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THE MAN ABRAHAM

Friday, July 1, 2016

Text: “After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” – Genesis 15:1.

Comment: Apart from directing His servants through His spirit, God Almighty appears to his prophets in visions to expound to them vital spiritual truths and to encourage them in His work. In this case, Abraham is reassured of the blessings and protection of God. Abraham already had wealth on abundance. But He had no child. He decided to make the request. He was asked in the vision to look at the stars and see if he could number them, following which he was given assurance that his seed would be as innumerable as the stars in the sky. Though he was old, he “believed in the LORD; and he (God Almighty) counted it to him for righteousness”. (Genesis 15:6, parenthesis ours) Commenting on the faith of Abraham, St. Paul wrote, “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”(Romans 4:19-22) It vital for us to remember that since it is impossible for God to lie, what He had promised, He would fulfil – but in His time and in the manner He chooses. – Psalm 27:13,14; Hebrews 6:18.

Saturday, July 2, 2016

Text: “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.” - Genesis 15:13, 14.

Comment: God Almighty knows the end from the beginning – by virtue of which He gives His prophets the privilege of knowing what will happen in future. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” (Acts 15:18) Abraham, for whom the term Hebrew was first used in Genesis 14:13, would, in course of time, be the grandfather of the twelve brethren who had to travel with their father to Egypt where Joseph was governor because of famine in the land of Canaan. In Exodus 12:40,41, the Bible says, “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and

thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:40, 41, emphasis ours) The 30 additional years that made their entire stay 430 years were the years they lived in peace and prosperity under the Pharaoh who knew Joseph.

God Almighty is the greatest timekeeper. A God of exactness. He will carry out His purposes at His own time. When evil happens it does not mean that God does not see it or foreseen it; only that He allowed it. We should pray to have the faith and understanding to be delivered from the evil to come and to wait for God to answer our prayers. - Job 5:19; Psalm 34:15-19.

Sunday, July 3, 2016

Text: “And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations ... He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised...” - Genesis 17:9, 12-13.

Comment: When Abraham was 99 years old God appeared to him and charged him to remain steadfast in His service so that he would attain perfection in the end. He appeared to him with the name Almighty God, meaning that He is greater than all and therefore should be trusted to fulfill His promises. A covenant or agreement was therefore made – God Almighty promising to bless Abraham on the condition of obedience; Abraham pledging to be faithful in the Lord's service in order to enjoy His blessings. Instead of Abram (exalted father) this faithful patriarch would thenceforth be called Abraham, (father of a multitude). Then there was the circumcision, to serve as a sign of the covenant. All male children, whether freeborn or slave would be circumcised the eight day.

However, the Bible makes it clear that even in the time of old, literal circumcision must be backed up with good heart condition for one to be a true child of Abraham. Moses told the israelites, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.” (Deuteronomy 10:16) The Bible further says, "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision...For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." - Romans 2: 25-29.

Monday, July 4, 2016

Text: “And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.” - Genesis 17:15, 16.

Comment: After changing the name of her husband to Abraham, God also changed the name of the wife from Sarai, (My princess), to Sarah, (Princess). She was Abraham's half-sister, who was according to him, “the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife”. At that time marriage between close relations had not been outlawed by God. When she was about 90 years, God promised to give her a son and that kings would come from her. Even to Abraham this looked a tall order and so he laughed in his heart. (Genesis 17:17) The promise that a seed would be born to him was made since he was 75 years old. He therefore sought divine favours for Ishmael, the son he had through the slave-girl, Hagar. Knowing what he was reasoning, God repeated the promise that he would have a son who would be his heir and even instructed that he should be called Isaac, meaning Laughter. According to St. Paul, Sarah answers to the heavenly “Jerusalem which is ... free, which is the mother of us all”. (Galatians 4:26) Issues highlighted in the texts for today include the importance of answering spiritually meaningful names, the need for patience in waiting for God's due time for His promise to be fulfilled and the fact that God helps or strengthens the faithful in their strivings for salvation. See Psalm 27:13, 14; Luke 21:19.

Tuesday, July 5, 2016

Text: “And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.” - Genesis 18:1-4.

Comment: The three men who appeared to be passing by as Abraham sat in his tent door, were angels on an important mission to Sodom and Gomorrah. However, Abraham's kindness and hospitality to strangers showed forth as he pleaded with them

to come in and refresh themselves. He offered them food fit for royalty though he did not know who they were! St. Paul advises, "...Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:1, 2) Abraham sat by them as they ate. The leader of the team, The Word, who came to this earth and was known as Jesus Christ then, specifically told him for the first time when the promised child would come. "And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." (Genesis 18:10) Sarah doubted and even laughed. (Genesis 18:11-13) The angel reproved her conduct and asked, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." - Genesis 18:14.

Though a believer may pass through some unusual circumstances, he or she should continue to trust firmly in God Almighty Who knows why He had allowed such a circumstance and with Whom nothing is impossible. Evidently God allowed Sarah to be stricken with barrenness until she was 90 in order to manifest His infinite power and compel people around to fear Him (the more). See Hebrews 11:6; Psalm 58:11; Proverbs 11:18.

Wednesday, July 6, 2016

Text; "And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" - Genesis 18:17, 18.

Comment: In the words of Apostle John, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1John 4:20) Having demonstrated his love for God by showing love to his fellow man in addition to his position among God's people, the angel decided to respond to Abraham's goodwill by revealing to him their mission. The angel added, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Genesis 18:19) The worshippers of God owe it a duty to God to ensure that their entire household are given to the worship of God Almighty and that they do justice and keep the commandments of God. It is on record that the very day God enacted the law on circumcision, Abraham ensured that his entire house, including his servants, were all circumcised. While many Christians today owe their faith by God's grace to the upbringing given them by their parents, many also there are who have deviated from the truth because their parents trained them to love the world than the things of God. The

trend should not be allowed to thrive. Compare 1 John 2:15-17; Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:10.

Thursday July 7, 2016

Text: ““Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? ...That be far from thee to do after this manner, ...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” - Genesis 18:23-25.

Comment: Having commended Abraham for being able to rule his house in the fear of God, the leader of the three-man team of angelic creatures then disclosed to him their mission, which was to assess the level of sin in Sodom and Gomorrah and take a decision on them. (Genesis 18:20, 21) As they turned their face to go proceed on their journey to Sodom, Abraham drew nearer to asked if the land would be spared if 50 righteous people could be found there. He continued to reduce the number from 50 to 45, then to 40, 30, 20 and then to 10. The point made by Abraham bears repeating: God does not punish the righteous with the wicked; that is satan's characteristic. In the book of Job it is written, “Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.” (Job 34:10, 11) The fact that God would certainly reward the faithful for their sacrifices because of His name is a big encouragement for them to continue in the way of righteousness despite misrepresentations, blackmail and even physical assaults at the instance of the devil. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name ... And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” - Hebrews 6:10, 11.

Friday, July 8, 2016

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

Comment: The two angels that reached Sodom were shown no small hospitality by Lot. He would not hear of their plan to spend the night in the street but pressed them to lodge in his house. Captivated by the physical features of the angels, the men of the city, being homosexuals, demanded that they be brought out to them, thereby violating

the high notions of hospitality which Lot held as sacred. In their determination to gain entry to the house, they pressed hard on Lot who was by the door. But the angels drew him into the house and struck the men with blindness. For them this was the last straw. They told Lot to call all those close to him, "For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it." (Genesis 19:13) But his sons-in-law made jest of him and would not follow him. The angels had to drag Lot, his wife and two daughters out of the city, warning them not to look back. "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." - Genesis 19:26.

The utter destruction that meets a people when God visits His anger on them, the danger of backsliding from the service of God and how God cares for and delivers the faithful are all highlighted in this story. – Hebrews 12:29; 10:38, 39; Isaiah 45:17; Matthew 24:12,13.

Saturday, July 9, 2016

Text: "And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." - Genesis 21:1, 2.

