:27, 28). God Almighty was also pleased with Hannah fulfilling her vow that He blessed her with five additional children (3 boys and 2 girls). The Bible says that it is God Almighty Who makes the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children. (1 Samuel 2:20 -21 and Psalms 113:9) Truly, there is blessing in paying one's vow.

### **Saturday, September 23, 2017**

**Text:** "That which is gone out of thy lips thou shall keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou has promised with thy mouth." – Deuteronomy 23:23.

**Comment:** Vows are promises we make in our prayers to God. The Bible tells us that God hears prayers and unto him shall vows performed. The Psalmist said "Praise waiteth for thee, O God in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." (Psalm 65:1 , 2) In this regard, we make prayers to God, and God answers our prayers, we should not fail to offer the vows we made to God. Eliphaz the Temanite said "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows." (Job 22:27) Therefore, whatever we have purposed in our hearts to offer (especially as vows to God), we should give and God will surely bless us.

While St. Paul travelled to Syria, with Priscilla and Aquila, the Bible says he shaved his head at Cenchrae "for he had a vow". (Acts 18:18) When Paul returned to Jerusalem, he was told to join four believers and perform the formalities required for purification in fulfillment of their vows. St Paul admonished "Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." – 2 Corinthians 9:7, 8.

### **COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE YE SEPARATE**

The Holy Bible says "The whole world lieth in wickedness", (1 John 5:19), and "Thou shall not follow a multitude to do evil..." (Exodus 23:2) Therefore, it is imperative for a true worshipper of God to separate himself from the crowd of the ungodly – those who do iniquity (Matthew 13:41) by maintaining a distinct Christian character by the grace of

God. It is because iniquity ruins one spiritually that God advised us through Ezekiel the Prophet to run away from it. - Ezekiel 18:30-32.

As true Christians who have come to know the truth, right conduct or behaviour is expected of us, hence, we are expected to discontinue or cut off our association with persons who are not morally upright or who are opposed to truth and righteousness so as not to suffer the spiritual consequences that will befall such ungodly persons in the end.

### **Sunday, September 24, 2017**

**Text:** “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” - 2 Corinthians 6: 14.

**Comment:** In the text for today, St Paul admonished true Christians not to team up with or join unbelievers in their activities and way of life because there is no fellowship (spiritual association) between righteousness and unrighteousness, and there is no communion (relationship) between light (truth) and darkness (falsehood).

Though many people in the world love darkness (i.e engaging in ungodly practices), worshippers of God are expected to be of exemplary conduct, standing up for truth and righteousness wherever they find themselves. A striking example is that of the three Faithful Jews (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego), whose blunt refusal to fall down and worship the golden image led to miraculous sights which made King Nebuchadnezzar to make a decree that no other god should be worshipped except the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. – Daniel 3:1-30.

Having known the truth, we, as true Christians, are not expected to have spiritual association with unbelievers who are still wallowing in ignorance about the purpose of God; rather, we are expected to disassociate ourselves by keeping to the truth (the light) which, by the grace of God, has the power to turn unbelievers to God. Scripture says, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” - Philippians 2:15. See also Matthew 5:16.

### **Monday, September 25, 2017**

**Text:** “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” - 2 Corinthians 6:15.

**Comment:** The text for today is a rhetorical question, stressing the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ can never ever have any connection with Belial (Satan the Devil). Likewise will a believer not compromise his faith with an unbeliever. Truly, there is no concord or common ground because two cannot “walk together, except they be agreed” - Amos 3:3.

Jesus Christ told his disciples, “No man can serve two masters...” (Matthew 6:24), while St Paul charged Christian believers thus, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.” - 1 Corinthians 10:21.

Christ demonstrated that there is no concord between him and Satan the Devil when on an occasion he saw the Devil approaching, he told his disciples “...for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me...Arise, let us go hence”. (John 14:30, 31) As worshippers of God we should not associate with activities inspired by Satan the Devil, no matter how glamorous they may appear. We should recall that when the Devil showed our Saviour all the glories of the world and promised to give them to him, if only he would fall down and worship him, Christ said to him “...Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” - Matthew 4:10

### **Tuesday, September 26, 2017**

**Text:** “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?...” - 2 Corinthians 6:15, 16.

**Comment:** It is quite unfortunate and disheartening that up till today, people still make idols and worship such Idols, the works of their own hands, leaving the true God who lives in heaven. (Psalm 115: 2, 3) These idols have mouths but cannot speak; they have ears but cannot hear; they have noses, but cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot handle; they have feet but cannot walk e.t.c. - Psalm 115:4-8.

