

DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE JULY – SEPTEMBER, 2014

FOREWORD

Due to human imperfection and the influence of satan the devil, man is surrounded by various troubles, fears and difficulties some talk of 'imponderables and impregnables" at almost every turn of the way. Even when things appear to be smooth and plain sailing, the improbable surfaces sooner or later, plunging people into sorrow and anxiety. Evidently, the instability and uncertainty of human life exposes in stark relief the limitations of man and the extent of the tragedy that has become his lot since the first human pair were driven from the Garden of Eden.

However, despite the fact that satan is unrelenting in his drive to keep people in misery, ignorance and despair, they could still do a lot to help themselves to live relatively less stressful lives. They only need to heed the words of God in the holy Scriptures and exercise absolute trust in their Maker.

The themes in this edition, like others, are chosen to light up the way of the weary wayfarer. (Psalm 119:105; Deuteronomy 8:3) David, a prophet of God stated: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4) The themes in this edition are "Abounding in the work of God"; "Scriptural Commentary on James Chapters 1 and 2"; "The Voice of God", "Praying according to the will of God"; "Discipline"; "The Just shall live by Faith"; "The danger of tale bearing and rash judgment".

It is our hope that readers will gain knowledge, faith, strength and inspiration from the texts and comments contained herein.

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May God Almighty, Who is teaching His people through His word, continue to guide us with His holy spirit so that we may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of His word for our blessings in this world and salvation in the end through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Ministry,
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Tuesday, July 1, 2014

Text: "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away..." - Matthew 13: 3-9

Comment: Parables are stories from everyday life that relate and illustrate certain spiritual truths. In the case of the parable of the sower, Jesus Christ highlighted the different attitudes people display in their response to the gospel message. Some hear the word and are gladdened by it. But they do not understand it and thus easily become prey to the devil who will find a way to sift them out of the work of God, sooner or later. (See Psalm 119: 34) Some receive the seed on stony places, meaning that they receive the word with joy but it does not have root in them. The shallowness of their faith is however soon exposed as they become easily offended when confronted by tribulations or persecutions. (Verses 20, 21) The person who received the seed among thorns is the one who hears the word; "and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." (Verse 22) "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." - Verse 23.

Those who claim to be disciples of Christ must prove by their conduct that truly they had received the seed on good ground, by seeking first the kingdom in their words and actions, placing the work of God above every other concern and labouring to win souls to Christ. - 1 Timothy 6: 9-10; Matthew 6: 33; Proverbs 11: 30.

Abounding In The Work Of God

Wednesday, July 2, 2014

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

Comment: The word abound means "to overflow, be plentiful; be rich, have possessions to overflowing". St. Paul wrote these encouraging words to the Christians at Corinth to the end that they may remain true to their faith and not allow their high ethical standards to be diluted by the immoral lifestyle of many of the people of Corinth at that time. St. Paul's exhortation was for Christians to be firm, strong, confident in the faith based on the truth which they had received. We should not be shaken or confused by the problems we face, the temptations, and

the cares of this life. We should be so strong in the faith that we, by the grace of God, shall not be seduced from the faith of the gospel.

In other words, we should by action and words be engaged in projecting the truth that the Kingdom of God which all Christians have been praying for has now come; that as Lot and his family were saved when they fled to the mountain, so all people of goodwill who flee into God's Organisation, and remain there serving Him in sincerity and in truth, will be saved from the catastrophe which God will soon visit on the nations of the world. (Isaiah 2:2-5; Matthew 24:15, 16; 13:31, 32) Such people of good heart condition "who sigh and cry" over the abominations going on in the earth, should take it as a duty to tell others of the world to come where peace and righteousness will hold sway. By doing all we can to project the name of God and the truth which He has revealed we are abounding in His work by His grace. "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", knowing that we are "a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." - Titus 2:11-15

Thursday, July 3, 2014

Text: "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." - 2 Thessalonians 1:11

Comment: The exhortation for us to abound in the work of the Lord has been given more urgency or importance by the fact that we are now in the time of the end, a time God will take action against the devil and his hosts after which He will give salvation to the faithful. To be able to abound in our duties to God we must have a definite sense of being called by God, knowing that it is a privilege for us to be counted among the few who are called from darkness to light. We must view the work of God as the most significant aspect of our lives which should be pursued with excellence. This requires practical Christianity. (James 1:22-25) We should be able to see the "big picture" of a future life in God's Kingdom rather than just whatever we are opportuned to have and enjoy in this life. (1 Corinthians 2:9,10) We should be able to deepen the faith of one another as we try to keep the faith in the midst of the daily struggles of life. King Solomon stated, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17) Moreover St. Paul exhorted: "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

Friday, July 4, 2014

Text: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but

will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." - 1 Corinthians 10:13

Comment: Definitely, we shall have various obstacles in the way of accomplishing the work given to us. It is our responsibility to confront and overcome each obstacle in a way that is productive and edifying or unifying to the work of God. St. Paul, speaking of his experiences, stated that he was flogged 39 strokes on five occasions; three times with rods. Several times he was imprisoned; a number of times, he was at risk of death; once he was stoned; thrice he suffered shipwreck and was in the open sea a night and a day. Besides the dangers he faced from robbers and from the hands of gentiles, his countrymen were also looking for his head. (2 Corinthians 11:23-26) Rather than being deterred by these dangers he faced he went about, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." - Acts 14:22.

Because what is right is not always easy to follow, we may find that sometimes loneliness is an inevitable reality in that we could be alone in fighting a righteous cause. We should recall that St. Paul found that he was alone in the struggle at a time; however, God helped him to carry on. So also He will continue to help us. - 2 Timothy 4:16-18

Saturday, July 5, 2014

Text: "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." - Job 8:11-14

Comment: It is our heart condition, which must be right with God, and our ability by God's grace to translate the vital beliefs and the high ideals of Christianity into practice that are of greater importance than our verbal confession of the faith. (James 2:14-20) God hates hypocrisy. Our Lord Jesus Christ, quoting the words of Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 29:13) said hypocrites draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from God. Because what they teach as doctrines of God are nothing but the traditions, prevailing cultural norms and ideas of men, they worship God in vain as their services will not be accepted by God. (Matthew 15:8, 9) Hypocrites abound in the world today as many people claim to love God but in reality, are opposers of righteousness. (Matthew 23:2-5) Moreover, Eliphaz stated: "For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit." - Job 15:34, 35

Sunday, July 6, 2014

Text: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." - Ephesians 4:15.

Comment: Those who have come to God must be studious so as to grow in knowledge and the understanding of the Bible. When one is constant in studying the word of God and has faith in it, God will open his heart to understand what he has read and had been taught and to remember them. "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." (Psalm 111:2) "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3. See also Philippians 1:9,10) Apart from knowledge of the truth, we must also love one another. We must note that the marks of the true church are truth and love. A good many professed Christians have a long way to go in terms of love for one another. Because of lack of love, people, even believers, use very destructive words against one another that show evidence of malice, hatred, envy, which breeds tale-bearing, blackmail, backbiting and so on. What is the use of all the work we are doing if we destroy them again with these vices? See Leviticus 19:16; Titus 3:3; Galatians 2:18

If we have truth but do not love one another, then we are incomplete. We must work on this and do to others as we would be done by. (Matthew 7:12) St. Paul wrote, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." - 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13.

Monday, July 7, 2014

Text: "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

Comment: Jesus Christ severally told us to follow him with our own crosses. This refers to the suffering we must be ready to face and the self-denial we must demonstrate, without which we cannot live up to expectation in the Lord. To abound in the work of God requires a lot of sacrifice. Under no circumstance must we allow human or worldly considerations to override the demands of Jesus Christ. If the wishes of parents or wife or relatives or whoever it may be, are in conflict with the requirements of Jesus Christ, we must at all times hold to the one of God even if this would offend parents and so on. (Matthew 10: 37,38; Luke 14: 25,27) We must do away with the lusts of the flesh and make serious efforts to live a quiet and sober life, and above all, a life of holiness. Whoever gives cause for infidels - the enemies of righteousness - to blaspheme the name of God and Christ, will face greater judgment and condemnation. - Romans 2: 1-3, 21-24

We should be careful in the quest for money and power or positions. Any one striving to be rich at all costs will fall into temptation and a snare. (1 Timothy 6:6-12) The blessings of God will come to His people in His due time; but we do not have to make material acquisition our preoccupation. See Proverbs 28:20, 22; Philippians 3: 7-9.

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

Text: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." - 1 Samuel 15:22, 23.

Comment: It is self-denial that leads to obedience which Samuel the prophet said is better than sacrifice. Some people are active in Church works, donate huge amounts or gigantic structures to the Church but at the same time do things that are contrary to the will of God. They eat both on the Lord's table and the table of devils through membership of secret societies and involvement in occult practices. They think God will overlook the fact that they are having fellowship with devils by reason of the donations they make to the Church. That is not correct. "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. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Corinthians 10:21-22) Jesus Christ said we must do all righteousness, not do some good and spoil them with evil. Apostle James said: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." - James 2:10-12.

Scriptural Commentary on James Chapters 1 and 2.

Wednesday July 9, 2014

Text: "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.

Comment: This text shows that God allows temptations to meet us His people in order to build them up spiritually. It is not that He derives any pleasure from afflicting any of His worshippers. Rather, the tribulations that meet them are the handiwork of the devil who is determined to drag the person away from godliness into vanity and lies. (1 Peter 5:8; Proverbs 30:8) The convert thus has to go through a "fiery trial" by way of the tribulations and persecutions that arise

because of the word. (1 Peter 4:12; Matthew 13:21) Evidently, God allows some of these difficulties to meet us in order to prove our faith and enable us cultivate the godly virtues required of true Christians. David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." (Psalm 119:71, 72) In the words of St. Paul, "tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope". (Romans 5:3,4) The fact is that these temptations compel the believer to wean himself of his sinful habits to become a new creature. The Christian should therefore not panic or be confused due to these temptations but continue to look to God with faith knowing that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." -1 Corinthians 10:13.

Thursday July 10, 2014

Text: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." - James 1:5-7.

Comment: God Almighty is the repository of all wisdom. (Romans 11:33,34) One who is wise and who desires peace and life must seek the wisdom that comes from the Most High. But the person has to ask, and be earnest in his desire for it. And this must be done now that the door is still open. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6) The point is that if one desires a particular gift, he should pray for it and not just assume it will come to one as a matter of course. Jesus Christ stated, "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. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:7-11) However, we should be confident that God will grant what we pray for, if it is His will, as He is liberal and upbraideth not, (that is He does not chastise or reprove anyone for asking). Our Saviour stated, "... 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.

Friday July 11, 2014

Text: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For

the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.” - James 1:9-11.

Comment: Those who are materially poor or who are seen in that light are usually not reckoned with nor their opinions consulted or taken seriously when issues arise. They are ignored and treated with contempt. In fact their presence is only endured in certain gatherings. This makes such ones feel rejected to the extent that they may become withdrawn, not bothering to contribute to issues or play their part in supporting worthy causes. Solomon spoke of a poor wise man whose wisdom saved a city from destruction, But at the end of the day nobody remembered him; he was despised. (Ecclesiastes 9:14-16) This exhortation to the poor is meant to encourage them to serve God with all their hearts and might because God Almighty judges righteously and is no respecter of persons. (1 Samuel 16:7; Acts 10:34,35) For one thing, the poor are humble and so are better disposed to obeying the commandments of God as against the rich, a number of who are proud, vulgar and coarse, with little or no regard for God or man. (Proverbs 18:23; Luke 18:2,4) Also, riches entice one to trust in material things rather than in God, which is idolatry. (Luke 12:15-21) By giving one a false sense of security, riches could become an obstacle to true discipleship. That apart apart, wealth creates ungodly desires in one which ensnare the soul, a situation the poor are generally free from. (1 Timothy 6:9,10; Luke 8:14) However, since some of those who are materially poor can also be very wicked, it is the spiritual poverty (humility, good heart condition) that God requires from all His worshippers. “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” - Jeremiah 9:24.

Saturday July 12, 2014

Text: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” - James 1:13-15.

Comment: God Almighty does not tempt people by laying stumbling blocks on which they will trip over and fall. God created man a free moral agent, free to decide what course he wants to take. The text points out that people put themselves into trouble when they choose wrong courses because they want to gratify their carnal desires. When such desires are put into action they amount to sin. The Bible says, “For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.” (Lamentations 3:33-36) No one who commits sin by not being able to resist evil or temptations should blame God for his sin. He should

rather, blame himself, because it is when one has the desire to do wrong that he is likely to commit that error. Solomon states, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10) We must stand firm on the side of truth and resist enticements to sin. With such faith, God will help us to overcome the temptation that is before us. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (James 4:7, 8) The godly men and women of old were also human and yet they did the righteousness of God until the end. (James 5:10-11) "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." - James 1:12.

Sunday July 13, 2014

Text: "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." - James 1:16-18.