Comment: Sarah conceived at the exact time the angel told her and later gave birth to a son, whom Abraham called Isaac and whom he circumcised the eighth day – all in keeping with the Lord's command. By then he was aged 100 and the wife 90. The promises made to him over the years had now been fulfilled. Their joy knew no bounds, hence the child was named Isaac, which means laughter. (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:19; 18:10,14) The faith and patience exercised by Abraham and Isaac are everlasting examples to the people of God. Scripture says: "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 1:3, 4) Commenting on the faith shown by Abraham, St. Paul stated, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." He added, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." - Romans 4:19-24.

Sunday, July 10, 2016

Text: “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” - Genesis 22:1, 2.

Comment: Since God does not tempt people, (James 1:13,14), the translation should have read that God tried, proved or tested Abraham, as it is in the New King James Version. (Also compare Hebrews 11:17) God Almighty wants us to love Him with all our hearts and might, meaning that His work should always be our priority. (Matthew 6:33; Luke 14:26) Faith, as shown in this story moves people to obey God without hesitation and explains why Abraham is called the friend of God. Having gotten the instruction, Abraham took his son, the wood for the burnt offering to the place he had been instructed. Incidentally Isaac asked the father, “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” The father answered, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering ...” (Genesis 22:7, 8) He built an altar, laid the wood in order and laid the child on the wood – and stretched out his hand to kill the son. But the angel of God stopped him, making him know it was only a test of his obedience. Instead, a ram caught in the bush was what he was directed to use for sacrifice. He called the place Jehovahjireh, that is, The Lord will see, or, provide.

We learn from the story the importance of absolute obedience to God, the importance of doing things in order as prescribed by the Almighty, the humility and obedience and keen sense of observation of Isaac, and so on. – 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40; Deuteronomy 12:13,14; Jeremiah 11:4,7.

Faith according to the Holy Bible denotes strong belief, unquestioning confidence or trust in God and His word, and in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Though we have not seen God or Jesus Christ, the evidences of Their existence are abundant and warrant absolute confidence. By this there is the assurance and conviction that God will fulfill His promises. Faith is thus a defensive weapon against the forces of evil. Without faith no worshipper of God can withstand the assaults of the devil. That a Christian, old or young, should be armed with strong faith is therefore a matter of life and death. Thus, Saint Paul stated: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." – Hebrew 11: 1.

Monday, July 11, 2016

Text: "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." - John 20:27-29.

Comment: The text for today warns us against faithfulness, using the example of Apostle Thomas who insisted on seeing the risen Lord himself before believing that he had risen. Though Jesus Christ had spoken several times about his imminent death and resurrection, Thomas still had his doubts as shown in his insistence on incontrovertible proofs before he would believe. Jesus Christ expounded to him the importance of faith, saying: "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed". For the reason that some people believe only in what they see or are able to see, they have no faith in God or in His word. This is dangerous because unbelief is a major obstacle that separates a person from his Maker and reduces him from honour. In any case, the things created which are around us, provide abundant proofs of the existence of God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." -Romans 1:20.

A Christian by virtue of his spiritual rebirth through repentance and conversion lives by faith and is confident and full of hope. "For we walk by faith, not by sight", said Saint Paul (2 Corinthians 5: 7). And to the Hebrew Christians he wrote: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." - Hebrews 11: 6.

Tuesday, July 12, 2016

Text: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." - 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5.

Comment: Jesus Christ, who has been vested with power by God Almighty to crush His enemies is at war with the forces of evil and rebellion headed by Satan the devil. A true Christian, having taken sides with God and Christ, must be aware of his involvement in the conflict. He should expect attacks from the enemies of truth and righteousness. It should be clear therefore why Jesus Christ our Saviour declared, "Think not that I am

come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Those on the side of Christ must not be swayed by filial attachments as to compromise their faith, hence the statement, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." - Matthew 10:34-38.

The battle being spiritual, the weapons needed are not carnal. On this score, St. Paul exhorted: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." - Ephesians 6:14-16.

Wednesday, July 13, 2016

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

Comment: Paul the apostle was a valiant fighter and a renowned defender of the Christian faith. In spite of the fierce attacks he received from the devil and his agents on all fronts, he fought with indomitable courage and faith. He stated, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed...." - 2 Corinthians 4:8-10.

He did conquer all, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and was rewarded with the "crown of righteousness" which is the reward of the saints, those of the heavenly class. He successfully accomplished his mission and gave the testimony in the text under reference. As he said in his letter to the Christians at Corinth, everyone in the race of salvation ought to run the race to the end, and according to the rules in order to receive the prize, which is eternal life here on earth. He further exhorted: "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.

Thursday, July 14, 2016

Text: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” - Ephesians 6: 11, 12.

Comment: Apart from the divine inspiration with which Saint Paul was richly endowed, his personal experience helped him in his spiritual warfare. Those on the side of righteousness are the targets of the devil, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:2) In Ephesus, the persecution was such that St. Paul stated that he fought (spiritually) “with men resembling savage beasts”. (1 Corinthians 15:32) In order to make the Christians know the seriousness and intensity of the battle as to get themselves fully equipped, he charged them in this vein: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." This advice was necessary because a soldier may have all the weapons necessary to launch an effective attack on the enemy but he must not lose sight of his protective or defensive weapons. The enemy always looks for areas that are vulnerable. This accounts for Saint Paul's emphasis in the epistle to the Ephesians where he touched on the point of defence, saying, "Above all taking the SHIELD OF FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." – Ephesians 6:16.

Friday, July 15, 2016

Text: “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” - 1 Samuel 17:45.

Comment: David was a man who had strong faith in God, one who had enjoyed the goodness of God in various ways and one who would do everything to defend the name of God. When he heard the blasphemies of Goliath, he could not bear it and so he volunteered to confront the “uncircumcised Philistine” in order to put an end to his villainies. But seeing that Saul expressed some doubt and was afraid, he recalled some past experiences in which God Almighty showed Himself strong on his behalf, when he killed a lion and at another time, a bear that attacked the sheep. “Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.” (1 Samuel 17:34-36) David expressed the belief that "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of

the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine (Goliath) .” Saul then told him, “...Go, and the LORD be with thee”. - 1 Samuel 17:37.

One point we should remember is that the faith of David was bolstered by his past experiences, in which God showed Himself strong on his behalf. We too should not forget the things God does for us because they help to increase our faith to stand future temptations by the grace of God. – Psalm 103:1-5; Romans 5:3-5.

Saturday, July 16, 2016

Text: “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.” - 2 Chronicles 20:12.

Comment: In ancient times, before Christ's first advent, when physical combat was the order of the day, and carnal weapons were freely employed, faith still proved to be of greater strength in defence and attack than anything else. A striking example was that of Jehoshaphat and the rest of the children of Judah when they faced defeat in the hands of their enemies. They prayed to God and believed firmly in His promise to give them victory, even without a fight. And so it was. Another case that should be of particular interest to Christian is the case of David who himself was a youth. By faith in the name of the God of Israel he defeated and killed Goliath, the giant of Gath in a combat. (1 Samuel 17) His utterances and everything he did was based on faith. He told the Philistine, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will Jehovah deliver thee into my hand...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Jehovah's, and he will give you into our hand”. (1 Samuel 17:45-47 Authorized Standard Version) This is the kind of faith we should have in the battle against the devil's onslaughts.

Saturday May 21, 2011

Text: “For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.” - Psalm 18:28, 29.

Comment: King David in the above text, expresses his faith in the Almightyness of God. “For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.” (Psalm 44:6) He also stated, “It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.” (Psalms 144:10) Our Lord Jesus Christ had absolute trust in God by reason of which he spoiled “principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”. (Colossians 2:15) If we continue to trust in God, no matter the odds, we shall also overcome, by His grace. St. Paul said, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” For the people of God the future is more important than yesterday or today which are marked by buffetings from the devil. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) St. Paul therefore exhorted, “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 15:57-58.

Sunday, July 17, 2016

Text: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” - Daniel 3:16-18.