God Almighty abhors the worship of idols. He instructed the Jews in the Ten Commandments “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...” - Exodus 20: 4, 5.

Those who engage in idol worship either through bowing to images or relics, consulting witch doctors, fortunetellers or soothsayers, pouring of libation, calling ancestors, swearing in the name of various gods, worshipping the planetary/heavenly bodies (such as Sun, Moon, Stars e.t.c) are committing idolatry and need to repent. Hence, as true worshippers, God Almighty through Jeremiah the Prophet warned “Thus said the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the stars of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the custom of the people are vain...” Jeremiah 10: 2, 3.

### **Wednesday, September 27, 2017**

**Text:** “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” - 2 Corinthians 6:17.

**Comment:** The most unfortunate consequence that will befall anybody who refuses to disassociate himself from evildoers is that such a person will be destroyed along with evildoers. A striking case was that of the sons-in-law of Lot. The two Angels sent to

destroy Sodom and Gomorrah specifically instructed Lot to go and tell his sons-in-law to get out of the place, as the LORD would destroy the city. But they did not take him seriously for, “he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law”. - Genesis 19:12 – 14.

The refusal of Lot's sons-in-law to follow him made them to perish along with the sinful inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is in sharp contrast to the case of Rahab the harlot. She showed great faith in taking the risk to protect the two spies from the wicked men of Jericho. But before their departure, the two spies instructed her to bring all her family members into her house so that when the Israelite army would come to destroy Jericho, none of her family members in her house would be killed. Rahab complied and they were all spared when Jericho was destroyed. -Joshua 2:12 – 19; 6:20 - 25.

The true servants of God in this last day are also giving warning that only those who flee into God's organization and remain there until the end that would be saved. - 1 Peter 1:2-5; Matthew 24:31,12-14; Ezekiel 3:17.

#### **Thursday, September 28, 2017**

**Text:** “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.” - 1 Peter 4:3.

**Comments:** Being humans, we might have been involved in unwholesome activities in the past when we had not been truly converted or were still low in knowledge and understanding of the word of God. At that time, some of us spent our time, to use the words of Apostle Paul “in rioting and drunkenness, ... in chambering and wantonness, ... in strife and envying”. (Romans 13:13) Those who have gained true knowledge have the greater responsibility to do righteousness, hence St Paul also stated that “the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained...”. - Acts 17:30, 31.

As expected, when we dissociate ourselves from wayward lifestyles, those with whom we did such unwholesome acts will start seeing us as “acting strange” and may call us derogatory names, yet we have done what is spiritually expected of truly converted Christians. St Peter attested to this when he said “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” (1 Peter 4:4, 5) We should pray for the faith and understanding to continue in the way of holiness until the end. – See Isaiah 35:8

### **Friday, September 29, 2017**

**Text:** "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." - Proverbs 16:25.

**Comments:** King Solomon, the wisest in his days, gave us a very important warning that should make one think and be conscious of the end result or consequence of whatever way of life one has adopted for oneself as stated in the text for today. Earlier, Moses the Prophet had warned the people of Israel that he had set before them "life and good, and death and evil" - a blessing if they obeyed the commandments of the Lord and a curse if they disobeyed. - Deuteronomy 30:15; 11:26, 27.

In one of his discourses, our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the Narrow Way, which represents a godly and spiritually disciplined way of life, which leads to abundant blessings and ultimately to eternal life, and the Broad Way which represents a carefree lifestyle, filled with ungodly activities which lead to shame, destruction and everlasting contempt. - Matthew 7:13, 14.

For this spiritual reason, there is need for us to constantly examine ourselves in regard to what we say and do. (2 Corinthians 13:5, 6) Where we are coming short we should pray to God to help us apply the Scriptures in our daily lives and He will direct our paths by His grace. Scripture says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." - Proverb 3:5-7.