Comment: As opposed to gifts from the devil, the gifts God gives to His people are good and perfect, in that they are for His glory and the benefit of mankind. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." -1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

Joseph was given the gift to interpret dreams and through that many souls were saved from starvation. (Genesis 41:15,16, 38,39) Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah was filled him "with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship". God also told Moses that Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, among others, had been given the spirit to work with him. (Exodus 31:2-6) Ahithophel, was a privy councillor of David, and his wisdom was so highly esteemed, that it was said that if a man sought his advice, it was as if he had enquired at the oracle of God. (2 Samuel 16:23) God Almighty does not change but keeps His promises. With him "there is no variation or shadow due to change". (James 1:17, Revised Standard Version) According to the law of God, individual Israelites harvested choice examples of their crops and dedicated them to God, as their first fruit offering. (Exodus 23:19; 34:22; Leviticus 2:14-16 etc) The apostles are anointed and taught in spirit by God through Jesus Christ and thereby empowered or commissioned to teach others the accurate knowledge of God. They are the first class of Christians. Hence, St. Paul says they (the apostles) "have the firstfruits of the Spirit", (Romans 8:23) The point however is that whatever gift one has he should be appreciative and make full use of it to the glory of God and for his salvation. Scripture says: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more

highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." - Romans 12:3.

Monday July 14, 2014

Text: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." - James 1:19, 20.

Comment: Those who are desirous of doing the will of God are anxious to hear His word so as to do His righteousness the more. That is why David stated that he was glad when he was told to go to the house of the Lord. (Psalm 122:1) As one hears the word of God he should be able to judge himself and determine to purge himself of his errors. A disciple of Christ will not be like the unbelieving Jews whom Christ said did not keep his sayings though they called him master and lord. (Luke 6:46) In this age of false prophets, when many people merely call on the name of Christ out of pretence, it is important that the seeker-after-truth should, before believing anything, carefully compare what he is being taught with what the Holy Bible says. (Acts 17:10-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:21) We should also be slow to speak, to avoid the error of some who talk without reflection, or when they had not heard all the sides to a matter. It is very foolish to do so. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." (Proverbs 18:13. See also Proverbs 17:27, 28; 18:17) Another admonition given by Apostle James in the text for today is that we should not be given to quick outbursts of temper. He who does so will soon find out that he will be doing several foolish things he would be regretting in his sober moments. (Proverbs 14:17) He will be quarrelling with others over one thing or the other and will become an easy tool in the hand of the devil. (Proverbs 15:18; 16:32; 25:28) Our Lord Jesus Christ warned that those who make blasphemous statements out of anger are in danger of God's judgment. (Matthew 5:22) We should therefore strive to control our temper and even when angry should not harbour it for long. - Ephesians 4:26, 31; Colossians 3:8, 13, 15.

Tuesday July 15, 2014

Text: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." - James 1:22-24.

Comment: The Bible stresses the point now and again that those who know God and are known by Him are not just those who hear the word but those who do what they have heard. St. Paul stated: "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Romans 2:13) Our Lord Jesus Christ told his mother and brethren, "...Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matthew 12:49, 50) And when a certain woman blessed the womb that bore Christ and the paps he had sucked,

Christ said "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it". (Luke 11:28) As Apostle James said, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25) The keeping of the word of God calls for faith and humility which would impel one to "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word". (James 1:21) Those who do their own will in spite of the knowledge they have will suffer worse punishment than those who err out of ignorance. St. Peter declared: "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them..." - 2 Peter 2:20-22. See also James 4:17; Luke 12:47,48.

Wednesday July 16, 2014

Text: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." - James 1:26, 27.

Comment: The Holy Bible does not leave us without adequate guidance and admonition on the dangers of misuse of the tongue. With bad words, people reduce their neighbours before others. The Bible says, "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour". (Proverbs 11:9. See also Psalm 101:5) Bad words separate the best of friends and stirs up anger. (Proverbs 16:28; 15:4) The Amalekite who ran to David and lied that he had killed Saul, thinking he would thereby get favour from the future king of Israel, suffered the penalty for his deceitful action. (Compare 2 Samuel 1:1-10; 1 Samuel 31:4,5) However, one who has come to Christ must strive to control his tongue so that his words will build and not destroy, will edify people and not dampen their spirit. Apostle James says, "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:7, 8) The fact that the Christian is a new creature must permeate his way of talking. The person who, after conversion, still uses foul language, who is abusive and tells lies, is only exposing himself that his heart is far from God. For the fact that "the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat" (Job 34:3), people are judged by the way they talk. Apart from cultivating the discipline to enable our words to be seasoned with salt, we should be involved in works of mercy to the fatherless and the widows those who cannot pay us back. We should run away from sin, so as to be blessed now and granted eternal life in the world to come. - Luke 14:12-14.

Thursday July 17, 2014

Text: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit

sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” - James 2:8-10.

Comment: Apostle James describes the law of God on the love of one's neighbour, as “the royal law”, because he who keeps the golden rule by doing good to others just as we would want them to do to us, would not be breaking the laws of God on morality. The Apostle explains further, “For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” (James 2:11,12) It could be seen that true devotion lies in doing good to our fellow men whenever we have the opportunity. - Galatians 6:9,10; 1John 3: 17,18.

From a spiritual standpoint therefore, it is impossible to claim to love God sincerely and yet harbour ill-will against any other person. Certainly, it is when one appreciates the fact that man is created in the image and likeness of God and that one is accountable to His Maker that one can strive to do His will and cultivate high regard for his fellow man. It was because he tried to relate with even his domestic servants as he would like to be treated that Job the prophet declared: “If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me; What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:13-15) St. Paul further explained that if we love our neighbour as we love ourselves we do not need any further preaching on the keeping the laws of God. He stated, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” - Romans 13:8-10.

Friday July 18, 2014

Text: “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” - James 2:13.

Comment: The theme of the Holy Bible is salvation or redemption of man from sin and death by God Almighty through Jesus Christ in exercise of His lovingkindness and tender mercies. That God Almighty went as far as to send His only begotten son to die for man should teach us to have high regard for the well being and life of every person we come in contact with. It is common knowledge that some people are hard--hearted, unfeeling, and cruel to their fellow men. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Debtor (Matthew 18:21-35) Jesus Christ likened the kingdom of heaven unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. As he began to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents, (about \$10million) “But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children,

and all that he had, and payment to be made” (Verse 25) But since he was profuse in his pleadings for mercy his lord “was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt”. But this same servant met his fellow servant who was owing him 100 pence (about \$2000) and rejected pleas for mercy. Rather, he went ahead to cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. Because he did not extend to his fellow servant the mercy which his master had shown him, he suffered double punishment. Christ said: “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matthew 18:35) Even when it is within our rights to exact punishment on others we should be lenient and not seek a pound of flesh. We should give priority to what our Saviour calls, the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith”. (Matthew 23:23) We should live up to the words of the Lord's Prayer which says, “And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” - Luke 11:4.

Saturday July 19, 2014

Text: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” - James 2:14-17.

Comment: Love is one of the identifying marks of true Christianity. Jesus Christ said it is by the love we show to one another that people would know that we are his disciples. God Almighty commanded the Jews through Moses that they should not harden their hearts and refuse to help any of the poor among them. “But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.” The law also states, “For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” (Deuteronomy 15:7-11) Solomon the prophet makes us understand that God Himself would reward the person who helps the poor for His name's sake. “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” - Proverbs 19:17.

The word of God makes it clear that the fasting God has high regard for is not affliction of the body, putting on of sackcloth and ashes but the doing of righteousness. “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6, 7) Acts of self-denial in the fear of God for our fellow man are expected of true worshippers by the grace of God. Scripture says, “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of

compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." - 1 John 3:17,18. See also 1 John 4:20-21.

Sunday July 20, 2014

Text: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" - James 2:18-20.

Comment: This statement by Apostle James had been misunderstood by some in the past, who felt it contradicted some other portions of the Bible. Some felt that James teaches the doctrine of justification by the merit of good works, whereas Paul asserts that man is justified by faith. Earlier the apostle had said "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14) The point Apostle James is making is that faith, which is belief in God can only be meaningful or convincing when it is expressed in action. If salvation could be obtained merely by expressing belief in God then the devils would also be saved because they also believe that God exists. (James 2:19) Therefore, it is by what one does that people can know the sincerity, purity, or depth of his faith, hence St. James shows the difference between the person who sees a brother or sister naked and destitute of food and gives him the things needful to the body and the person who merely tells him to go in peace, even though he has material things with which to assist him. (James 2:15, 16) St. Paul in his letter to the Romans (Romans 4:2, 3) was talking of the works of the law which were no longer relevant in the Christian era. Thus, Abraham was counted as righteous by God on the basis of his firm belief in God, a belief so strong that he waited patiently until it was fulfilled. Writing on the importance of faith, St. Paul declared: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. 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 11:1, 2, 6.

Monday July 21, 2014

Text: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." - James 2:21-24.

Comment: Abraham's faith was tried a number of times and he passed the tests by God's grace. After he had had a son at the age of 100, God told him to sacrifice this very long-looked-for son to him on mount Moriah. He obeyed. But as he was about to kill the son, God intervened: "And the angel of the LORD

called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” (Genesis 22:15-17) His strong faith in God made him to believe that if he obeys the command of God Almighty to sacrifice his son, God could give him another son. It is because of these demonstrations of faith by Abraham that he is called the father of the faithful.

It is this simple and unwavering faith of Abraham that worshippers of God are required to have. We should obey the laws of God without hesitation. We should not compromise our faith or become weak because of afflictions or difficulties. St. Paul stated: “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. (Galatians 2:17) He also declared “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” - Hebrews 10:35, 36.

Tuesday July 22, 2014

Text: “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” - James 2:25, 26.

Comment: Jericho was the first city in Canaan taken by Joshua, whom God appointed to take over from Moses. He first sent two spies to examine the state of the land and bring report. The two men lodged in the house of a woman called Rahab. The king of Jericho, having been alerted that the Jews had come into the town, directed her to deliver them up. She in exercise of her faith in God, hid the spies, and told the messengers that the men had departed towards the mountain. As soon as the officers of the king of Jericho were departed, she took the spies to the house-top, and covered them with flax. - Joshua 2:6, 7.

Instead of the people of Jericho to take warning and take steps for their preservation by humbling themselves before God and submitting to the rule of the people of God, they met the Jews with hostility and were destroyed in the process.

Rahab said they had heard how God dried up the Red sea for the Jews to pass through and what happened to the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and that “as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:10,11) She therefore desired them to swear to her that they would preserve her and her family when they took Jericho. That was how she was spared when the walls of Jericho came down and the city was destroyed by the Israelites. Rahab

abandoned her former way of life and later became the wife of Salmon, a prince of the tribe of Judah, the line through which Jesus Christ came ! (Ruth 4:21; 1 Chronicles 2:11; Matthew 1:5) Like Rehab did, all people of goodwill must exercise strong faith in God and be obedient to His laws by taking steps to secure their safety now; for It will be too late to do so when the final destruction of the world begins. See Hebrews 11:30,31.

THE VOICE OF GOD

The Voice of God means the determinations of God; the purpose or mind or will of God. The voice of God is expressed in His commandments and admonitions and these are conveyed through His prophets and apostles "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come". - 1 Corinthians 10:11.

God has never come down physically to this earth to speak to man. (1 Kings 8:27) Generally, God Almighty speaks to His people through Jesus Christ or other angels through whom He reveals His purposes to the prophets and apostles. The Holy Scriptures state: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds..." (Hebrews 1:1, 2) It could thus be seen why it is written that God has never left himself without a witness. - Acts 14:17.

Wednesday July 23, 2014

Text: "But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house." - Ezekiel 3:27.

Comments: Ezekiel the priest and prophet of God was among the exiles taken by the Babylonians and resettled by the River Chebar. But his pointed exposition of the moral failings of the people was a constant source of tension between him and them. To those who are stubborn the word being spoken is but a witness against them; they would not say they did not hear. When God gives the inspiration to His servants to convey His word to His people, they are duty-bound to do so. In Amos 3:8, it is written: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" If the servant of God fails to deliver the message from God, he will be the one to be punished, but the word will still reach the people concerned and accomplish its purposes. (Ezekiel 33:1-7; Isaiah 55:10,11) Even in the days of the apostles, in the heat of persecution and threats of death the apostles did not fail to declare the message of God. They told the Jewish leaders in those days: "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) And what is more St. Paul declared: "...woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Those who want to hear the voice of God should therefore go to His servants who will expound His word to them. The Bible says: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

(Malachi 2:7) It is in man's own interest to listen to the voice of God as stated in His Word. The Bible says, "And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us. -Deuteronomy 6:24-25.

Thursday July 24, 2014

Text: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" - Ezekiel 33:11.

Comment: God Almighty speaks to man in exercise of His love. God derives no pleasure from the death of anyone. In spite of man's many follies and backslidings, He continues to instruct, direct, advise, encourage and warn, so as to pull those who have backslided from the way of death. Speaking through Ezekiel the prophet the Almighty God stated: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31)

Knowledge enables one to come out of ignorance, the barrier to spiritual progress. (Hosea 4:6) It is because God wants His people to take warning by repenting of their sins that He has not destroyed the world. Rather, He has given them time for the truth to be preached to educate man on the benefits of serving Him and the danger of sin. 2 Peter 3:9.