Comment: The above quotation comes from the popular story of the three faithful Jews, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, better known by their Babylonish names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who in exercise of their faith in God refused bluntly to serve the king's golden image. Worshippers of God obey secular authorities but not when their laws go against the one of God. One should not give to Caesar the things that are gods. (Matthew 22:21) The law of God to His people is clear, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” (Exodus 20:3, 4) A number of times, civil authorities, due to the influence of the devil, are moved to make laws or to embark on projects that are injurious to the spiritual, economic and social lives of their subjects. The laws serve their selfish ends, and are even prompted by the desire for vainglory. It is by faith in God that

His people would be able to overcome. When Nebuchadnezzar the king, drunk with power, threw the three young, faithful Jews into the roaring flames, their faith in God made Him to have mercy on them such that they were not hurt in any way. Moses declared, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" - Exodus 15:11.

Monday, July 18, 2016

Text: "Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon." - Daniel 3:29,30.

Comment: This was the declaration King Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to make on seeing the manifestation of the power of God in saving the three faithful Jews. This incident shows that God places great importance on faith, courage and non-compromise. The Lord truly knows those who trust in Him and will not forsake them. The king, his princes, governors, captains and counselors in astonishment, saw the wonders of faith on these Jewish youths "upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither was their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." (verses 24-27) In the words of a writer, "This miraculous manifestation of Divine power was witnessed by the court and the nation, and was felt as a just punishment on the transgressors, and a signal display of mercy to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, which should operate on all believers to similar acts of faith and confidence in the Lord." What happened to the Jews was proof of the love of God for His people and His ability to save them from any condition. Christ said, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Matthew 10:30) We should also be ready to stand up for our beliefs in this age, insisting on doing the will of God and trusting in His almighty power. We shall also find out "that there is no God that can deliver after this sort".

Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Text: "Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; ...That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and

rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” - Daniel 6:25-27.

Comment: The above text contains an order given by Darius the King following the miraculous deliverance God gave to Daniel, in saving him from being devoured by the lions. The colleagues of Daniel the prophet convinced the king to enact a law, that whosoever shall ask a petition from any one except from the king for thirty days shall be cast into the den of lions. Rather than hiding himself when he knew that the law had come into force, Daniel “went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime”. Indeed God performed wonders by sending His angels to shut the lion's mouth. “Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because HE BELIEVED IN HIS GOD”. (Verse 23) The devil looks for opportunities to drag the people of God into humiliation, confusion, faithlessness and desolation. When they stand firm He will not forsake them. “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.” (Psalm 34:7, 17) Let us all pray for God to continue to increase our faith so that we shall be delivered from the jaws of the lions, seen and unseen, that surround us.

Wednesday, July 20, 2016

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

Comment: The words of the Bible were not written merely to fill up spaces. We should therefore reflect on each passage and each story to know what we are supposed to learn from them. The Bible is a book for all times. Several instances of acts of faith by the ancient faithfuls were recalled by Saint Paul when he wrote to the Hebrew Christians. These are meant to strengthen our faith. Among other things he stated, "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." - Hebrews 11:32-35.

As David the prophet said, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Our heavenly Father continuously keeps watch over us. He assures thus through Isaiah the prophet saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." - Isaiah 43:1, 2.

Thursday, July 21, 2016

Text: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" - Romans 8:35.

Comment: Christians are today faced with many challenges from the enemies of truth. In their places of work, there are pressures to compromise the faith not just to be in good terms with colleagues but to avoid violating laid down official policies. There are those who deny eligible candidates employment because they refuse to join secret cults or join a church group whose beliefs the true believer does not agree with. Sometimes, when a christian is sick or in crisis, and it looks prolonged, so many associates advise him or her to seek help from the devil's agents. In times of war or famine or financial crisis – and these abound in this world of sin - the true Christian must exercise strong faith in God with Whom nothing is impossible. They must remain opposed to the doctrines of devils as well as the superstitions, idolatrous practices and ungodly traditions of men. "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) True Christians should always practicalise the knowledge of the truth and be alert to the tricks and devices of satan by the grace of God. "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. ...we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." - Psalm 66:10,12.

Friday, July 22, 2016

Text: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Romans 8:37-39.

Comment: The knowledge of the truth and faith in God are of great advantage in spiritual warfare. Faith is built on knowledge and is expressed through works of righteousness which openly demonstrate that one has understanding of the purposes of God. But where faith is lacking then there is danger, as resistance to the devil's temptations will either be weak or non-existent. Such one should not expect to receive any thing of the Lord. (James 1:5-7) We should always be prayerful to be strong in faith. This was the attitude of the What St. Paul is saying in the text for today is that Christians should hold fast to their faith. Having vowed to serve God all the days of their life, believers should stand their ground, come what may, believing that God will always help them. This calls for knowledge, understanding, integrity and prayer. Jesus Christ our Saviour told the man whose son was being troubled by an evil spirit "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The Bible says that "straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." - Mark 9:23, 24.

Strong faith will always triumph no matter what the devil does. The apostles of Christ assure us that when we resist the devil he will flee from us by the grace of God. -James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9

Saturday, July 23, 2016

Text: "For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. - 1 Thessalonians 5:7,8.

Comment: In the Holy Bible, daylight symbolizes truth and righteousness of God while darkness symbolize lies, evil, the works of the devil. In the above text, St. Paul highlights the plainness and honesty of those who keep the laws of God, and are guided by His spirit, as well as the deceitful and vainglorious ways of those who follow the devil's devices. Christians should not sleep, that is, be inactive, lazy and given to eating and drinking, when they should be working to promote the interest of God's Kingdom. Those who are sleeping love pleasure, ease and seek popularity, preferring to please men than to please the Lord. They do not want to be seen as serious Christians lest they be persecuted or suffer any inconveniences. St. Paul stated, "...Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain

salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:4-9) Those who love sleep come to poverty, spiritually and literally. (Proverbs 20:13) We should do works of faith now that it is day time. - John 9:4;12:35; Proverbs 6:6-11.

Sunday, July 24, 2016

Text: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”. - Philippians 4:6.

Comment: This charge by St. Paul is of vital importance to all true worshippers of God in their efforts to attain salvation in God's Kingdom fully established. By exhorting Christians to be careful for nothing, St. Paul meant that we should not be unduly anxious or worried by any matter so much as to be weighed down by it. Rather, we should take such matters to God in prayer, which is a solemn request or petition to God arising from a sense of one's inadequacy or want. Supplication means continuance in prayer with deep humility and earnestness. St. Paul says prayers should be accompanied by thanksgiving to God. One must show appreciation in order to enjoy more of the Lord's favours. It is with this frame of mind that the peace of God will rule our hearts by His grace. When the angel told Abraham that his wife Elizabeth shall have a child, the wife, Sarah heard it from inside the tent and laughed. The angel quickly corrected her saying, “And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD?....” (Genesis 18:13-15) The knowledge that “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27) is a powerful incentive to faith by His grace.

Monday, July 25, 2016

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

Comment: Having being born into trouble as a result of inherited sin man is surrounded by troubles difficulties which, from time to time, make him to be restless or disturbed. (Genesis 3:16-19; Psalm 51:5; etc.) Knowledge of the spiritual cause of the troubles in the world should inform our attitude to the various problems that confront us daily. While not discounting the efforts of governments all over the world in tackling these problems, the fact remains that God Almighty is the strength and hope of His people. He is the One people should look to in order to get relief from the hard conditions in the world.

Rebuking the rebellious Jews for looking to men for help than to their Creator, God Almighty stated, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!" The text continues, "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together." The passage further assures the people of Jehovah's protection. "As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it". -Isaiah 31:1-5.

Tuesday, July 26, 2016

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

Comment: The troubles of man have multiplied in this age because, the devil, having been driven down from heaven is most vicious in his determination to cause as much havoc on earth as possible. Jesus Christ stated that the difficulties that have defined the living conditions of the people in the aftermath of the First World War, "is the beginning of sorrows". (Matthew 24:7, 8) Truly, no one can deny that we are now in the last days, when there shall be "distress of nations, with perplexity" with men's hearts "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth". - Luke 21:25-27,

In the face of the strains and stresses of the age, we should always look to God by way of trusting Him and doing His will. David the prophet also states: "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." (Psalm 60:11) We should also bear in mind the charge from God Almighty through His servants to wit: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." - Hebrews 13:5.