### **Saturday, September 30, 2017**

**Text:** "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the Prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" - Jeremiah 5:30, 31

**Comments:** One of the signs of the last days as stated by Jesus Christ is the proliferation of false prophets or false religious leaders. They will preach falsehood and accompany it with the performance of miracles such that many people will be deceived to follow them. (Matthew 24:11, 24, 25) The activities of false prophets provide some of the most potent means by which the devil has been leading many people to their doom. God Almighty, speaking through Jeremiah the Prophet said that these false prophets cannot affect people's lives positively because their teachings, (no matter how articulate and persuasive) are based on falsehood. See Jeremiah 23:21, 22, 32.

However, though they be "many, which corrupt the word of God" in this age, (2 Corinthians 2:17) yet God promised to send true pastors who will feed people with knowledge and understanding. (Jeremiah 3:15) For this reason, St. Paul advised Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5: 21 to, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good". It is by ascertaining the claims of these religious leaders, that one can identify the false ones and dissociate oneself from such false Church organizations being led by false pastors. St. Paul advised, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome

words, even the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, ...from such withdraw thyself" 1 Tim. 6:3 – 5.

### **Sunday, October 1, 2017**

**Text:** "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed". - Genesis 19:17.

**Comment:** This was an instruction given to Lot, his wife and his two daughters by the angels sent by God to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were notorious for homosexuality and all sorts of sinful acts to the extent that they even demanded to have carnal knowledge of the two visitors in Lot's house, not knowing they were angels. (Genesis 19:4 – 11) The two angels instructed Lot to go and inform his family members and in-laws to leave because Sodom and Gomorrah were about to be destroyed for their heinous sins, but they did not believe, neither did they heed Lot's instruction. (Genesis 19: 12 –14) In the end, when the cities were destroyed, only Lot and his two daughters who responded positively to the instruction of the Angels to "...Escape for thy life ..." were saved from that destruction.

St Peter, speaking on this, admonished Christians that we should learn from Lot who separated himself by not taking part in the sinful activities prevalent in Sodom and Gomorrah, hence he was found righteous and was delivered when the cities of Sodom were destroyed. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." - Jude 1:7; see also 2 Peter 2:6, 7.

### **Monday, October 2, 2017**

**Text:** "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." - Proverbs 1:10.

**Comment:** This is a timely advice to worshippers of God, especially the youths, who have impressionable minds and are not spiritually mature enough to resist certain enticements, allurements or tempting pressures from their peer groups. Some youths have been lured into various money-related crimes to enrich themselves, and live false lives. The youths should be warned to desist from such practices, for, as the Bible says, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished..." - Proverbs 13:11; 28:22.

St Paul admonished believers "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" - Ephesians 4:28.

Moreover, King Solomon advised youths to dissociate themselves from ungodly friends, colleagues or peer groups, when he stated, "My Son, if sinners entice thee, consent

thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:.. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil, cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.” - Proverbs 1:10, 11, 13 – 16.

### **Tuesday, October 3, 2017**

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

**Comment:** In the text for today, St Paul is admonishing Christians not to take part in works of darkness anymore. Such works of darkness include, among others, the activities of secret cults / secret societies where they take various oaths of allegiance and secrecy and make blood covenants. They kill, rape, maim, destroy properties of perceived enemies and rival cult group members etc. People join these secret cults/societies for fame, fortune, wealth or riches, or to get connected to the high and mighty in the society. There are even stories of how some youths lost their precious lives while going through the ordeal of initiation into cults. Those who are already in such secret organizations should with determination, and above all prayers to God, discontinue their membership and trust in the protection of God Almighty. St Peter said “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” - 1 Peter 3:13.

St Paul admonished Christians thus, “Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 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 5:7, 11, 12.

### **Wednesday, October 4, 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:** That the Bible speaks of “the attire of an harlot” shows that there are dresses that instantly portray one as a harlot (especially for the women folk) even when one is not of such disposition. Tight-fitting and mini-dresses that reveal the feminine nature portrays one as a woman of easy virtue. The case of Judah and Tamar is very striking. What made Judah mistake Tamar for a harlot were two things: Firstly, her clothes (veil) and secondly, the manner it was worn on her body (using it to cover her face). (Genesis 38:12–15) We should not just copy any fashion of clothing that is in vogue because the fashion of this world will pass away. - 1 Corinthians 7:31.