Any one who hears the gospel should know that God loves him and that he is being chastened so that he may have life. The Bible says: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." When one is being corrected for his errors he should not justify himself or be angry but repent and strive to retrace his steps. The Bible says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." He further states, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12:5-11. See also Proverbs 3:11,12.

Friday July 25, 2014

Text: "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;

Comment: The voice of God today is contained in the Holy Bible as explained by his true servants who have been given His spirit to understand and expound it to the people. For the benefit of man God Almighty had, right through the ages, especially from the time of Moses, caused His word to be written down. (Deuteronomy 27:8-10; Revelation 1:11; etc.) God commanded Isaiah: "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever..." (Isaiah 30:8) It is through the word we know doctrine, the teachings about God, His purpose of creation and His kingdom, which are the basis of Christian beliefs. The word serves to correct people of wrong doing and to teach them the way of serving God so as to be acceptable to Him. It should be realised that because of the fall of man, the plan of God to fill the earth with perfect human creatures has not been realised. (Genesis 1:28) But this will become a reality in His kingdom fully established. The voice of God to man is to the end that all who are of the right heart condition will be part of this new order in due time. - Isaiah 65:17,18; Matthew 6:33.

All peoples of the world are duty-bound to obey the words of God in the Bible, which says: "Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." (2 Chronicles 20:20) And that "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." - Revelation 1:3.

Saturday July 26, 2014

Text: "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" - Deuteronomy 10:12,13

Comment: The words of God are for the good of man, for him to live a peaceful and happy life according to the will of God. In Micah 2:7 it is written: "... do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" Yes, it is those who heed the voice of God, who are obedient that will have life and eat the good of the land. Hearing the voice of God means paying attention to His word, reasoning over them honestly and humbly and amending one's ways to be in line with the will of God. God declared through Isaiah the prophet thus, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." - Isaiah 1:18-20.

People think the commandments of God are grievous. But this is not so. (1 John 5:3) We should note that those who disobey God are hurting themselves and their fellow men, not God Almighty, Who is in heaven. Eliphaz the Temanite stated: "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" (Job 22:2, 3) He adds, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver." - Job 22:21-25.

Sunday July 27, 2014

Text: "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?... but the counsel of the wicked is far from me." - Job 22:15-18.

Comment: In the time of Noah the people were given to wickedness. They ignored the word of God and carried on as if they were accountable to nobody, as it is written: "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." - Genesis 6:5.

The generation of Noah was destroyed and only he and his family of seven were saved. In the time of Lot there was so much sin that homosexuality became acceptable behaviour, as it is in the so-called advanced countries of the world today. Even when Lot went to alert his sons in law that God would destroy the world, they did not listen, but made jest of him. "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law." (Genesis 19:14 See also 2 Peter 2:5) Similar conditions exist today and the people of God must take warning and conduct themselves wisely. Jesus Christ stated: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." - Luke 17:26-29

Monday July 28, 2014

Text: "Fury is not in me: who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." - Isaiah 27:4, 5.

Comment: It is very dangerous for one to harden his heart or disobey the voice of God. Jesus told Saul, who later became Paul, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks". (Acts 9:5) When God sent Moses to instruct Pharaoh to allow the Jews to leave, he said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." - Exodus 5:1, 2.

Instead of obeying the voice of God, Pharaoh and his magicians, the visible representatives of satan at that time, set themselves against the Most High. (Exodus 7:11, 12,18,19) The magicians tried to mimic the miracles Moses did until they could no longer do so and had to confess, "this is the finger of God". (Exodus 8:19) God, addressing Pharaoh, and by extension satan the devil, declared, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16) St. Paul recalled the incident and stated that "as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith". (2 Timothy 3:8) God Almighty eventually subdued and destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts and so showed Himself supreme in the whole world. This is a vivid example to those who would refuse to obey the voice of God today. (Exodus 14:1-31; 15:1-21; etc.) St. Paul stated: "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.

Tuesday July 29, 2014

Text: "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. - Numbers 14:34, 35.

Comment: On the instructions of God Almighty, Moses sent 12 men, one out of every tribe, to spy the land of Canaan. After forty days they returned to the camp in Paran and showed to Moses and the people the fruit they had brought with them as evidence of the fertility of the land. (Numbers 13: 25, 26) While acknowledging that the land was good, 10 of the spies believed they were no match for the Canaanites militarily because they had iron chariots. Frightened, the Jews even chose captains to take them back to Egypt. The whole congregation wept sore because of the evil report brought by ten of the spies. Though Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb tried to rally them, the people would not listen. They even thought of stoning them. - Numbers 14:10.

Only the presence of God as shown by the cloud at the door of the tabernacle restored order. In the face of the pestilence which broke out and was killing the people at a rapid rate, Moses had to intercede on their behalf - which God hearkened to - and refrained from killing all of them. Because of their rebellion God decreed that none of the Jews, 20 years and above, who left Egypt would reach the promised land, except Joshua and Caleb. Moreover they spent 40 years to get to the promised land a year for each of the 40 days it took them to spy the land. -Numbers 14: 21-23, 30-34.

It could be seen how dangerous it is for one not to have faith in the word of God. "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.

Wednesday July 30, 2014

Text: "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest" - Psalm 95:7-11.

Comment: In their journey from Egypt to Canaan the Jews faced several trials. At times they were faced with danger of attack from hostile people, sometimes there was no water, or food. But instead of exercising faith in God, Who had opened a path for them through the Red Sea, many of them murmured and complained. When Moses stayed on the mountain for 40 days and nights, the people quickly did the worst thing imaginable: they made a golden calf, claiming that it was the idol that brought them from the land of Egypt. They descended to devil worship which involved immoral conduct and loose dancing. Even when they were close to the promised land, they, on the basis of the evil report brought by the spies, sought to make for themselves captains who will take them back to Egypt. (Exodus 16:1-11; Numbers 13:1-33; 14:1-45. 16:1-50; 25:1-18) Even when they had acknowledged their sin in defying God by believing the evil report, they insisted on going to war with the Amalekites whereas Moses had told them not to do so. As a result those who went were defeated.

St. Paul reflecting on these incidents as a lesson for the people of God stated: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 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 10:6-11.

Thursday July 31, 2014

Text: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” - John 1:10-12

Comment: Jesus Christ came into the world to declare the truth. (John 18:37) Unto him the world ought to hearken. (Deuteronomy 18:15) But instead of listening to him they sought to kill him because they “loved darkness rather than light”. (John 3:19-21; 8:40-44)

Some people today refuse to listen to admonitions to refrain from wicked works and follow the truth. They rather, listen to false prophets who tell them what they want to hear. (Isaiah 30:9,10) In St. Paul's letter to Timothy he stated: “I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge all men, living and dead: because of his coming and of his Kingdom, I command you to preach the message, to insist upon telling it, whether the time is right or not; to convince, reproach, and encourage, teaching with all patience,. The time will come when men will not listen to the true teaching, but will follow their own desires, and will collect for themselves more and more teachers who will tell them what they are itching to hear. They will turn away from listening to the truth and give their attention to legends”. 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Today's English Version.

Now that Jesus Christ has been crowned, his true servants and all those who have been converted to the light, must proclaim the truth to the people. The Lord Christ declared: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matthew 24:14) The hard and plain truths must be told boldly and [ersistently to sweep away the refuge of lies so that the people will know the truth. (Isaiah 28:16,17; 1 John 4:17) Jesus Christ told the Jews in those days, “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” - John 8: 43,45, 46, 47.

Friday August 1, 2014

Text: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” - Jeremiah 6:16.

Comment: As it happened in time of old and as prophesied in the Bible, ungodliness has today soared to levels unprecedented in the history of mankind. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) The gospel being preached is for those misled into error to

take the right course and find the way of escape and place of safety. (Proverbs 22:3) But despite warnings, many people today are stubbornly bent on continuing on the path of corruption, homosexuality, sexual immorality, and duplicity in the name of Christianity.

Also, despite warnings, both the young and the old, single and married are freely indulging in illicit sexual relations, contrary to the law of God. God has stated unequivocally that homosexuality, men marrying men, - and the last days variety of women marrying women is an abomination to him. But the world today, including religious leaders, are saying it is acceptable.

As Lot was vexed with unlawful deeds of the people of Sodom so, people of God today oppose homosexuality, which is one of the reasons God will destroy this world. (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 2 Peter 2:5) Those taken captive by this vice should repent with prayers to God Who will give them a new spirit to forsake the practice and be washed clean by His word. (Isaiah 1:18-20) Scripture says: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." -1Corinthians 6:9,10.

Saturday August 2, 2014

Text: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood." - Hosea 4:1,2.

Comment: In spite of admonitions, several greedy and conscienceless men and women are posing as miracle workers deceiving millions of people for monetary gain. Many are not paying heed to the warning of Jesus Christ that one of the marks of the last days is that false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. (Matthew 24:11,24) True to his words, so many magicians and witch doctors and other deceived persons are parading today as "anointed" men and women of God and many people are following them because of the promise of miracles. - Isaiah 9:16; Matthew 15:12-14; Jeremiah 5:25-31; etc

That apart, how many politicians are paying heed to exhortations that they should rule in the fear of God, as they will all give account to God some day? Those given to grabbing public funds should know that though bread of deceit may be sweet to a man, "afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel". (Proverbs 20:17) Because of greed people are never contented or satisfied and so they "join house to house, lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth" - Isaiah 5:7.

The warning cannot be over-emphasized, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase." (Proverbs 13:11) Also, "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live." (Proverbs 15:27) Leaders should use public resources for the good of the populace and not to enrich themselves. That is the only way to peace, good name and blessing of God which no money can buy. Scripture says "As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." - Jeremiah 17:11.

Sunday August 3, 2014

Text: "But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." - Proverbs 1:25-27.

Comment: Those who continue to harden their hearts in spite of these admonitions, will have themselves to blame in the end. The consequence of refusing to heed the voice of God are too horrendous to contemplate. The natural Jews suffered the consequences of disobedience as a lesson to all those who would serve God in later years. Recounting the several measures taken by God Almighty to steer the children of Israel from the path of certain destruction, the Bible says, "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, {that is, continually and carefully} and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy." -2 Chronicles 36:14-16.

Why should we not obey our Creator and live life to its fullest? St. Paul warned: "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. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." - Hebrews 3:12-14

Monday August 4, 2014

Text: "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." - Ezekiel 9:4.

Comment: The vision which Ezekiel the prophet saw, from where this text is drawn has to do with the period of grace God gives for people to be warned against evil and the time the destruction work commences. Jerusalem pictures

this evil world. (revelation 11:8) The true servants of God are empowered to preach the word to the people so that those of good heart condition, "who sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" would turn to God and serve Him sincerely and diligently until the end. The forehead is the seat of knowledge or intelligence. Setting a mark on their foreheads means giving them an intelligent understanding of the truth. When the time allotted for the preaching work is over, God will give the command for the destruction of the wicked to begin. At that time of the great tribulation, the proud and arrogant on earth shall tremble before the great power of God as it is written: "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the cave of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:10-22) To escape the forthcoming calamity, all people of goodwill must take warning now by doing the will of God as stated in His word, the truth, which He has made manifest in these last days.

That God has not taken action yet is not a sign of weakness as He is only giving all men a full and fair opportunity of knowing the truth so as to repent of their sins by taking their stand in His organisation so as to be saved. (Acts 14:16; 17:30,31) St Peter explained thus: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" - 2 Peter 3:9.

Tuesday August 5, 2014

Text: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." - Isaiah 28:20-21.

Comment: Here God Almighty uses a picture language meaning that one would be continually ill at ease, restless and unprotected. This would be the condition the wicked will find themselves in the day of the Lord's anger. Mount Perazim is the place where David, by the power of God made a breach among the Philistines. It therefore bears the idea of a sudden and complete overthrow. (2 Samuel 5:17-21; 1Chronicles 14:9-12) The Valley of Gibeon was where Joshua routed the army of Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem and four other kings who had encamped against the Gibeonites for making peace with Israel. (Joshua 10:1-11) More of the confederate forces died from hailstones than were killed by the children of Israel. When Joshua found that darkness was approaching, he prayed that the sun and moon might stand still and God hearkened to his voice, such that the sun did not go down for about a whole day, meaning that there was continuous sunlight for about two days. "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel." (Joshua 10:14) In the impending destruction of the wicked from

off the face of the earth, the devil, his demons and all visible elements in satan's organization would be affected, unlike in the first world when only "all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died". Thus, there would be no day like the day of the Lord's anger. However, before that day comes the gospel must be preached as a witness to all nations, which is the strange work, after which the strange act would follow, the destruction of the wicked. That being the case, those who are hearing the truth now must take warning, put away pride, and humble themselves to do the will of God. Matthew Luke 21:34-36.