Wednesday, July 27, 2016

Text: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." - Matthew 24:7.

Comment: Evidently, as the last days advances, evil men and seducers have been waxing worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:13) The last days are “perilous times” when “the wicked shall do wickedly”; when people will not have feeling for their fellow men, as their consciences would be “seared as with a hot iron”; and “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” - Daniel 12:10; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 12, 13. Matthew 24:10

The world has in the recent past faced severe economic and social conditions caused by insurgencies, wars, shrinking markets, inflation, unemployment, materialism, selfishness hold sway and people are “at the point of sheer panic”. The economic crises in various countries have resulted in the bankruptcy of companies, states and local governments and in the retrenchment of thousands of workers. Some of those affected have taken to desperate measures, including criminality, in order to survive. Knowing that the hard times and the selfish attitudes of many people are a fulfilment of Bible prophecies, we should not be wondering why the former times were better than this but to draw closer to God Who is gathering His people into His fold to learn meekness and righteousness as to be saved in the day of His anger. – Ecclesiastes 7:10; Zephaniah 2:1-3.

Thursday, July 28, 2016

Text: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy ...” - 2 Timothy 3:1, 2.

Comment: Knowing fully well how things would be in this age, Jesus Christ asked the question, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8) Definitely he will find faith, but they will be relatively few and far between. This is because of the pride in the hearts of many in this age who believe man is now an “intellectual giant”, capable of solving his problems and so does not need God and His word to guide them. God told the rebellious Jews who trusted in their wisdom and derided the word of God. “For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.” (Isaiah 30:15-16) We have seen however that though highly numerate and literate, without God, man is selfish, greedy, callous, and therefore dangerous to his fellow man. The ungodly are ready tools in the hands of the devil. That is why there is so much poverty in parts of the world, high rate of crime, marital instability, single parenthood,

wars, dissensions and so on. God Almighty charges us thus: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." - Isaiah 45:22.

Friday, July 29, 2016

Text: "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." - Exodus 14:13, 14.

Comment: By positive declarations and specific acts in time of old, God Almighty repeatedly impressed it on His people that there is no way to get help in time of trouble than to trust in Him. A ready case was when the Jews had left Egypt, Pharaoh was moved by the devil to pursue the Israelites with the mind of bringing them back into slavery. On seeing the host of the Egyptians, the Jews quivered and quaked because of fear (Exodus 14:10-12) Seeing that their faith was failing them, Moses was inspired by God to encourage the people as stated in the text under reference.

In fulfillment of the words of Moses the prophet, God Almighty wrought a great miracle in delivering the Jews in that He used the wind to divide the Red Sea so that the Jews crossed the dry river bed in one night. But Pharaoh and His host were swallowed up as the river closed up on them. What God did at that time should teach us His people to remain calm in times of crisis and to trust firmly in Him, no matter how extreme the circumstance may look like. (Exodus 14:21-31; 15:1-21) We are further exhorted in the Scriptures to wit, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" - Isaiah 8:19.

Saturday, July 30, 2016

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

Comment: In spite of what God did for them, the Jews could not sustain their trust in Him when they were faced with further dangers or difficulties. At a stage, they even wanted to return to Egypt. It was because of their faithlessness that they spent 40 years on the journey instead of 40 days. Even at that, it was only Joshua and Caleb and those who were 20 years and below as well as children born in the wilderness that reached the promised land. - Exodus 16:1-4; Number 14:1-39.

When Israel became a settled nation, God Almighty showed His power in delivering them from danger several times. These include when they were besieged by the people of Moab, Ammon, among others. In response to the prayers of King Jehoshaphat and other faithful Jews God delivered them. The Jews only came to gather the spoil. (2 Chronicles 20:12, 15-17, 21-34) During the time of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria besieged Jerusalem, but God fought for them and delivered them. - Isaiah 37:33-37.

God also delivered Paul and Silas who had been imprisoned on false charges resulting in the conversion of the Jailor and his family. (Acts 16:26) These instances were written to teach us that God Almighty is willing and able to save us from any situation as long as we show faith in Him. - Indeed "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." - Nahum 1:7.

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Text: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" – Matthew 6:25

Comment: It was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who gave us a stern warning on why we should not worry over material needs so much as to allow it affect our faith. He went on to draw our attention to a fact which many tend to gloss over, saying: "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? ... 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?" God asked Job in Job 38:39-41: "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat." King David also states that "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." (Psalm 147:9) "Throw the whole of your anxiety upon Him, because He Himself cares for you", exhorts St. Peter in 1 Peter 5:7 (Weymouth's New Testament). The fact is that The eyes of all wait upon God and He gives "them their meat in due season". - Psalm 145:15.

Monday, August 1, 2016

Text: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." - Psalm 37:25

Comment: This declaration by David the prophet is a vigorous affirmation of Jehovah's faithfulness to His children on the basis of His own personal experience. The point of the text is that we should not be restless about the wants of life or have fear of the future in as much as we are given to doing the will of God. "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 33:18-20; 37:25.

It is the determination to ensure that they permanently escape from the vicious claws of poverty that propels some people to commit various atrocities so as to become very rich. Those who oppress others for their selfish ends will reap vanity along the way. Micah the prophet stated, "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage..." -Micah 2:1-3.

People should be contented with what God provides for them. St. Paul prayed, "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)" - 2 Corinthians 9:10

Tuesday, August 2, 2016

Text: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." – 1 Peter 4:12

Comment: At one time or another, every Christian would have "a fiery trial". Such trial is allowed by God to prove the faith of the person who claims to worship Him. It is also a training or disciplinary process to purge the convert of the works of the flesh so that he would become a new creature imbued with faith, understanding, patience, temperance, humility, obedience and so on. The Christian should not get confused or become faithless in the face of these assaults from the devil, or start looking to "mountains" and "hills" or to "Egypt", (satan's organization) for help; rather he should understand that such tribulations show that he is on the side of God. (See Proverbs 24:10; Jeremiah 3:23; Isaiah 30:1-3) We should always remember that there are good times and bad times, just as there are sunny days and rainy days. God allows them to balance each other out for our own spiritual good.(Ecclesiastes 7:14) It is those who prayerfully remain on the side of God despite the storm that will get help from Him as He will make

a way out for them. "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, August 3, 2016

Text: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." - Psalm 37:19.

Comment: The righteous are those who out of strong belief in God Almighty strive to do all that they have learnt from His word. If they make mistakes they quickly make amends and strive not to repeat them. God will always help such ones and hear their prayers. Our Lord Jesus Christ stated, "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. See also John 8:29) Such ones know that the devil is determined to drown all men down the precipice along with him, and therefore mounts a sustained and determined assault on them to weaken their faith or resolve to continue in the way of life. The continual harrasment of the people of God by the devil, some of which God allows informs the statement by David the prophet that afflictions of the righteous are many. Instead of wilting under such pressure, the apostle of Christ exhorts us to resist the urge to buckle under, by remaining stedfast in the faith, "knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world". (1 Peter 5:8, 9) People of God should always trust and be prayerful to Him. David the prophet stated: "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." - Psalm 9:9, 10.