St. Paul admonished that when we renew our minds (i.e change our thoughts to godly thoughts) it will reflect in and transform our way of life and we will be seen to always do what is acceptable in the sight of God. St. Paul exhorted, “I beseech you therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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: 1 , 2.

### **Watch Ye Therefore And Pray Always**

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, knowing of the trials, temptations and tribulations that people would be exposed to in this last days at the instance of satan the devil and due to the gross carelessness of some and not wanting his followers to be lured away by the cares of this life and other glossy trappings of the age exhorted his followers to be circumspect by watching and praying always by God's grace.

The fulfilled Christian life is that of doing the Lord's will from the heart, constantly practicing the righteousness of God by His grace. To do this effectively, one must read the Bible continuously with faith as to understand the signs of the time, which is watching, and we should solemnly commune with God with thanksgiving, that is, prayer, which must be done always as a safeguard from evil so as to get the blessings of God now and salvation in the end by His grace.

### **Thursday, October 5, 2017**

**Text:** “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.

**Comment:** The word "watch" in the context of the text for today, has the meanings of keeping a guard upon oneself against sin, and of being on the lookout or being observant as to see what comes or happens. This is spiritual vigilance which requires diligent reading or searching of the Scriptures in order to know and understand the signs of the times that are physically staring people in the face today. And it must be accompanied with prayer of faith to God for His mercy, protection and deliverance from the trouble or tribulation that will shake the whole world and destroy the wicked or ungodly at the appointed time. At that time would be fulfilled the prophecy, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” - Romans 10:13; See also Joel 2:32; Matthew 21:22, Acts 2:21 etc.

It should be realized, that our prayers will not be heard or answered by God if we do not repent of our sins, pray in accordance with His will, or endeavour to live uprightly or honestly at all times by His grace. (Isaiah 59:1-4) Scripture says: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.” “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” - John 9:31; 1 John 3:22.

### **Friday, October 6, 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.” - Luke 21:34, 35.

**Comment:** Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, has in the foregoing texts graciously given his sheep (the children of God), the SIGNS which those with hearing ears and seeing eyes in this age should take warning from so as to guard against evil doings and be free from the danger of God's vengeance by which He will soon clear the earth of all vestiges of wickedness or evil. (Proverbs 20:12) But the pity of it is that countless numbers of people in our generation are so given to sensuality or worldliness that they have no time to read the Holy Bible as to understand the signs of the times in order to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded the sheep of God to escape imminent death or destruction. One of the vices that make people to be spiritually careless is drunkenness. The Bible says, “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! ...but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.” - Isaiah 5:11-13.

The warning of Jesus Christ against surfeiting (excessive eating and drinking), and worldly worries or cares should be taken very seriously by the faithful so as not to indulge in sinful pleasures as the ungodly do. See - 1 John 2:15-17.

### **Saturday, October 7, 2017**

**Text:** “I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord .” - Jeremiah 8:6, 7.

**Comment:** The Almighty Father in the text for today laments the unrepentant attitude of some of the Jews of old, which conduct some put up today. Ordinarily, when people fall down or realize that they are headed in the wrong direction, it is only proper for them to get up or change direction. But unfortunately, the Jews who pride themselves as custodians of the law of God were living sinful lives by choice and, to compound it all, were deceiving themselves that there would be no consequences. But as sure as night follows day, consequences do occur. God told the Jews, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2) He also said, “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.” (Jeremiah 5:25) The essence of watching and praying is for one to take warning, repent thoroughly for wrong done and amend one's ways to avert impending danger. – Romans 13:11-14.

Literally, the idiomatic expression "To be forewarned is to be forearmed" which means "prior knowledge of possible dangers or problems gives one a tactical advantage" cautions people to act properly to avoid danger. Those who heed such warnings find protection from trouble by His grace. Taking these spiritual warnings will secure for one safety and abundant blessings from God at this present time and salvation in the world to come all by His grace. - Zephaniah 2:1-3; Luke 21:28.