PRAYING ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD

Prayer is a request, thanksgiving or intercession made by one to God Almighty. Prayer should be based on knowledge and understanding of the will of God so that one would not, as Apostle James said, "ask amiss". Besides, prayer is answered by God in His own time, according to His will based on what He deems best for the individual in any situation. In this age of perplexity and distress, when men's hearts are failing them because of the signs of the times, it is vital that we be regular and diligent in prayer by the grace of God.

Wednesday August 6, 2014

Text: "Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." - Jeremiah 12:1, 2.

Comment: Many people, especially the wicked or ungodly do not see the need to pray to God. This is because they feel they have got all that the heart could get in terms of material possessions and the birth of children. As it is written: "...Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:7-15) These people are materially rich but are not rich towards God. (Luke:15-21) The Bible says: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit." (Proverbs 18:11) Such people through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all their thoughts. Their ways are always grievous. (Psalm 10:4, 5) No one should follow the path of such people because their end would be desolation.

To this end, Zopher stated: "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung." (Job 20:4-9) Job, a prophet of God, advised such carnally minded persons

to seek knowledge from beasts and the fowls of the air, the earth, and the fishes of the sea. They would realise that the soul of every living thing, the breath of all mankind are in the hands of God. What He breaks down cannot be built again and what He shuts down cannot be opened by anybody. (Job 12:6-14). We should copy the example of Job who declared: "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:" - Job 5:8, 9.

Thursday August 7, 2014

Text: "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" - Luke 18:1-8.

Comment: Knowing that some worshippers would become weary of waiting on God to answer their prayers, Jesus Christ gave the parable of the persistent widow. who sought help from "a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man". Though he would not answer her for a while, "afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me". - Luke 18:1-5.

Jesus Christ then drew from the story an admonition for the people of God, as stated in the text for today. They should continue to ask God for the fulfilment of their desires, believing that He would answer them in His own due time, according to His will. When the time is due, God would answer them speedily. This calls for faith, knowledge, understanding, patience, etc. The Psalmist, stated: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." (Psalm 55:17). And St Paul stated: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2) and "Pray without ceasing." - I Thessalonians 5:17.

Because of lack of patience some have compromised their faith and turned to the devil for help. We should know that it is God Who knows when to grant us our desires as our judgments are imperfect. David declared: "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season", while St. Paul wrote: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." - Psalm 145:15; Galatians 6:9.

Friday August 8, 2014

Text: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." - Philippians 4:6, 7.

Comment: Under the perfect conditions in which man was created, nothing would have given man cause for anxieties or fears as there was no danger or want of

any kind. It was sin that brought man low such that man has to look for food, clothing, shelter, which God has provided in abundance for man to get without stress. Also, because of sin, man has become far from God and subject to the attacks of the devil whose preoccupation is "going to and fro in the earth, and ... walking up and down in it", "seeking whom he may devour". (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8) Despite being subject to the devil's onslaughts, those who want to get the salvation of God only have to look at the antitypical brazen serpent, Jesus Christ in faith and prayer so as to be saved. It is because of such assurance from God that Jesus Christ enjoins as, echoing the text for today, that we should "take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Explaining that the life is more than raiment, he stated, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" - Matthew 6:26-30.

Saturday August 9, 2014

Text: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." - Psalm 27:13, 14.

Comment: But for his patience and faith David would have lost hope of becoming king of Israel. He was still a youth when he was anointed by Samuel the prophet to be the future king of Israel. (1 Samuel 16:13,14) But he had to go through so many tribulations before he was made king. Though he made history by defeating Goliath, the giant of Gath, he thereby awakened Saul's jealousy (1 Samuel 18:6-16), and he pursued him relentlessly with the mind of killing him. (1 Samuel 18-30). Saul knowingly threw a javelin at David with the mind of pinning him to the wall with it, but he escaped. Even Saul's daughter which he promised David for his victory over Goliath, he gave her to another person and when he offered David another one, it was on the condition, that he would pay a dowry which was as good as asking him to kill 100 philistines, thinking he would die in battle. But David met the condition easily. Seeing that the persecutions from the king would not abate, David fled to Gath, a city of the Philistines, But there he was quickly recognised as the one who killed Goliath. Afraid, David started behaving like a mad man. (1 Samuel 21:15) Fleeing from there, he fled to the cave of Adulam in Judah whereunto his brethren and all his father's house came and lodged with him. Still not assured of safety, David took his father and mother to the king of Moab for protection and nourishment. (1 Samuel 22:3) All the efforts of Saul to kill David and prevent him from becoming king failed, until Saul died in battle and David was formally anointed as king of Judah in Hebron (2 Samuel 2:4). and later, over the entire nation of Israel. (2 Samuel 5:3,4) Like

David, we should take to heart the exhortation: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." - Psalm 27:14

Sunday August 10, 2014

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

Comment: After the Pharaoh who knew Joseph had died, his successor was cruel to the Jews, fearing that they would one day take over the land from them. The children of ancient Israel were forced to render slave labour to the Egyptians.. They then cried, that is, prayed fervently to God and, as the text for today says, "God heard their groaning", in that He would always keep His promises to His people. In course of time God sent Moses to redeem them from the oppressive hands of Pharaoh, who represented satan the devil at that time. (Exodus 5:1,2; 3:9-10) After God had wrought great wonders in the land of Egypt by Moses and Aaron, He delivered the Israelites in His due time. A day did not exceed the appointed time. - Exodus 12:40-42.

The years the Jews stayed in favourable conditions under the Pharaoh that knew Joseph was 30 years. But the years of oppression were 400 years. (Genesis 15:13-15; Exodus 12:40,41) What we should learn here is that even though by human calculation, it took a long time for God to deliver the Jews from the hand of Pharaoh, their faith in Him did not fade away: they continued to wait for Him. The Bible says, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." - Psalm 37:7, 3-5.

Monday August 11, 2014

Text: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." - James 5:10, 11.

Comment: James the apostle specifically recommended "the patience of Job" for us Christians to emulate under any condition, no matter how unpleasant it may be.

The cruelty of the devil as expressed in his persecution of those who are on the Lord's side was shown in the trials of Job. The devil arranged it such that the adversities came on him almost at once, one after the other. He lost his 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses, along with the servants attending them.

Another report also came that the Sabeans, apparently notorious for stealing, were moved by the devil to attack and carry off the oxen and asses, and kill the servants. That was not all. The 7000 sheep, and the shepherds that kept them; died when the "fire of God" fell from heaven and consumed them at once. Lastly, his ten children were killed when "there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men", and killed them. Note that only one person would escape to break the sad news to Job. (Job 1:13-19) We also bear in mind that the aim of the devil, was for Job to curse God and renounce his faith. We also should bear in mind the response of Job to his travails, as it is written, "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:20, 21) The Scripture also adds, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." - Job 1:22.

Tuesday August 12, 2014

Text: "For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." -Mark 11:23, 24.

Comment: As we pray, we should believe that God will do for us what we are asking from Him. We must not have any doubt in us. Jesus Christ made the statement in the text for today to exhort his disciples who were surprised that the fig tree he cursed the previous day had dried up, even from the roots. He then told them, "Have faith in God".

St. Matthew records the healing of the centurion's servant. He was sick of the palsy, "grievously tormented". When Jesus Christ offered to come and heal him the centurion said no, believing that if Jesus just spoke the word the servant would be healed. The centurion felt he was not worthy of the honour of Christ coming to his house, believing that the will of the Messiah would take effect once he gives the command, even from a distance. Our Saviour commended the faith of the centurion, saying many like him would come from various parts of the world to inherit the Kingdom of God. We should also learn from the humility of the Roman officer. For our prayers to be answered we need faith and humility. Christ told the centurion, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." - Matthew 8:5-13.

Also, a certain woman who suffered from an "issue of blood" (slow bleeding) for 12 years, "which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any", was healed instantly when she touched the edge of the garment of Jesus. And Christ said to her: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." (Luke 8: 43-48) No matter the problem we are facing, even if it looks impossible to solve by human standards, with God nothing is impossible.

Wednesday August 13, 2014

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: Our prayers to God must be said in accordance with the will of God, and we must submit ourselves to His ultimate will. Even when Jesus Christ prayed, he did not pray for the purpose of God to be overturned but subjected himself to the will of God.. And because it was the will of God, he had to taste death for every man. - Matthew 26:39,42; Hebrews 2:9-14.

What we are asking for should be based on the understanding of the will of God. God does not want us to pray to be rich overnight. That is contrary to His will. (Proverbs 13:11) Also, it is wrong to pray and give God deadlines. Such as praying to ride a car by this time next year. God does what He deems fit for His people at His own time. Again we should not pray for the death or destruction of people, but rather that they should repent to do the will of God. (Matthew 5:43-48) It should be recalled that when the disciples of Christ asked him to call for fire to come down to consume the Samaritans, "...he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." (Luke 9:55, 56) Any prayer made for one to be the only one having a particular gift, or possessing wealth while others remain poor, would not be answered. Anyone making such a prayer is asking amiss, out of selfish considerations. (James 4:3) But those who pray with faith and understanding will be heard by God. Scripture says, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." - Psalm 65:2.

Thursday August 14, 2014

Text: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13) "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." - 1 Timothy 2:5.

Comment: God Almighty sent Jesus Christ to die for man so as to reconcile us to Him. Because of the sacrifice of Christ in paying back the life Adam lost in the Garden of Eden, the door to eternal life, with its attendant blessings, is now open to all. God Almighty told the Jews regarding the Passover, that "...when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you,

when I smite the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:13) So also for Christ's sake we shall no longer perish but have everlasting life if we believe in Him. And for our prayers to be answered, they must be routed or channelled through Jesus Christ. (1 John 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:5) When our Saviour sent the 70 disciples two and two to every city and place where he himself would come, the account of Dr. Luke states that “the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” (Luke 10:17) Then Christ told them “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” (Luke 10:18) The axe is already laid at the root of the trees and the kingdom of satan is already crumbling. Those who have escaped satan's captivity must therefore be steadfast in prayer and the doing of the will of God. Jesus Christ said: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” - John 10:9, 29.

Friday August 15, 2014

Text: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.” - John 9:31.

Comment: After the man born blind had been cured by Jesus Christ, the unbelieving Jews took him on, saying they knew God spoke to Moses but as for Christ, they knew not from whence he came. The blind man then told his persecutors, “Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.” (John 9:30) He then followed up with the text for today, and added, “Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.” (John 9:32, 33) In other words, if Christ was not a man of God, his prayers would not have been answered. Truly, Christ had said, “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” (John 8:29) We should strive to do the will of God always if we expect our prayers to be answered. - Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:8.

Sin therefore is a very great obstacle to prayer. So when one is wicked or loves what is evil, his prayer will never be answered by God. And if such a wicked man has his prayer answered, it is not God Almighty that answered it but the mimic God, Satan the devil, the enemy of God. Ironically, those who are given to prostitution, indecent dressing, robbery, and other evils still pray feverishly to God, expecting Him to hear them. It is true that God Almighty is tolerant and gives each person the opportunity to repent, but that grace should not be taken to mean that God answers prayers of those who walk contrary to His will, God declared through Jeremiah, “Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?” - Jeremiah 7:8-10

Saturday August 16, 2014

Text: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." - 1 Timothy 2:8

Comment: St. Paul, stressing the importance of prayer in the life of the Christian, enjoined believers to pray "everywhere", that is wherever they are that is convenient. (Of course, one who is in danger or distress could also be praying in his heart.) Then St. Paul adds that the hands they lift up in supplication to God, should be from upright and clean hearts. God declared through Isaiah "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1, 2) Apostle Paul also says the Christian should pray without wrath. This means one should not pray while angry. The anger has to be cleared away or the issue settled before one can pray or lead prayer. This is because "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God". (James 1:20) It was anger that enveloped Moses that made him to err at the waters of Meribah when he had to strike the rock twice before water gushed out. (Numbers 20:11-13) For his error, he did not lead the congregation to the promised land. Doubt or unbelief is a barrier to prayer. On a certain occasion when Christ received word that the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue was dead he told him, "Be not afraid, only believe." His daughter was raised to life because he believed. He did not doubt. (Mark 5:35-43) Scripture says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 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. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. - James 1:5-8.

Sunday August 17, 2014

Text: "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." - Matthew 14:28-30.

Comment: While on earth, Jesus Christ made out time to be alone so as to pray to God. One example was when he was to choose the 12 apostles. (Luke 6:12,13; Mark records that Christ departed into a solitary place and there prayed. (Mark 1:35) At the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible says that Christ "was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed." (Luke 22:41) We should also follow his example by seeking out time for prayer. There was a time Christ fed 5000 people with two loaves and five fishes, after which he sent his disciples to the opposite shore while he sent the multitude away. He then went into a mountain to pray. In the fourth watch of the night, between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m., while the disciples were rowing their boat which was "in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary", Christ

walked on the sea towards them. The disciples, seeing a person walking on the sea, were afraid, and shouted that "It is a spirit". But straightway Jesus Christ calmed them down saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." But Peter requested to also walk on the water. And this was granted. "And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." In stretching out his hand to pick him from drowning, Jesus rebuked him saying "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And not only that, when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. The disciples were compelled by what they saw to worship him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God". (Matthew 14:22-33) The lesson for Christians is the danger of doubting. The devil brings boisterous winds and the raging waves to frighten the believer. But when our faith in God is firm, we shall walk over them without sinking. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." - Psalm 46:1-3

Monday August 18, 2014

Text: "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." -Matthew 17:20-21.