Thursday, August 4, 2016

Text: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." - Hebrews 11:6

Comment: Faith "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". It is strong and unwavering belief in the Almightyness of God. Nobody should expect any help from God if he lacks faith. Apostle James enjoins us to make our requests based on strong faith in Him, "nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of

the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord". (James 1:6, 7) The Scriptures assert that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin". (Romans 14:23) God is ever ready to help us, but He hates faithlessness or doubts in His ability to save. Such doubts lead to impatience, interfaith and regression. Faith grows as one increases in the knowledge of God. It takes deep roots as one is exposed to trials or temptations. As one passes through these tests he gains experience and this firms up his convictions. The effect of faith is to make us be at peace with God and with our fellow man. (Romans 5:1) In the words of St. Peter, God Almighty will "after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you". -1 Peter 5:10

Friday, August 5, 2016

Text: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD." – Psalm 112:7

Comment: One who has faith, that is, absolute trust in God Almighty will not be moved by the ebb and flow of the tides of life in this imperfect and sin-ridden world. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD." (Psalm 112:7) Such people will be at peace, which means a condition in which one is free from fear and anxiety. This is the secret of the strength of the people of God which those who are otherwise disposed find difficult to understand. The Bible says "Be not afraid of sudden fear..." (Proverbs 3:25,26) Apostle Paul stated that he and his colleagues carried on the work of God irrespective whether they were respected or despised, praised or abused, whether false or evil reports were carried about them or not. The Christian trusts absolutely in the love and care of Jehovah and in His ability to solve every problem that comes his way. And so he is not "afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday". (Psalm 91:4-6) One cannot say he trusts in God and yet be constantly fearful or panicky, imagining that the worst is about to happen. Rather he would be calm and composed as much as possible. "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

Saturday, August 6, 2016

Text: “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not ...” - Luke 11:5-7.

Comment: During the hot periods of the year, the night time is the most convenient time to travel because it is cooler. But even at that, it is most inconvenient to call someone up at midnight. Yet men still attend to those close to them in times of emergency. A man will not tell his friend “... the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed...I cannot rise and give thee.” Our Lord Jesus Christ adds “I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.” (Luke 11:7,8)

If men could do so, what of God Almighty Who neither slumbers nor sleeps, who fainteth not neither is weary” God is ever ready to attend to us at any time. We should not be afraid or shy to ask for His help. Hence Jesus, the Master Teacher exhorts us thus: “And I say unto you, 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. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” - Luke 11:9-12.

Sunday, August 7, 2016

Text: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” - Ephesians 3:20, 21

Comment: Truly God does more for us than we even ask. When God Almighty asked King Solomon to make a request as to what he would do for him, he asked for an understanding heart to the people so that he could discern between good and bad. (1 Kings 3:9) Commending him for his modesty, God Almighty gave Solomon things he did not asked for both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto him all thy days and to give him long life – if he continues to walk uprightly. I will lengthen thy days. (1 Kings 3:13-14) Being human, our understanding or perception of what is before us, where it could lead to and how it could be solved is grossly limited

and this affects our responses, and our prayers to God. We may not even be able to know the right language to express our prayers. But God understands situations perfectly and sorts out our problems for us according to His will.

One could move “mountains” (seemingly impossible situations) through faith. We should remember that after Christ had cured the boy possessed by a demon, his disciples came to ask him why they could not cure him. He told them, “...Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” - Matthew 17:20.

Monday, August 8, 2016

Text: “And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.” - Mark 11:20-22.

Comment: According to Bible scholars, the large size, and the abundance of its leaves, render the fig plant a pleasant shade tree while its fruit furnished a wholesome delicacy for people of the East. It is a symbol of peace and plenty. (1Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4) The fruit of the fig tree appears before the leaves, and without any show of blossoms. The context of the text for today is that while returning to Jerusalem from the small village of Bethany, Jesus Christ became hungry. When he came to a fig tree and found no fruit thereon but leaves only, he said unto it “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.” It was not until the following day that the apostles realised that the word of Jesus Christ took immediate effect as the tree had dried up “from the roots”. This incident was no doubt allowed by God to teach us the very important practical lesson of the power of faith in the life of a true worshipper of God. Hence Jesus Christ our Saviour told his disciples, “...If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you”. (Luke 17:6)

Tuesday, August 9, 2016

Text: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” - Hebrews 11:1.

Comment: Faith is strong belief in God Almighty based on the mind's assent to the truth of the Scriptures. St. Paul stated that “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Faith is so vital to the Christian life that St. Paul declared that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) Faith is planted and nurtured by knowledge through hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Faith is tested and strengthened through trials which give one experience or better understanding of the ways of God. “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also”, said St. Paul, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”. (Romans 5:3-5) Thus, faith is similar to hope concerning which St. Paul states, “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. (Romans 8:24, 25) Knowledge exercised through good heart condition and godly conduct and nurtured through patience to the end lead to salvation by the grace of God.

Wednesday, August 10, 2016

Text: “But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” - Matthew 8:27

Comment: Jesus Christ taught us by practical example not to be moved by tempests brought by the devil though fearsome they may be. On one occasion while he and his apostles were crossing the sea in a boat there arose a great tempest insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. His disciples were frightened and so woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us: we perish”. The Lord first of all rebuked their lack of faith saying “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” Then to the great amazement of the disciples, he rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:23-27) At another time, St. Peter followed Jesus Christ and walked on the sea. Because of his faith in God, the laws of gravitation were suspended. “But when he saw the winds boisterous, he was afraid” and began to sink. Jesus Christ in saving him said “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” A number of believers, by reason of their faith are able to walk on the “sea” of obstacles and tribulations brought by the devil, doing seemingly impossible things by the power of God. But after a while, when the winds from the devil create storms and the waves began to lash at them repeatedly, they begin to doubt and to be fearful. And they will begin to sink. Let us all pray to always have the strength to cry out to the Lord to save us lest we perish.

Thursday, August 11, 2016

Text: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” - 1 Peter 4:12

Comment: It is not the intensity of the devil's persecution that we should see as strange, for persecutions must come at the instance of the devil. The real crisis is when we do not understand that the trials are at the instance of the devil and are allowed by God to enable us grow spiritually. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28) In the words of St. Peter, “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”. (1 Peter 1:7) We must believe that the Almighty Father can by His grace, deliver us from the trials and afflictions brought upon us by satan the devil and at the end usher us into His kingdom of peace and happiness. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 8:35-39.

Friday, August 12, 2016

Text: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” - 2 Timothy 3:12, 13.

Comment: Christians face fiery trials at the instance of the devil who is bent on preventing people from serving God. Before his ascension to heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ told his disciples, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you ...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:18-20) The world is selfish and greedy as people who do not consider God and His word in planning and carrying out their schemes. Such ones love darkness rather than light. Jesus Christ said: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:19-21) While

being “blameless and harmless” and not giving cause for offence or rebuke in anything, the Christian must avoid exposing themselves to unnecessary danger and the guile or deceit of the ungodly just as the serpent has the cunning to escape danger.

Saturday, August 13, 2016

Text: “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?” - Luke 18:8.

Comment: During this age of Christ's second presence, would he find people with strong faith in him? Of course he would, though unbeliever would be greater in number. It is in this age countless numbers of people will be saved when God will destroy the earth. Apostle John relating the vision, wrote “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10) Explaining their identity, the angel explained, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. (Revelation 7:13-15)

Jesus Christ knew that because of the intensity of the devil's activities, those who will be faithful to him in the last days will be few. There is no denying the fact that while there are some, though few, who exhibit strong confidence in God at all times by His grace, others are weighed down by doubts and fears resulting in their being easily led down the path of error. We should continue to trust in God for He is our sufficiency and strength. - 2 Corinthians 3:5; James 4:13-16.

Sunday, August 14, 2016

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

Comment: The truth is that when Jesus Christ said whatever the disciples asked in faith in his name believing they shall receive he was not giving throwing the door open for to make frivolous or outlandish demands not based on knowledge. The understanding is that since there is nothing impossible with God, we should believe that

God is capable of doing whatsoever we ask that are according to His will - if and when He chooses to give it to us. Jeremiah declared, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27) One who believes the Father is Almighty will not only do His will but will be prayerful for God to continue to sustain him. "

"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) The Christian life does not promise one overnight wealth; it is one of patient endurance, longsuffering and self-denial: but at the end of the day we shall overcome by God's grace. David stated, "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." -Psalm 37:3-6.

Monday, August 15, 2016

Text: "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature." - Matthew 5:36; 6:27.

Comment: Jesus Christ made this statement to warn us against undue anxiety or worry which is a mark of lack of faith. In the passage under reference, our Lord and Saviour shows up our extreme weakness and helplessness without God. No matter how one worries about his condition he cannot increase his stature a bit. Today a growing number of people are going for body makeovers, changing their physical features and even sex change operations, that is to turn from men to women and vice versa. True to the words of Christ these changes do not endure and they bring with them so much sorrow and pain. The obsession with enhancing physical appearance to the point of enduring the pains of surgery with all the risks involved, rather than in enhancement of moral standards is nothing but gross misplacement of values. It is wasteful and expresses disregard for and lack of faith in God and His purposes of creation. Vain and foolish it is to make pleasure our chief goal, to act only with reference to this life. (Compare Isaiah 22:13; 1 Corinthians 15:32) David the prophet of God declared: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." (Psalm 139:14) People should be preoccupied with doing works of faith so as to enter into God's Kingdom where they shall by God's grace have perfect bodies and be "more precious than fine gold". - Isaiah 13:12.

Tuesday, August 16, 2016

Text: “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 6:25-34

Comment: Jesus Christ warned us against being obsessed for our basic daily needs, such as food, clothing and shelter as such anxiety spring from unbelief, doubts and misgivings. He said we should understand that He Who has created us will also provide for our sustenance by His grace and power. Inasmuch as God provides for far smaller creatures like birds of the air, surely he will do even more for man. Our power is of no avail and indeed human help is of no consequence except we trust in God. “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.” (Psalm 118:8, 9) It is to Him we owe the supply of our wants and provision of the means of not only preserving our lives but living it in a fulfilling way. Indeed, “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.” (Psalm 146:5) David the Sweet Psalmist of Israel stated: “Trust in the LORD and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.” - Psalm 37:3-5.

Wednesday, August 17, 2016

Text: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” - Galatians 5:1.

Comment: Faith which denotes absolute trust in God casts out fear that torments the mind and pushes one into unwholesome deeds. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” (Psalm 42:5) For when one is full of doubts one runs here and there, from one place to the other, seeking solace. False prophets are thus able to take advantage of such ones, promising to banish the devil from their lives and to deliver them from “ancestral curses” and “spiritual bondage”. Every mishap, no matter how minor is seen as an attack from one source or the other. It is only by continually

studying the Scriptures, exercising strong faith in God and doing His will that we can escape the deceits of the devil and his agents, rise above the lusts and temptations of the world and withstand the storms, winds and shakings the fiery trials - that may come our way. "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge." (Proverbs 14:26) And Isaiah the prophet stated, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." - Isaiah 12:2, 3.

Thursday, August 18, 2016

Text: "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." - Psalm 55:22

Comment: Because of sin and the activities of satan the devil, people on earth carry various burdens, some of which are of their own making and some due to circumstances over which they have no control. They are thus in the grip of one aspiration, concern, uncertainty, worry, fear or the other. By casting our burdens on the Lord such concerns will not overwhelm us by His grace. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." (Psalm 56:3, 4) But when ills befall us we should see them as temptations which God has allowed to try our faith, teach us vital lessons, keep us out of the devil's captivity and from which we shall grow. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked." (Psalm 94:12, 13) We should have the understanding that God knows whatever our problems are, that He had even foreseen them before they came and that He is able to help us out by His grace if and when He pleases. "And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." - Deuteronomy 31:8.

Friday, August 19, 2016

Text: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." - Job 27:3-6

Comment: The determination or faith of Job in the midst of his fiery trial has been recorded as an example to worshippers of God in latter ages. We should not be confused, and keep running from pillar to post in the quest for deliverance for therein lurks the danger of compromising our faith. "Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies." (Psalm 40:4) Seeking help from the devil and his agents amounts to sinking deeper into captivity and thus into greater restlessness. God stated through Isaiah the prophet, "And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isaiah 8:19 New King James Version) We should commit our problems to God in prayers, and He would make them light for us. Scripture says, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." - Jeremiah 17:7, 8.

Saturday, August 20, 2016

Text: "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth." - 1 Kings 17:13-14

Comment: An example of one demonstrated strong confidence in the word of the Lord was the widow of Zarephath who lived at the time of the prophet Elijah. God Almighty had directed Elijah "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." (1 Kings 17:9) On getting there, Elijah asked the widow "for a little water in a vessel", that he may drink. As she was going to bring it, he asked for "a morsel of bread in thine hand". On hearing this, she explained that she and her son had barely enough for just one meal, after which they would wait for death. It was this honest declaration that prompted the promise from the man of God, that is the text for today. The woman had firm belief in the word of God through Elijah the prophet and did as she was instructed. By the miracle of God "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah." (1 Kings 17:1-24) The exemplary faith of the widow even in the most extreme situation and how God provided for her in the time of hunger is a practical illustration of the words of King David that "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.

Sunday, August 21, 2016

Text: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? ...Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone....But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." - James 2:14, 17, 27.

Comment: It is by good works in the service of God that we show our faith in Him. James, an apostle of Jesus Christ discoursed the issue extensively in the second chapter of his general epistle. Anybody can claim to have faith. But that is not enough because even the devils do know that God exists. It is when the belief is translated into action, such that it directs our thoughts and shapes our character, that it is reckoned with in the Christian context. Reflecting on the faith of Abraham the prophet, St. Paul stated that Abraham believed the promise that he would become the father of many nations. He added: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." (Romans 4:18-24) He added, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." - Romans 4:23, 24.

Monday, August 22, 2016

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; 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.

Comment: Nobody can by his own efforts attain salvation. It is therefore a matter of grace. But to justify the unmerited favour of being called to enjoy the grace of God we

must do what is required of us for therein lies our peculiarity as Christians. Bible understanding shows that God helps those who faith in Him to keep to the strait and narrow path. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Peter 2:9) When Abimelech king of Gerar took Sarah, Abraham's wife, God appeared to him and ordered him to restore the wife of Abraham to him. When he explained that Abraham had told him she was his sister, saying that "in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this". God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." (Genesis 20:3-7) To the faithful God gives his holy spirit to help them. He also delivers them in various ways to strengthen them. Hence King David stated, "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word." - Psalm 119:74.

Tuesday, August 23, 2016

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

Comment: Continuing his discourse on the signs of the end of the world, which are also signs of his second presence, Jesus Christ spoke of an age in which people will be so given to wickedness and in which they will appear to be succeeding in their enterprises that many of those given to righteousness will begin to doubt all that they had believed in the past and may even backslide. While some lose their faith due to false teachings or philosophies, others break down under the weight of economic, social or health problems, and some run into various cults and societies because of fear of death. The love of God and of one's neighbour gives way to bitterness, hatred and suspicion. Having been warned that this is a time in which people will be cold and heartless, in which the conscience of some people will be seared as with a hot iron, as it were, all true Christians must hold on to their faith. 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. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." - Hebrews 3:12-14.

Wednesday, August 24, 2016

Text: "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 12:15.

Comment: St. Paul here gives a stern warning to all believers to be careful so that they will not derail because of the pressures of the last days. They should learn from what happened to the Jews when they wilted and buckled because of some difficulties they had on the way. “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)” Hebrews 3:7-11) In his letter to the Christians at Corinth, he highlighted the pitfalls that became the undoing of the Israelites and warned us to avoid them. He stated, “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. ...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 10:5-11.

The need to be diligent in prayer, especially in this age - the end of the world - when the nations of men are in distress and perplexity, in fulfillment of Bible prophecies, cannot be over-stressed. Accurate knowledge of God enables one to pray with understanding so as to get the required response from God Almighty. St. Paul stated, “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” - 1Corinthians 14:15.

Thursday, August 25, 2016

Text: “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but 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.

Comment: Jesus Christ, knowing that some worshippers would become weary of waiting for answers to their prayers because of impatience, gave this parable of the importunate widow. Though the Judge would not grant her request for a while, yet she persisted in seeking his help to avenge her adversary. Eventually she got him to act, so

that she would not wear him out with her persistent demands for help. From this parable Jesus Christ taught a vital lesson. "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?" (verse 8) It is most rewarding not only to pray and wait for God, but also to be persistent in our prayers. The Psalmist, because of the great benefits he derived from prayer, made it a routine in his life. Thus, he stated: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." (Psalm 55: 17) And Saint Paul stated: "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5: 17) He stated, "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." (Psalms 27:13, 14) We should however take note of the question posed by Jesus Christ when he asked: "...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18: 8) In other words, will he find people who will still have faith in God in this age? How many among the people of faith would be willing to continue praying even when their petitions have not been granted by God? We should be counted among such ones by His grace..