Comment: This statement was made by our Lord Jesus Christ following the question asked by his disciples as to why they could not cure a young man who was possessed by "a dumb spirit". (Mark 9:17). He was the only child of his father and had been so afflicted from childhood . (Luke 9:38) He had turned into a lunatic, and sore vexed: "for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water". (Matthew 17:15) The disciples must have despaired on seeing the nature of his condition. That Christ called his disciples faithless and perverse, that is, "twisted or turned from the proper direction" shows that for prayer to be answered, it must be based on strong faith, accurate knowledge of God, understanding. We must believe that with God nothing is impossible. (Jeremiah 32:27; Luke 1:37) Jesus Christ told the man "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth". (Mark 9:23) He then commanded "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." (Mark 9:25) On why they could not cure the lunatic Christ told them point blank that it was because of their unbelief adding "for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17:20) He went on to explain in the next verse that no one could get succour from spiritual ailments like that than by persistence in prayer and fasting, that is temporarily denying oneself of material pleasures in order to give oneself to sober reflection, meditation and prayer. This shows that one could fast but in a

quiet manner if he or she feels the situation warrants it. However the most important fasting is the doing of righteousness of God at all times. - Isaiah 58:6,7; Matthew 6:16-18

Tuesday August 19, 2014

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 shalt glorify me." - Psalm 50:14, 15.

Comment: God Almighty takes pleasure in His people showing appreciation to Him whether through oral expression of such thanks, by songs of praise or by freewill offerings. Christians have every reason to be thankful: for the gift of life, for the things created for man's benefit, for the protection and guidance we receive daily and for opening the way to eternal life for man in spite of the fall in the Garden of Eden. But the most important form of thanksgiving to God is faithful service. -Psalm 116:12-14

It is remarkable that of the ten lepers Christ cured, it was the Samaritan among them (whom the Jews despised) that came back to say "thank you" to Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ commended and blessed him shows that it is highly rewarding to always say "thank you" for good done to one. (Luke 17:11-19) St. Paul stated: "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."- 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

A vow, is a pledge to fulfil an agreement or to make a pledge. It is a voluntary and binding promise made to God. The Scriptures make us to understand that it is better not than to dilly-dally or not to pay what one has vowed after God has granted him his desire, Ecclesiastes 5:4,5. Compare Deuteronomy 23:21-23.

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

DISCIPLINE

According to the Webster's New World Dictionary, discipline is defined as "training that develops self-control, character, efficiency; orderly conduct; acceptance of or submission to authority and control; a system of rules as for a Church ... that corrects or punishes..."

Discipline in word, thought and action is the hallmark or characteristic of every Christian. By their high standards of discipline many have attained fame and the blessings of God while others have tarnished their long periods of faithful service to God (and humanity) and plunged themselves down the valley through indiscipline. The following exhortations on discipline would be of immense benefit to the worshipper of God by His grace.

Wednesday August 20, 2014

Text: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all Churches of the saints. Let all things be done decently and in order." - 1 Corinthians 14:33,40.

Comment: God Almighty is a God of order. All His ways are according to His laws through which His will is expressed. He desires that His people should do things in conformity with His divine standards. It is by God's immutable or unchanging laws that order is maintained in the entire universe and it is when mankind keeps the laws of God that there will be order and peace in the earth. The Bible says that "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) It is because all His ways are governed by laws that the way of life is described by Jesus Christ as narrow and strait, as distinct from the broad way. - Matthew 7:13, 14.

Indiscipline manifests in many forms. Apart from breaking the laws of God and instructions by leaders of the Church, there are aspects such as attending services late or not at all, not carrying out duties assigned to one, going to work late or not going at all; failure to take permission from superiors before going out, etc. A military government in Nigeria found the issue of indiscipline to be so serious that it took steps to correct the situation by launching what it called "War Against Indiscipline" (WAI) with queuing in public places such as Banks, Post Offices and Bus stops as its corner stone. The leaders who clamour for discipline in society, especially church leaders, must of course show example. They should not be found breaking the laws they had made. They must not do just what they like without regard to the likely impact of their conduct on others. The Bible says, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." - Romans 2:1.

Thursday August 21, 2014

Text: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." - Genesis 3: 6.

Comment: After creating man, God commanded him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16-17) The law was meant to discipline man. It was a test of his obedience to God. But unfortunately, they succumbed to the Devil's temptation. The fruit appealed to her sense of self importance and worth. She determined to exercise her will contrary to God's law. Though Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2: 14), he yielded to the desire of the woman and ate the fruit. It was sheer indiscipline for the two to choose to violate the law of God. In keeping with His divine law, God Almighty imposed the death sentence on them. (Genesis 3: 16-19) If Adam and Eve had obeyed the law, they would

have been permitted, in due time, to eat of the fruit of the tree of life and live for ever. (Genesis 3:22; Revelation 2:7) Satan has continued to employ the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” to lure people from God. Apostle John warned: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” - 1 John 2:15-17.

Friday August 22, 2014

Text: “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” - Romans 7:14-19.

Comment: Due to the influence of the devil following Adam's fall, man constantly wrestles with the forces of good and evil. St. Paul lamented the untoward situation when he spoke of the continual temptation which the worshipper faces to do wrong whereas his better inclination is to do that which is right, as stated in the text for today. However, in spite of the disabilities imposed by sin, those who are “willing and obedient” to the laws of God can “learn to do well” and become disciplined people, victorious over sin through Jesus Christ. (Romans 7:24, 25; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Isaiah 1: 18-20) It follows therefore that true wisdom lies in keeping the laws of God by exercising discipline. (Proverbs 1:7) Hence the Prophet Moses charged the natural Jews in time of old: “ 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

It is the nations whose people exercise discipline that are great in the world. Discipline is the bedrock of harmony, peace and progress. Scripture says: “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34) The Bible also says: “He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.” - Job 36:9-12.

Saturday August 23, 2014

Text: “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” - Hebrews 12:5-7.

Comment: Sin means violation of the laws of God in thoughts, words and actions. Since man is imperfect, anyone who sins will be corrected by God through His word so that those who are humble and therefore obedient will be able to retrace setrace will be reconciled to Him. St. Paul dwelt extensively on the chastening of God which he likened to that of a father correcting his children, as stated in the text for today. He further declared: "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." - Hebrews 12:8-11.

Those who are self-willed and who despise authorities lack discipline and are not doing the will of God. God Almighty commanded through Moses: "Ye shall not do every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." (Deuteronomy 12:17; See also Titus 1:7) And Solomon advised; "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. See also Romans 12:16

Sunday August 24, 2014

Text: "We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us saying, ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. Neither shall ye build house, nor any seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he charged us..." - Jeremiah 35: 6-10.

Comment: The Rechabites, by their obedience to the laws given them by their father, left a fine example of discipline for succeeding generations to follow. When offered wine by the prophet Jeremiah, they refused to drink explaining that it was the law given them by their father who also directed them not to build houses or plant vineyards as the text for today states.

It is noteworthy that the children of Rechab denied themselves of worldly glory and comforts and quietly bore the hard conditions which obedience to the instructions made by their father entailed. God blessed them for their discipline in obeying a law made by man and emphasized that their conduct was superior to that of the Jews who disobeyed laws made by Him. (God Almighty) - Jeremiah 35: 15,16, 18-19.

The Scriptures enjoin us to obey "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake..." (1 Peter 2:13) We should obey the instructions and directives made by the elders of the Church or by our governments and community leaders that are not

contrary to the will of God. By so doing we show ourselves as disciplined people. (Hebrews 13:7,16,17) Those who refuse to follow the laws of God and of His ministers are disorderly and are not doing the will of God. Concerning such people, St Paul stated: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you..." (2 Thessalonians 3: 6,7,14. See also Romans 16:17-18) It is a mark of discipline for a true disciple of Christ to subject himself to the rebuke or chastisement from the servants of God for his own good. - Psalm 141:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; 1 Timothy 5:20

Monday August 25, 2014

Text: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."- 1 Corinthians 9;24-27.

Comment: To be a fitting vessel for the Lord's use, the servant of God must himself be disciplined. St. Paul described himself as a prisoner of Christ, because though free, he was bound to faithfully keep to the laws and instructions of God and not use his "liberty for an occasion to the flesh." (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1-3; Galatians 5:13) Expounding on the need for utmost self-control or discipline in the race of life, St. Paul made the famous declaration in the text for today. The apostle here alludes to the athletic exercises in the games which were celebrated in Corinth and other parts of Greece, which included running, wrestling, boxing, throwing the discus etc. Needless to say that the Corinthian Christians were well aware of these games. If athletes could deny themselves voluntarily for relatively less important things as getting a crown of flowers or garlands after winning the race, the Christians must strive harder to get salvation. In the worldly games only one received the prize, though all ran. But in the race of salvation all who ran, following the rules will receive the prize. However, for us to obtain the prize we must be "temperate in all things". As those preparing for the games went through hard preparations in terms of restrictions on food and drinks, continuous training, irrespective of weather conditions in order to excel at the games, so people of God must put pleasures aside in order to win in the race of life. Moreover, despite the rigours they had to go through, the worldly athletes were not certain of the victory. Some would be like the boxer who beats the air thus wasting his energies without hitting the target. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway", said St. Paul. We also must run in an orderly or disciplined manner with all our hearts until the end, so that our work will not be rejected in the end by God Almighty.

Tuesday August 26, 2014

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

Comments: The world today is steeped in the sins of sexual immorality in utter disregard of the laws of God. This trend is at the instance of the devil who turns things upside down (Isaiah 29:16) He makes vice or sin appear "civilized", polished and acceptable to men so that they may be destroyed along with him. St. Paul warned: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." He added: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them." - Ephesians 5:3-5,6-7.

Today the sins of homosexuality (men having sexual relations with men) and lesbianism (women having sexual relations with women) are gaining acceptance, particularly in the Western world. These heinous sins are being given a badge of respectability in the name of human rights, gender equality and so on. There were homosexuals and lesbians at the time of St. Paul and he did not mince words in condemning these practices as evidence of gross degeneration for which such will be destroyed except they repent. (Romans 1:25-27) It must be made clear that it is not only those who break the law but those who support, encourage and close their eyes to such acts that are guilty before God. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." - Romans 1:32; See also Isaiah 65: 11-12.

Wednesday August 27, 2014

Text: "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 1:10.

Comment: What must be pointed out is that Christians must lead the fight in warning people against loose behaviours for which those who are guilty will be punished by God. A dangerous trend in the world is the distribution of family planning devices to men and women and even children free of charge or at reduced price thus giving them the confidence to engage in immoral behaviours without fear of contracting diseases. It is a great irony that the governments who should stem the incidence of AIDS, and of other diseases spread through indiscriminate sexual relations and should be worsening the situation by

encouraging men and women to be even more irresponsible in their sexual behaviour. And this is in spite of their acknowledgment that the family planning devices are not fool-proof against AIDS infections! No wonder in spite of efforts over the years, the AIDS scourge is marching on relentlessly, according to reports. St. Paul says: Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." - Romans 2:22-24.

Thursday August 28, 2014

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

Comment: In his charge to the church at Laodiceans, one of the churches in Asia in those days, Jesus Christ chastised them for being "neither cold nor hot" and for being "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17), all because of their worldliness. It is instructive however, that the Lord stressed the importance of being properly clothed so that the shame of their nakedness do not appear. Though used in a figurative sense, the point is made that nakedness provokes or invites shame and embarrassment. One's dressing or outward appearance makes statements about his or her level of discipline. People are known by what they wear. A person of loose moral character is likely to dress in a certain way. It would be recalled that when Tamar the daughter in law of Judah saw that Sheah (the son of Judah) was grown and she was not given to him as wife, she disguised herself by dressing as a harlot by which attire, Judah noticed her. (Genesis 38:14) And Solomon the prophet speaks of a woman who dressed herself "with the attire of an harlot" in order to entice men. (Proverbs 7:10) The trend in fashion these days among women is to expose as much of the body as possible, leaving the wearer practically naked. A number of complaints in the media have lamented that indiscipline in dressing among youths, but mostly with girls and women, was now turning into a national calamity. A Christian with the knowledge of God's standards of order, decency and good taste must exercise good judgment on the matter of clothing and avoid ungodly emulation. - Galatians 5:19.

Apostle John says: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of

the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” - 1 John 2:15-17.

Friday August 29, 2014

Text: “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.” - Proverbs 28:20.

Comment: It is a mark of discipline for a Christian not to be high minded but to be contented with what one has. There are many God fearing Christians today who have opportunity to make millions of naira through dubious means but have desisted from doing so. Others have also picked up from the road huge sums of money or returned large amounts wrongly credited to them. Such ones should be commended and encouraged not ridiculed or abused. God will bless them for their faithfulness and discipline. The Bible says that “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” (Proverbs 22:1) And that “He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.” (Proverbs 28:22) The Bible says we should not mind high things. (Romans 12:16) And St. Paul exhorted: “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. But thou O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” Timothy 6: 6-10

Saturday August 30, 2014

Text: “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.” - Proverbs 21:23.

Comment: To be disciplined in our use of the tongue, we should be mindful of what we say, where we say it, the time or under what situation we say it. The Bible says that our words should be few. (Ecclesiastes 5:2) Scripture also says, “He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.” (Proverbs 17:27, 28) Because some people do not think before they talk, they end up creating quarrels, causing confusion and misleading people. That is why Solomon stated that it is more honorable for a man, who, having nothing to say, remains silent “Despite inflation, a penny is still a fair price for too many people’s thoughts” is a popular saying by John Ploughman.

To warn people to be careful what they say our Lord Jesus Christ warns that we shall give account of every idle word we utter. (Matthew 12:36,37) It should be understood why David declared “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” (Psalm 39:1) Because the tongue is “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”

David the prophet said he would keep a bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, in order to keep it in check. One has to be determined and disciplined to reason on his thoughts before voicing them out and even when he decides to speak to be able to filter his thoughts as to know what to say and what things to leave out. The servants of God are given His spirit “the tongue of the learned ... to know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary”. Solomon the prophet stated, “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.” -Proverbs 12:18.

Sunday August 31, 2014

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

Comment: Among the questions which St. Paul was required to answer by the Christians at Corinth was whether it was right to purchase and eat the meat which had been sacrificed to idols, and which were exposed indiscriminately with other meat in the market. (1Corinthians 10:25) He explained that whatsoever was sold in the markets they should feel free to eat because everything on earth belongs to God. If one is invited by an unbeliever to a feast he should also eat what is offered without first asking if the meat had been offered to idols first. However if someone points out to the Christian that the meat had been offered to idols, then he should refrain from eating, not because the superstitions involved in sacrificing meat to idols carry any weight, but in order not to injure the faith of the other person. Things may be lawful for one to do but may not be expedient. (1 Corinthians 10:23) He then followed with the exhortation which should be a constant rule of conduct, which we should be often reminded of - that whether we eat or drink and indeed in whatever we are doing we should ensure that it leads people to faith, that it gives glory to God. This admonition should also guide Christians to avoid foods specially served in honour of ancestors, idols or gods in the name of tradition. These include the practice of eating “new” corn or “new” yam only after sacrifices had been made and libation poured, after which a big feast is made in which all members of the community gather to eat. A Christian should not be at such ceremonies. “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 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 10:20, 21.

Monday September 1, 2014

Text: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” - 1 Timothy 2:9, 10.

Comment: Our dressing or appearance should reflect our faith as worshippers of God. Scriptures say our moderation should be known to all men and this should

reflect in our dressing. (1 Timothy 2:9,10) When a professed Christian is preoccupied with dressing, going for very expensive wears and changing often to reflect current trends, taste, circumstance or occasion, with shoes, bags, jewellery to match each attire, then the focus will be on the dressing than on any thing spiritual. The Bible enjoins wives particularly, to ensure that their hairdressing, jewellery, cosmetics should not be loud, showy or excessive. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:3, 4) We should be disciplined in our dressing and not follow the fashion of this world that would soon pass away. (1 John 2:15-17) What God wants is for us to dress according to our gender, in a way that fulfils the function of clothing, which is to provide protection, warmth and pleasant appearance to the wearer. The Bible says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." - 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Tuesday September 2, 2014

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

Comment: It is a natural instinct in human beings to cover their nakedness. That was why after Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit, and "the eyes of them both were opened", that they "knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7) After sentence had been passed on them, the Lord's representative made them clothes of coats of skins. It is clear therefore that God is against nakedness. However, the tendency to expose more and more of the body has been gaining popularity in the last five decades or so. In fact, the use of underwear as outerwear has been recurrent in fashion history and has continued into modern times. This is apparently inspired by the desire "to shock" especially among the young, who now "have both the money and the leisure time necessary to reject the established order and to devise a look of their own". (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2012) The trend of women wearing male clothing has also become established in many societies across the globe, such that it is difficult sometimes to tell a woman's gender from her dressing. This is contrary to the Bible standard. (Deuteronomy 22:5) St. Paul. in his letter to the Corinthians highlighted the absurdity of cross-gender dressing when he said, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (1 Corinthians 11:14) St. Peter exhorted, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." - 1 Peter 4:1, 2.

Wednesday September 3, 2014

Text: "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." - 1 Peter 3:10, 11.

Comment: We must be disciplined in our use of the tongue, by being mindful of what we say, where we say it, the time or under what situation we say it. Those who would be given life by God must not be given to lie-telling. They must speak the truth to one another, such that their yes should be yes and their no, no . (Matthew 5:37; Zechariah 8:16) When one makes a vow he should keep it, for it is better not to make a vow than to vow and not fulfil it. (Ecclesiastes 5:4) Some people simply open their mouths and talk or make jokes without thinking about the ordinary and deeper meanings and implications of the words spoken.

That way they had injured persons unintentionally. "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him." (Proverbs 29:20) Generally, words should be the product of one's thoughts and therefore offer the yardstick to judge what is in one's heart. Hence Christ said: "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matthew 12:34, 35) The Holy Bible says that we shall give account of every idle word we utter with our mouth. It also says that "Whoso keepeth (or disciplines) his mouth and tongue keepeth his soul from trouble" (Proverbs 21:23) and that our words should be few. (Ecclesiastes 5:2; Proverbs 17:27, 28) We should therefore keep our hearts with all diligence knowing that out of it are the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23) This is by cultivating thoughts that are in harmony with the will of God so as to be directed by the spirit of God so that the words spoken would edify the listener. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." - Matthew 12:36.

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

Thursday September 4, 2014

Text; Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? - Job 4:7

Comment: Some people have long been exercised by the question of whether it pays to be godly. They say that it is the wicked, those who defy God and sacred things, that live long and prosper, without apparently suffering any punishment for their wrong doing. (Job 21:7-12) Because things are going so well for them without their having to submit to the restraints imposed by Christianity "they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:14, 15) The latter verses of Job 21 shows that the glory of the wicked is temporary and that they do suffer the consequences of their

actions while alive on earth. (Job 21:17) There is also the punishment the wicked would suffer when they are raised to life for judgment. (John 5:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 5:10) Thus, the counsel of the wicked, as Job said, should be far from the people of God. (Job 21:16) It is at the sanctuary of God one can know the truth about their end in that their "glory" is temporary. (Psalm 73:17) However, the innocent will be protected and blessed in this world and given life eternal in the world to come. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." - Ecclesiastes 8:11-13

Friday September 5, 2014

Text: "If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, Yet if they ... repent, and make supplication unto thee ...saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; Then hear thou their prayer ... And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee." - 1 Kings 8: 46-50.

Comment: The text for today is drawn from the prayer made by King Solomon at the dedication of the temple, in which he acknowledged that even the most dedicated worshipper makes mistakes sometimes. David the prophet said he was shapen in iniquity and in sin he was born. (Psalm 51:5) That being the case, each person has to strive by the grace of God to overcome the flaws and infirmities that keep him from reaching his full potentials. St. Paul blamed the sin in him for fostering in him the desire for things which his better inclination told him were wrong. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:23) He thanked God however for the sacrificial work of Christ in freeing the people of God from the power of sin (Romans 7:24,25) Though struggling for perfection, the true worshipper would definitely make mistakes now and then because of his human nature. These however are not deliberate sins but errors that come about because of human imperfection. Once such an one is overtaken in a fault, he quickly repents and refrains from doing such a thing again. There is danger however when one justifies one's sins and continues to wallow in them. That was the error of Adam, he blamed the woman for his sin in eating the fruit and ultimately, God Almighty for giving him the woman. He thereby covered up his transgression. (Genesis 3:9-12; Job 31:33) "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." - Proverbs 28:13,14.

Saturday September 6, 2014

Text: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" - Micah 6:8.

Comment: Having created man on earth and provided them with everything they needed for a happy life, God Almighty made it clear that man would continue to enjoy these benefits on the condition that they continue to live up to the reason they were created, which is to worship their Creator. Moses declared: "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13) Thus, what God Almighty requires from His worshippers is sincere and dedicated service. Though occupying different positions in His organisations there is no difference in the level of dedication required of each person. (Psalm 84:10-12) Dedication to God's service means subordinating one's desires and interests to do the will of God, manifesting the fruits of the spirit and forsaking the works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21) Also, for one to be counted as just, he must be prepared to study the word of God constantly, adjusting his lifestyle to the truth and be determined to serve God until the end. - Psalm 27:4,5; Matthew 24:12,13.

Sunday September 7, 2014

Text: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." - John 6:38.

Comment: Jesus Christ came not only to teach us by precept but also by example. He did not go about carrying out his own preferences or plans as to how the work of God should be done. Rather, it was what God directed him to do that he gave himself to, completely. It would be recalled that at the time he was to die, he prayed fervently for it to pass away from him but that was not the will of God and so he "prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done". (Matthew 26:42) Christ has given us the example to do as he had done. (John 13:15) No true worshipper of God therefore will go about doing "whatsoever is right in his own eyes". (Deuteronomy 12:8) Or "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:" (Deuteronomy 29:19) Let us all be part of the men, women, boys and girls who are morally upright, humble and willing to do the Lord's will by His grace. Such ones, known as the meek, could make mistakes, but not knowingly or deliberately. Not being perfect, they do not relish in such errors but make efforts to rise above such misdeeds in the future by the grace of God. St. Paul states, "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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus 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.

Monday September 8, 2014

Text: “For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” - Psalm 1:6.

Comment: Abraham, Lot, Noah, Moses, Simeon, Zechariah, and so on were righteous. Though they were surrounded by sinful men, they never compromised their faith but were always grieved by the wickedness going on around them. Concerning Lot the Bible says that “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 2:8) Regarding the priest Zechariah, we are told that he and his wife Elizabeth “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”. Luke 1: 5-7.

From the instances just cited, one can see that these faithful men were adjudged righteous by God because of their sincerity in keeping His laws by His grace. We cannot claim to be devout worshippers of God today and expect Him to hear us, unless we honestly and diligently keep His laws. For a man to be counted righteous, he must have the accurate knowledge of God. But to have knowledge is not enough because there are many people who have knowledge but are not reflecting it in their day-to-day conduct. In fact they just relish in the glory of being counted among the Lord's flock. It follows therefore that the person must have strong faith or belief in the knowledge he has as to be moved to translate it into practice in the fear of God. (Hebrews 4:1, 2) As one grows in knowledge and in the practice of the faith, the spirit of God in him will be growing also and he will be showing forth the fruits of the spirit, withstand trials and declare the truth to others. 'The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' - Job 17:9.

Tuesday September 9, 2014

Text: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” - Hebrews 12:14,15.

Comment: The problems that afflict man today are many and varied, filling him with “labour and sorrow” such that it is even a miracle that people not only live up to three score and ten years but also enjoy additional years of grace, as stated in the Bible. (Psalm 90:10) In the words of the prophet Job “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not”. (Job 14:1,2. See also Chapter 5:6, 7) Though we are all born in sin, there are times when the just are confronted by various difficulties, which St. Peter calls “fiery trial” that may shake one's faith to its foundations.

In the last days or “perilous times” in which we are now living these troubles have multiplied in variety and magnitude. They could be personal, inter-personal, educational and/or even, vocational. The Christian should maintain his focus and should not be intimidated or scared, knowing that these troubles are from satan the devil and come to the Christian because he has taken his stand on the Lord's side. We should be prayerful knowing that with time we shall overcome by the grace of God. St. Paul stated, “That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.” (1 Thessalonians 3:3, 4) As the text for today shows we should not allow any bitterness to take root in us because of difficulties we face to the extent of denying our faith. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” - 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Wednesday September 10, 2014

Text: “Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” - Matthew 11:2, 3.

Comment: For condemning the action of Herod in taking his brother's wife (Herodias) from him, John the Baptist was thrown into prison. Under the weight of the sufferings he was undergoing in prison, John the Baptist faced a crisis of faith, which impelled him to send word to Christ to confirm if he was indeed the Messiah. In other words, if the Saviour had come why was he going through all that suffering? The depth of crisis could more easily be seen when we recall that it was John the Baptist who identified Christ as one “the latchet of whose shoes he is not worthy to loose”. (Luke 3:16; John 1:15, 16) It was he who saw Christ and proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) How come he is now asking whether Christ is the one that should come, or whether they should look for another? The intensity of suffering had made his humanity to tell on him. To show to the messengers that he is indeed the Messiah, Jesus Christ did a number of miracles in their presence so that they will convey the message to John. “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” (Matthew 11:5,6) Thus, even an elder in the work of God can become confused and weak because of fiery trial. In such instances, other worshippers should encourage him and strive to restore the person to the path of life. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. - Galatians 6:1.