Friday, August 26, 2016

Text: "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: 14, 15.

Comment: Many people who are ungodly do not see the need to pray to God. This is because they feel they have got all that the heart could desire in terms of material possessions and children. As regards the ignominious end of such godless people, the Bible states: "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) In the parable of the Rich Fool our Redeemer talks of a man who gave his soul assurance of rest for ever without reference to God simply because he had acquired all that he desired in life. When he thought he had secured all he needed for a peace "... God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20) As King David said "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness." (Psalm 52:7) Our confidence and assurance should not be in our material possessions but in our spiritual treasures with God. - Luke 12:15-21.

Saturday, August 27, 2016

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: Many things there are which disturb the minds of people on earth in this age of the last days which St. Paul describes as perilous times. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Luke 21:25,26) But St. Paul exhorts us not to be anxious or solicitous about the problems that the devil brings upon the world in his bid to make earth as distressful a place to stay as possible. Albert Barnes explains, St. Paul is not saying we are to exercise no care to preserve our property, or to provide for our families, "but that there is to be such confidence in God as to free the mind from anxiety, and such a sense of dependence on him as to keep it calm". But when faced with challenges regarding our basic needs; when we face afflictions, embarrassments, and trials besides spiritual problems; there is nothing which "pertains to body, mind, estate, friends, conflicts, losses, trials, hopes, fears, in reference to which we may not go and spread it all out before the Lord". The text also advises that while praying for the supply of our wants, we should not forget to be thankful for what the many other things we have enjoyed from God Almighty. How He has saved us from danger and death at various times, restored us to health when we were sick, how He forgives us our sins. We should take our problems to God in prayer for He is able to do all things. - Luke 1:37.

Sunday, August 28, 2016

Text: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt..." - Exodus 12:40-42.

Comment: It is well known that the children of Israel in an ancient times were made to render slave labour to the Egyptians. They cried to God and He heard them, as it is written, "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) After God had wrought great wonders in the land of Egypt by using Moses and Aaron, He delivered the Israelites in His due time. A day did not exceed His appointed time. People who today are being similarly oppressed in any part of the world should pray and be patient for God to deliver them in His own good time. (Psalm 60:11, 12; Isaiah 45: 20-22; etc) David the prophet declared, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” - Psalm 27:13, 14.

Monday, August 29, 2016

Text: “Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, ...came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.” - 2 Chronicles 20:14,15.

Comment: The inspired words quoted above were uttered through Jehaziel, a Levite, to encourage the Jews when three nations, Moab, Ammon and Mount Seir came against Jehoshaphat in battle. Jehoshaphat caused the inhabitants of Judah to “gather themselves together to ask help of the Lord.” Prayer is an acknowledgement of one's insufficiency and dependence on God. It is noteworthy that when the children of Judah faced danger, it was to God Almighty Jehoshaphat made them to turn to, with the firm belief that He would save them. This is what is expected of the people of God. It is evidence of understanding and faith. The Bible shows that God Almighty knows those who trust in Him and that He will never forsake them. “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.” (Nahum 1:7) God Almighty will certainly show Himself strong in the behalf of those who serve Him diligently when they call on Him with faith and understanding by His grace. The servant of God said, “In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.” - Psalm 62:7, 8.

Tuesday, August 30, 2016

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

Comment: As all Judah stood before God with their little ones and their children and their wives, God sent this heart-lifting response through Jehaziel, the son of Benaiah, a Levite. He said they would gain victory over their enemies without having to fight in battle. The assurance had been given. How it will come to pass, only the Almighty knew. True to His promise, God wrought a great deliverance for Jehoshaphat and his people by making the invading nations to be engaged in an act of self-destruction. (Verses 22 and 23.) Consequently, “...the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.” (2Chronicles 20:29) Here, we see vividly that it is most rewarding to pray and wait for God. Truly, “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.” (Lamentations 3:26) But those praying for help from God Almighty should give themselves to godliness for it is in Him they would have rest. “For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.” (Isaiah 30:15) Moreover Isaiah the prophet under the inspiration of God stated, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” - Hosea 10:12.

Wednesday, August 31, 2016

Text: “But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord...” - Luke 1:13-15.

Comment: Zacharias and Elizabeth who were the parents of the pro-phet, John the Baptist, prayed for a child and waited patiently for God to answer their prayer. At a time they least expected, an angel of God announced to Zacharias that his prayer had been heard and that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son to be called John, as stated in the text for today. When Zecharias heard this, he was doubtful as to how his wife could still conceive as he and his wife were very old. However, as there is no impossibility with God, (Jeremiah 32: 17), Elizabeth truly became pregnant and gave birth to the famous prophet, John the Baptist, who had the honour of being the fore-runner of Jesus Christ.

(Luke 1: 23-25,57,58) When Rachel the wife of Jacob had stayed for years without having an issue, God had mercy on her and opened her womb, as it is written, "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach." (Genesis 30:22, 23) This story is an encouragement to people of God who are looking for children. "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD." - Psalm 113:9.

Thursday, September 1, 2016

Text: "Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. (Psalm 25:3, 4.

Comment: Having made their requests known to God in prayer, the people of God should believe that He is taking care of the problem and that all they need do is to patiently wait, while still praying. That is evidence of faith. David the prophet stated, "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."(Psalm 130:5, 6) He also stated, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved." (Psalm 62:1, 2) The point of being more active in the way of God in the midst of tribulation is highlighted by King David when he stated, "O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD." (Psalm 31:23, 24) Those who are patient would by the grace of God enjoy the fruit of it, and would in course of time proclaim with joy, "...Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." - Isaiah 25:9

Friday, September 2, 2016

Text: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." - James 5:16.

Comment: Confessing faults one to another means acknowledging wrongs done to one another and seeking forgiveness, in line with the injunction of our Lord Jesus Christ who stated, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17:3, 4) Contriteness and forgiveness makes for peace and unity of purpose. When people love one another, they will share their joys and sorrows and pray for those who are in distress. Earnest prayers made by people who are given to godliness avail much. When we cast our burdens on the Lord and trust firmly that He will solve them for us, we shall realise that prayer has power. Even things people thought were impossible, and had given up hope, God is able to do them for them. When Paul and Silas were locked up in prison on charges of introducing a new religion and thereby endangering public peace and safety, they prayed to God and sang praises to Him. An earthquake occurred suddenly and immediately all the doors of the prison were opened and their chains loosened. The miracle led to the conversion of the jailer and his house. This serves to teach us an important lesson on the efficacy of prayer.

Saturday, September 3, 2016

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 mentioned "the patience of Job" for us Christians to emulate under any condition, no matter how unpleasant it may be. It is the worshipper who patiently does the will of God that will receive His promised blessings. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 - 1882) a United States poet wrote in his poem, "A Psalm of Life" that "Lives of great men all remind us/ We can make our lives sublime,/ And, departing, leave behind us/ Footprints on the sands of time/ Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for any fate;/ Still achieving, still pursuing,/ Learn to labor and to wait."

The attitude of emulating the good qualities of great people is even more important in the work of God. Great men like Job are shining examples of patience, which is faith maintained in spite of difficulties over time. We should not become despondent and draw back from the Lord's service because of the devil's persecution, else one will lose everything, including salvation. The Bible says, "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) Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” - Hebrews 10:38, 39.

Sunday, September 4, 2016

Text: “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.” - Isaiah 30:18.

Comment: God Almighty is patient with His people, giving them warning and giving them time to repent. He also rewards His people according to His grace in His due time. There is time for everything. Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour exhorted us saying: “In your patience possess ye your souls.” (Luke 21:19) This means that we should continue trusting in Him and doing His will while we wait. King Solomon says, we should believe that the whatever may be problems will pass with time. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 7:8) The skies do not remain overcast with clouds all year round. After some time sunny days will come again by His grace. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. - Psalm 37:37.