Thursday September 11, 2014

Text: “So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no

comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun... - Ecclesiastes 4:1-4.

Comment: Many are the obstacles that challenge the faith of the person of goodwill in his efforts to remain on the path of righteousness always. The devil puts up so many stumbling blocks to cause the unwary to lose his footing such that he would not be able get up. The devil knows man's make up that man is primarily concerned about his well being and happiness. He therefore does things that negatively affects man's physical, emotional and psychological state such that many would feel one were better dead than alive, as said in the text for today. Some would even give in and fulfill the devil's desire, which is for the worshipper to "curse God and die". The situation around us is really cloudy: Infectious diseases are spreading and man is unable to check them; many youths have resorted to anger and violence because of the multitude of problems that beset them, while some among the adults submit to a life withdrawal and sadness. There are those who have difficulty sleeping (insomnia) while others sleep too much (hypersomnia); some feel frequently fatigued, have significant but unintentional weight loss (or wait gain) due to decrease or increase in appetite. Some take to womanizing, smoking, alcoholism and other drugs; some want to hurt themselves or even harbour suicidal tendencies. Older persons have problem of loneliness, self-pity, physical aches and pains, feeling of purposelessness; some handicapped persons wallow in resentment, loneliness and self pity and a sense of uselessness. Whatever may be the condition the worshipper may find himself, he should know that he is suffering because of inherited sin due to the influence of satan the devil. The way to peace and life by God's grace, is to focus on the purpose for man's existence and to strive to fulfill it, in harmony with the word of God. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. - Isaiah 57:15.

Friday September 12, 2014

Text; "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." - 1Thessaloonians 5:3.

Comment: That this age will be beset by a multiplicity of troubles had long been prophesied in the Bible, which refers to this age as "the latter day", "time of the end" or the "last days". (Daniel 12:10; 2 Timothy 3:12-13) Because the leaders would be trying to right the wrongs and fix the problems in the world by their own efforts, their efforts would collapse on their heads when they least expect; just when they think they have succeeded in dealing with one problem or the other. For instance, worse variants of existing illnesses and new diseases keep coming

up when scientists announce they had found solutions to existing ones. The extent of the problems facing the world cannot but lead to the conclusion that the reasons are spiritual: they are caused by the devil who, having been cast down from heaven by Jesus Christ, has great wrath "because he knoweth that he hath but a short time". (Revelation 12:12) These problems present serious challenges for the ardent christian. Some have even fallen from the faith. In the early church there were those who could not continue due to the persecutions visited on them by the devil, Our Lord Jesus Christ therefore sent warning to the churches to take heed lest they also fall. Really, man does not have the power to solve the problems of the world on his own. St. Paul declared, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." - 1 Corinthians 3:18-19.

Saturday September 13, 2014

Text: "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" -Jeremiah 8:9.

Comment: The wise men and intellectuals of the world despise the righteousness of God and struggle to solve the world's problems by their own efforts. As long as they reject the wisdom of God, they will continue to fail. For instance, after seeing the follies and brutalities of the First and Second World Wars the leading powers of the world set up the United Nations on October 24, 1945, as a kind of world government, in which nations would act in concert to solve common problems and thereby ensure peace for mankind. But the facts so far have informed a more humble and realistic view of man's capacity to tackle the challenges that confront him every second. Writing on the arrangements for the largest ever gathering of world statesmen for the 60th anniversary of the UN to hold on 24th October 2005, Mr. George Kerevan, a columnist for The Scotsman, a British newspaper, declared that the "global realities have made a mockery of pretensions to a world government" and described the last decade (1995-2005) as the worst for the UN following the genocide in Rwanda, the Balkans, the Sudan, the wholesale proliferation of nuclear weapons technology, "under the nose of the UN Watchdog", the war in Iraq and the Middle East Crisis. He believed the UN is "an idea whose time has been and gone". The Scotsman Thursday September 15, 2005, page 31.

Other commentators have spoken of the inevitable failure of the campaign by the United Nations to "Make Poverty History" in view of the fact that in Africa Hunger kills more people than the HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined and that the number of hungry people are rising every year by almost five million the total around the world now estimated at 852 million. It is only when people do the righteousness of God that He will give them peace and happiness, in the world to come by His grace. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall

dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” -Isaiah 32:17, 18.

Sunday September 14, 2014

Text: “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.” - Luke 1:5-7.

Comment: Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth had no child. The Bible says they were both righteous before God and were blameless. In spite of their condition they had continued to serve God diligently. It is true that sometimes the righteous suffer like the wicked. (Ecclesiastes 8:14) When God Almighty created the woman Eve and gave her to Adam, he blessed them and said they should be fruitful. (Genesis 1:26-28) We could see therefore that God never intended any woman not to have children. But the reality today is that a significant number of couples have been seeking desperately to become pregnant. The couple should draw comfort from the word of God and exercise faith in Him with Whom there is no impossibility. (Philippians 4:6, 7; Luke 1:37; Jeremiah 32:27,17) They should give themselves to the doing of the will of God and should use their time well by rendering service to humanity. Jesus Christ said, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” - Luke 21:19.

God Almighty is the One Who “maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children”. (Psalms 113:9) The Christian should however avoid idolatry. Even if one gets a child through the devil's agents, such a person would get more problems that he would prefer to have remained childless. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward”, declared St. Paul. He also said, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” - Hebrews 10:35, 38.

Monday September 15, 2014

Text: “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.” - Psalm 33:18, 19.

Comment: The devil, knowing that with the shield of faith, we will be able to quench all the fiery darts he has aimed at us, creates various problems to overthrow our faith so that we may become hopeless and therefore defenceless. All those in one crisis or the other should submit themselves to Jehovah's guiding care and not allow themselves to be swayed. We should not backslide because that is worse. We must therefore continue to forge ahead, come what may, by the grace of God. - Luke 9:62.

One needs to be hopeful at all times, for hopelessness is not part of the Christian life. It is faith coupled with patience that enables us by the grace of God to maintain our confidence in God even when surrounded by afflictions. Faith means no one can actually tell us that we will never get well, we can never have children, we can never get married, pursue our education, or career because "All things are possible to him that believeth", as stated by Jesus Christ. (Mark 9:23) Once we keep doing the work of God with sincerity, and patience, working hard in all our endeavours, learning from our mistakes, we shall overcome our problems and will be raised by God. St. Paul, recalling the words of the Psalmist exhorted 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. 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.

Tuesday September 16, 2014

Text: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." - Hosea 13:14.

Comment: Occasionally we are thrown into mourning because of the loss of loved ones. Death has a profound effect on individuals in the family and the family unit and even the larger society. The devil however troubles some people with death more than others. When children lose their parents they generally feel unhappy about it, wishing they lived longer. But what of the situation where it is the parents who are burying their children? There are cases where the only child of the couple or even of a widow dies just after completing his or her final examinations in the university or even the National Youth Service. What of parents who lose their children and in some cases those who are the bread winners in the family? During a plane crash in Nigeria some years ago, a woman had to bear the pain of watching as the aircraft carrying her three children burst into flames consuming all of them. Some pains are indeed too much for tears.

Christians who lose their loved ones should have firm belief in the promise of the resurrection of the dead, when death will be no more. They submit themselves to the care of the Almighty Who "is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works".(Psalm 145:9) St. Paul asserted: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable". -1 Corinthians 15:19.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope", said apostle Paul, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words". 1Thessalonians 4:13, 14,18.

Wednesday September 17, 2014

Text: 'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:' - Ephesians 5:6-8.

Comment: It is common talk among those who scoff at the word of God that the lives of those who give themselves to righteousness would be "bound in sorrows and in miseries" and that there is nothing like judgment or a future life in God's Kingdom. They therefore go all out "to take the current when it serves", to use every opportunity to oppress, cheat and do violence to their neighbours in order to satisfy their selfish interests. It is well known that those who are righteously inclined, who refuse to steal money or cheat and who try to do good generally are derided by some as fools who are living in the past. These wrong counsels are what St. Paul calls "vain words" of those disobedient to the truth. People of God should not reward evil with evil but should trust in God Almighty, the God of Justice and continue to do what is right until God will vindicate them. (Proverbs 23:17; 1 Peter 3:10-13) They should not be bothered by the gloating of the godless who say: "...Where is now their God?" (Psalm 115:2; 79:10)

The fact is that the truth cannot be permanently suppressed neither will righteousness go unrewarded. The righteous should therefore continue to maintain their faith. When God's time comes, all the wicked will be punished by God Himself, (Isaiah 33:1) and the person who is right will be vindicated. Psalm 104:27. Proverbs 11:19,21

What is required of us is to trust God and maintain the faith. "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." - Psalms 37:3-6.

Thursday September 18, 2014

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

Comment; Those who keep on seeking righteousness and meekness in this age of Christ's second presence will be rewarded abundantly not only now but in the world to come. (Mark 10:28-30; 1 Corinthians 2:9,10) In God's due time, He will kill satan the devil and wickedness, and hard times, sorrow and pains and death will be no more. Our joy will become perfect and undisturbed. Concerning the bruising of the devil which people of God have long been yearning for, God Almighty spoke in this wise: "...Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake

kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?" (Isaiah 14:14-17) In the book of Ezekiel God states of the same event thus: "All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more". - Ezekiel 28:19.

It is with the understanding that God will eventually destroy the devil and save His people that God Almighty gives the following exhortation through the prophet Isaiah saying "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." (Isaiah 35:3,4) When all wickedness is put away by God and man attains perfection by the grace of God in Paradise, the Third world, that is, the world without end, this text will fulfil: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away". - Revelation 21:4

Friday September 19, 2014

Text; 'For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.' - Isaiah 65:17, 18.

Comment: Today, due to the devil's handiwork, the types of sickness in the world are so many. And some of them have neither been really understood nor cures found for them. Having to cope with pains every day and to take medicines every time is truly tiring and frustrating, especially when it is evident the situation will continue for life. The just should have the consolation that in the kingdom of God these would be no more. God has promised a better life in His Kingdom when fully established where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." - Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:4.

Also, God Almighty has never intended that anybody should be hungry in this world. He has provided food and other resources in abundance for mankind. But the devil has cornered the riches of the world and placed them in the hands of godless people. The idea is to lure the meek and godly ones to copy the pernicious and arrogant ways of those the devil is using. The people of God should not be deceived into compromising their faith thereby violating their conscience in order to get their hands at the bigger pie. We should remain firm in our faith in the Lord's provisions. He will surely provide for us our daily bread by His grace. - Matthew 6: 11,25-34; Proverbs 23:17; 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34.

The fact that the best human efforts have failed to secure happiness for mankind, is proof to one and all that only in God Almighty lies salvation. (Psalm 3:8; Isaiah 45:22) This should reassure the people of God and caution those still looking to Egypt for help. - Jeremiah 3:22,23; Isaiah 31:1

Let us therefore march on with faith that the time will come when all our travails in this world shall not even “be remembered nor come into mind”. (Isaiah 65:17) David the prophet declared: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” - Psalm 126:1-6

THE DANGER OF TALE BEARING AND RASH JUDGMENT

Saturday September 20, 2014

Text: “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.” - Romans 3:7, 8.

Comment: In this text St. Paul speaks of how some people, through the influence of the devil, misrepresent him and his colleagues, putting them in bad light before the public. They even say they heard St. Paul to be preaching that when people do evil or break the laws of God, good will follow them. St. Paul says the charge amounts to slander, which is the act or offence of saying something false or malicious with the intent of damaging someone's reputation. Those who were spreading such lies just wanted to present St. Paul and his colleagues as false prophets who should be avoided. Those who indulge in such actions are opposers of the work of God and will never go unpunished, unless they repent. Such ones are working to further the devil's futile plot to destroy the work of God and drag all the children of God to destruction.

But by God's grace, the true converts who, like St. Paul and others, know why they are serving God, will not be moved by such misrepresentations; they will not look back. St. Paul stated, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake ...” (2 Corinthians 12:10) We too should continue to forge ahead in spite of misrepresentations by people who do not want to do the righteousness of God but prefer to follow the devil's devices. “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.” - 1 Peter 3:16-17.

Sunday September 21, 2014

Text: “And more over I saw under the sun the place of judgement, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.” - Ecclesiastes 3:16;

Comment: This statement by Solomon, a prophet and king in his days, shows that there are people who are not afraid to do evil in God's organisation, which should be a haven for righteousness. Truly, did God declare through Jeremiah that “among my people are found wicked men”. (Jeremiah 5:26) Some spoil their

neighbours because that person is firm or strict in insisting on adherence to Christian principles. Others do so because of envy - they are disturbed that their neighbour is manifesting certain gifts for which he has become popular or is likely to be so. Some slander others because they want to outshine the other person and get more respect, honour or get a higher position in the Organisation. Whatever the case, it is wicked and dangerous to indulge in backbiting, tale bearing and slander. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:16) And "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." (Proverbs 20:19) The warning to the true servants of God, who are examples to all Christians is that they should carry on with the work, not minding the lies being said about them and the hostile acts of the wicked: "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee." - Jeremiah 1:17, 19.

Monday September 22, 2014

Text: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." - Matthew 12:36, 37.

Comment: It is wrong to conclude that someone is suffering divine punishment or is a bad person simply because he is in difficulty or distress at any point in time. Some people are thrown into agony or suffering by the devil, whereas before God they are innocent. When our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the stake, the soldiers and the unbelieving Jews used the opportunity to mock him and say malicious things about him. The gospel account has it that one of the robbers who was hanged along with him derided Christ saying "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." Instead of being sorry for his sin and worrying about the kind of death for which he was paying for his crime, he was mocking another person. That is how some people point fingers at others whereas their own sins and burdens, at times self-inflicted, are weighing them down.

On the other hand, another robber who had also been crucified, rather than joining his fellow robber to insult Jesus Christ, rebuked him saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." (Luke 23:39-41) Turning to Jesus Christ, he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." For his humble, penitent spirit which he had shown, Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day, shalt thou be with me in paradise." In other words, he assured him that he will have life in God's Kingdom, of which Christ is head and King, when it is fully established. It could be seen that while the other robber stood condemned for his rude, careless and ignorant statements, the penitent thief will inherit eternal life, by virtue of the way

he spoke to Christ. Indeed, "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." - Proverbs 15:4.

Tuesday September 23, 2014

Text: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." - James 3:6.

Comment: We should be very careful how we use our tongues because misuse of it could lead to consequences that one could hardly have imagined. There was a war that broke out between the Jews and the Ammonites. It was an unnecessary war that was prompted by the misrepresentation of the good intentions of King David. What happened was that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son ascended the throne. David then decided to show kindness to him as the new king's father did to him in time past. He then sent men to comfort the new king. However, the princes told him that the ambassadors sent by King David came with an evil motive "to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it". This was of course completely false. But the new king listened to such tales and mistreated the men sent by King David, cutting their hair, beards, clothes carelessly, such that the men were greatly ashamed and had to wait at Jericho until their beards were grown before returning to Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 10:1-5)

Seeing that they had wronged the people of Israel, the Ammonites started a war by hiring soldiers from Syria to join them in fighting the Jews. However they were roundly defeated. It could be seen that so many lives and property were lost because of the abuse of the goodwill of David the king sequel to the web of lies woven by the king's advisers which misled him and led him to take a rash decision. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." - Proverbs 18:21.

Wednesday September 24, 2014

Text: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." - Matthew 12:35.

Comment: In the heat of the crisis occasioned by the attempt by Absalom to overthrow his father and install himself as king, a certain man of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, met David as he was fleeing the rebel forces. Shimei cursed David as he came, and cast stones at him and at all the servants of king David, saying, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." The insult was too much for David's generals and they wanted to kill Shimei but David stopped them saying "so let him curse,

because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? ... Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day." - 2 Samuel 16:5-14.

Evidently, Shimei did what he did because he thought the attempted overthrow would succeed and that would be the end of David. When the tide turned and David was restored to the throne, the same man came back to beg for forgiveness. David spared his life. It was clear from the event and the words of Shimei that some elements in the house of Saul were still angry that David was placed on the throne. (Matthew 12:34) It also shows we should not rejoice over someone's misfortune, particularly a man of God. (Proverbs 24:17,18) We should also not talk ill of people just because they are down. (Micah 7:8) If not for King David's godly disposition, Shimei would have been killed for his wicked action. It is instructive however, that death still met Shimei at the hands of Solomon when he failed to keep to the terms of parole or restriction order placed on him. - 1Kings 2:8,9, 36-46.

Thursday September 25, 2014

Text: "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." - Proverbs 18:17.

Comment: There are people who lie in order to get advantage over others, especially when money, property or position are involved. Through such lies they may get decisions in their favour and thereby undermine the other person. This ugly situation played itself out in the way Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth the son of Saul misrepresented his master in order to get favour from David the king. It would be recalled that it was King David who gave the lands of Saul to Mephibosheth and ordered Ziba and his servants to be tilling the lands for him. However, because Mephibosheth was lame, he could not follow David to flee when crisis came. Ziba took advantage of this by sending food and wine to David while he was fleeing from his son, Absalom. When David asked of Mephibosheth, Ziba lied against him saying Mephibosheth had said "To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father." David was annoyed and handed over to Ziba all that pertained to Mephibosheth. It was when David returned, his loyal forces having defeated the rebels that he found he was told a lie. King David asked Mephibosheth not to bother about it but shared the land between them. (2 Samuel 19:23-29) If not for a person with the spirit of God like David, Mephibosheth could have been killed on false charges. Ziba thus earned himself a bad name for slandering his master in order to take over his property. The virtue in finding out or hearing from the other party to a matter before taking a decision is therefore evident. See Deuteronomy 19:15-19; John 7:51.

Friday September 26, 2014

Text: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.." - Leviticus 19:16.

Comment: Tale-bearing carries with it the vices of whispering, gossip, slander and backbiting. So it is difficult to separate one from the other. They can make close friends become bitter enemies. Scripture says: "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." (Proverbs 16:28. Please see also Proverbs 17:9) Because it is important for us to avoid these ills, St. James warned, "If any man among you seem to be religious," said James the apostle, "and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain..." (James 1:26,27) When false accusations are repeatedly laid against a person, it is with the aim of excluding the person of some benefits, send him to imprisonment or kill him. In the time of Ezekiel the prophet the Bible says there were "men that carry tales to shed blood". (Ezekiel 22:9) King David, giving his own experience stated, "...For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life." - Psalm 31:11-13.

Unless those who are given to whispering, gossip, slander and backbiting repent by putting a stop to such evil practices, they cannot escape the punishment of God. As it is written: "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was together such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." - Psalm 50:19-22.

Saturday September 27, 2014

Text: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." - Psalm 101:5, 6.

Comment: Many a time, slander is done secretly, but will be said with such confidence as if what is said is true. Then the slander will be repeated often to give it a ring of truth. Even a matter that is true but has been put behind need not be repeated, just to lower the person's esteem, whereas the person involved had moved on. "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." (Proverbs 17:9) The activities of tale-bearers, backbiters, whisperers, slanderers and gossips have led some to commit the error of rash judgement. The tale-bearers carry stories of some things that happened between two or more people and modify or change the content in order to convince the person they are telling the story, knowing the nature of such a person. Then the person to whom such stories are told passes judgement on, and condemns one of the parties concerned without waiting to hear from the party he has condemned. This is backbiting and rash judgement. It is backbiting

because the party that is condemned is not there to defend himself; and it is rash judgement because the condemned party's defence is not heard. It is very wrong, ungodly, unscriptural and against the principle of natural justice. It makes one to make a big fool of oneself and it can be very shameful. Scripture says: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." - Proverbs 18:13.

Sunday September 28, 2014

Text: "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." - Matthew 26:59-61.

Comment: People of God must run away from joining a multitude to do evil. (Exodus 23:2) Because the leaders of the Jews were afraid of Jesus Christ and therefore were bent on putting him away, they spared no effort in cooking up charges against him so that the Roman authorities would pass the death sentence on him. However, because they were in a hurry, it was after Christ had been arrested that they started looking for credible witnesses against him. Their charges did not even agree (Mark 14:56) Even the charge they accepted, that he will rebuild the temple in three days, they did not bother to find out what he meant. But anything to hang on to will do. Obviously the Jewish court was used to the practice of hiring false witnesses when they had evil schemes to carry out. "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty" declared David in prophecy in Psalm 27:12.

As could be seen, some carnally-minded people, even among those who claim to be worshippers of God, do not care about morality or the laws of God when they feel their interests or positions are at stake. It is even more dangerous when leaders are involved as they would always find people who will do their dirty jobs because of one benefit or the other. Naboth was killed after a false charge of blasphemy was made against him by two so-called witnesses, sons of Belial. (1 Kings 21:7-16) Persecuting those keeping the faith is certainly the devil's device against the people of God. Jesus Christ said: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matthew 10:24,25. See also John 15:18-25) Christians must condemn and oppose people of such disposition in and outside the congregation. St. Paul stated: "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.

Monday September 29, 2014

Text: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." - 1 John 3:15.

Comment: A false report raised against someone can make some hate the person against whom the report was made. Those who concoct false reports about the other person, of course, do so out of hatred. This is very dangerous as innocent people have been killed because of false accusations. To hate one's neighbour is a sin. It can prevent one from gaining eternal life. And he who raised the false report against his neighbour will not go unpunished. To avoid rash judgment, one should only take sides and pass judgement, after the full facts had been provided. Jesus Christ advised: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement." - John 7:24.

While St. Stephen was making his famous oration in defence of the faith, there withstood him certain of the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians and Alexandrians, of Cilicia and of Asia, (Jews who lived in foreign lands) who found to their dismay that they could not withstand his arguments.

However, when they found they "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" they hired men who said they heard Stephen "speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God, sitting up the elders and the people." (Acts 6:9-15) That he announced that he saw a vision was only the last straw they needed to stone him to death.

The danger of involving oneself in ungodliness is that even after one had repented and had been forgiven, the action (at least with men) still remains a blot in one's record and stays somewhere in the inner recesses of people's memory. For instance, though St. Paul was sanctified following his anointing, the fact that these false witnesses who killed Stephen laid down their clothes at his feet while he was still a young man still remains on record. We should strive to avoid sin at all costs. See Job 28:28.

Tuesday September 30, 2014

Text: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." (Proverbs 18:13) "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." -Proverbs 18:17.

Comment: He who is first to bring a matter to you may present it in such a way as to free himself from any blame. Where you are rash, being unwise, you may condemn the other party whose version you have not heard. But God knows the failings of man more than anyone else. The law of God says that "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" and that if a man gives false witness against another he should suffer the penalty for the offence he accused the other person of. (Deuteronomy 19:15-19)

When Paul was accused by the elders of Jews, the Roman authorities did not just sentence him but endeavoured to hear all sides. In Acts 24 it is stated that “after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.” (Acts 24:1) The members of the Jewish council spoke, after which Paul was given the chance to defend himself. (Acts 24:10). The governor also heard from Lysias, the Roman Officer, who arrested Paul, and put him in protective custody, to deliver him from the hand of the Jews. (Acts 24:7; 22) Before anyone can pass a righteous or balanced judgement on any issue, the one must get the full facts of the case. That is “diligent inquisition” to avoid miscarriage of justice. Deuteronomy 19:18.

Wednesday, October 1, 2014

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

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

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

Thursday, October 2, 2014

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

Comment: After King Ahasuerus, king of the Medo-Persian empire had promoted Haman above all his other princes, all the king's servants started bowing down to him. But Mordecai, a Jew, who was working in the king's court, refused to bow. When this was brought to the knowledge of Haman, "he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai". (Esther 3:6) He decided to bring a false report against the entire Jewish nation, so that they would be destroyed. He told the King that their laws "are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them". - Esther 3:8.

Because of that negative report, the king signed an order for all the Jews to be destroyed on the 13th day of the month Adar. But the report was patently false. It was only Mordecai who was reported for the offence and because Mordecai refused to bow down does not mean that he and all the Jews do not keep the law of the King which did not conflict with their faith. It could be seen that some highly placed officers whom a leader trusts, could, for petty reasons and to further their own selfish interests, mislead him into taking certain rash decisions.

But as the Bible says "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect." (Psalm 33:10) and "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise." (Job 5:12) God used Queen Esther to present the matter to the King and thereby expose Haman's plot. Subsequently, the king hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. - Esther 7:1-10.

Friday, October 3, 2014

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

Comment: Those who spread lies about other people, and those who readily believe them and help spread such tales are committing abomination against God. The way to put gossips and tale bearers out of business is to shun them, and refuse to give ear to their talk. Or one could insist on verifying the information from the person who is spoken about. "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." (Proverbs 25:23) Apostle James condemned those who spoke evil of those doing righteousness, saying they have by so doing, made themselves judges, even of the law which the person is keeping. - James 4:11-12.

Instead of reading minds, making rash judgments, harbouring grudges or vexation against our neighbours who may even be innocent, our Lord Jesus Christ outlined for us the path to take, meet the person to talk the matter over.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” -Matthew 18:15-17.

Furthermore, God declared through Jeremiah the prophet, “Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou was not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee: when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.” Isaiah 33:1.

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

Saturday, October 4, 2014

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

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

Sunday, October 5, 2014

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

Comment: Those who have been favoured to come into God's organisation must show in their conduct the new life in Christ which is expressive of the truth which

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

David declared, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." (Psalms 27:4) He also stated: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God...For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness". - Psalm 84:1,2,10,11. See also Psalm 27:4

Monday, October 6, 2014

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

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

Tuesday, October 7, 2014

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

Comment: The Romans had the custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross. For instance, Simon the

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