St. Paul exhorts us thus, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might, receive the promise. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." - Hebrews 10:35,36,38,39.

Monday, September 5, 2016

Text: “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” - Matthew 6:5

Comment: The text for today, contains a manual on prayer from our Lord Jesus Christ. He explained that prayer should be a private affair. He added, “But thou, when thou

prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking". Other conditions are that as we pray, we should believe that God will do for us what we are asking of Him. We must not have any doubt in us. As already stated, and we do not have to scream or repeat the prayer endlessly before He hears us. Our words should be few, straight to the point. (Mark 11: 23,24) Then, the prayer must be according to the will of God and we must be prepared to submit ourselves to His ultimate will. (Matthew 26:39,42; 1 John 5:14,15) The prayer must be said through Jesus Christ "the only mediator between God and man" (1 Timothy 2:5; John 15: 16) Fourthly, realising that God does not hear sinners, the person praying must have repented of his sins and be doing God's will. (Isaiah 59:1) The blind man cured by Christ said." And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." -- 1 John 3:22; Ps 66:18

Tuesday, September 6, 2016

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: The man born blind whom Christ healed, gave as part of his reply to his persecutors the words in the text for today. As the blind man said, sin is a very great obstacle to prayer. When one is wicked or loves what is evil, his prayer will never be answered by God. We have the instance of Saul the king of Israel. When he fell from the favour of God because of sin, his inquiries were no longer being answered by God. Consequently he was surrounded by fears - as the wicked usually are. (Compare Proverbs 28:1) The Bible says, "And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." (1 Samuel 28:5, 6) He told the demons who appeared to the witch whom he went to consult out of desperation, at Endor, "...God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams". God departed from him because of his disobedience. Samuel the prophet told him point blank. "But now thy kingdom shall not continue ...because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee." (1 Samuel 13:14).

We must run away from sin all the time, so that God will continue to answer our prayers. See also Isaiah 59:1-14

Wednesday, September 7, 2016

Text: “And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.” - Matthew 8:5-7

Comment: One of the people commended for their faith by our Lord Jesus Christ was the centurion who came to him at Capernaum with a passionate request for his servant to be healed. When our Saviour offered to come and heal him, the man objected saying that, though he is an officer, under the authority of others, he gives orders which are obeyed. But Jesus Christ being the son of God does not need to come to his house to heal his servant of the palsy. He is too high for that. He only needs to give the command and his servant would be healed. “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” He then told him “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.

The centurion showed humility in seeking God's mercy, knowing that he was utterly helpless in the situation he found himself. His faith in the powers Jesus Christ was such that he believed that his word would take effect even from a distance. Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye ... ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.” -Matthew 21:21.

Thursday, September 8, 2016

Text: “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” - James 4:2,3.

Comment: God does not like selfish prayers – a person praying for himself or herself only all the time without praying for the good of other people. Some even pray to have all the resources meant for several people only for themselves. One should not say such a prayer because God is able to provide enough for everybody's need. In praying, the principle of Christian charity as taught by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ and his apostles should be applied. Thus, we should pray for the well-being of those outside the

Christian religion and even for our enemies so that God would touch their minds to appreciate the benefits of upright living. (see Matthew 5: 43-48).

God is opposed to the practice of praying for the death of one's perceived and even unknown enemies. (Luke 9:51-56) When the disciples of Christ urged him to pray for fire to destroy the Samaritans for not receiving him, Jesus Christ rebuked them. This shows that God does not answer such prayers. (Matthew 5:43-48. See also Luke 6:27,28).

It should be noted that Christ enjoined us to “pray for your enemies” and those who “despitefully use you and persecute you”. This is to the end that God would open their eyes to understand their folly so that they will turn to righteousness and not for them to be strengthened in wickedness. Christians should be kind, tolerant and broadminded and look at things from the Bible perspective and not from their own narrow point of view. The spirit of charity puts one in a suitable condition to have his prayers answered.

Friday, September 9, 2016

Text: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” - Luke 21:25, 26.

Comment: We are now living at the end of the world - the age known in the Holy Bible as the last day, described as "perilous times" in 2 Timothy 3: 1. This is the terrible age pointed to by Jesus Christ in prophecy and cited in the Bible text for today. The last day is a time of continual unrest between the rulers and the ruled; a time natural disasters will increase, a time people will have fears of the future due to the greed, selfishness and lack of fellow-feeling among people. The knowledge that has created so many facilities for making life easier has also become the tools for causing a range of economic, social and political problems. At the end of the day, people are left with so much pain and tears. What is the source of hope and comfort for the teeming masses now at the mercy of the principalities and powers that rule the world? It is only God Almighty through Jesus Christ in their established kingdom that men can find refuge and peace by Their grace, hence he said, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. - Luke 21:36

Saturday, September 10, 2016

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

Comment: What St. Paul meant is that people of God should pray wherever they are, if it is convenient to do so, without waiting until they get to a particular hallowed place, such as a place of worship. As some say "a praying heart, will ever find a praying place". According to the Bible scholars, the natural Jews believed that no prayer could be acceptable unless it was offered at the temple at Jerusalem. It is a position such as this the Apostle wrote to correct by saying we could pray anywhere, which, with Bible understanding, should mean anywhere that is neat, quiet and has some privacy. Another point is that one can also pray in one's heart anytime, even as one is working or travelling. But one should pray with hands and hearts devoid of sin, malice, hatred or doubts. Because they continued in sin while praying for His mercies, God told the natural Jews, To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD...When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? ...I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." - Isaiah 1:11-15.

Sunday, September 11, 2016

Text: "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." - 1 Peter 4: 7.

Comment: It is a pity that countless numbers of people in our generation are so given to worldliness that they have no time to read the Holy Bible so as to learn to comport themselves soberly, to reflect on the signs of the times, and to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded the sheep of God to escape imminent death or destruction. To "watch" in this context has the meanings of keeping a guard upon oneself against sin, and of being on the lookout for fulfillment of Bible prophecies or being observant as to see what comes or happens. This is spiritual vigilance which requires diligent reading or searching of the Scriptures in order to know and understand the signs of the times, which are physically staring people in the face today. Such diligence in studying the

Bible must be accompanied by prayer of faith to God for His mercy, protection and deliverance from the trouble or tribulation that will shake the whole world and destroy the wicked or ungodly at the appointed time. (Isaiah 26:21; Joel 2:32) When St. Peter said the end of all things is near, he was warning us to guard against evil doings so as not to incur God's vengeance by which He will soon clear the earth of all vestiges of wickedness or evil.

Tolerance is the acceptance of the differing views of other people, e.g., in religious or political matters, and fairness toward the people who hold these different views. Tolerance implies the existence of differences which we have to learn to accommodate. For, though we may not agree entirely with other persons, we should recognise the fact that they are entitled to their own opinions. Even if their views differ from ours, tolerance enables us to be at peace with them. It makes for a fulfilled Christian life to the glory of God.

Monday, September 12, 2016

Text: “And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But 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 9:53-56.

Comment: Jesus Christ taught his disciples tolerance by precept and by example. As could be seen from the text, the Apostles James and John asked Jesus Christ whether they should call for fire to come down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans because they were angry at the cold treatment given to Jesus Christ. The way the two disciples reacted was out of tune with the grace brought by Jesus Christ. He therefore had to correct them sharply. The fact that the disciples asked for the ultimate punishment to be invoked on the Samaritans showed marks of the age-long prejudice between the Jews and Samaritans. But knowing that the hostility between the two nations was not based on spiritual grounds, Jesus made it clear such hostility should not be harboured by Christians. Rather he rebuked the two disciples saying that his mission was to save, not to destroy lives. It is the devil who has pleasure in the deaths of people. Truly God “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”. (2 Peter 3:9) The example of tolerance shown by our Lord Jesus Christ should guide our attitude to non-believers and to one another.

Tuesday, September 13, 2016

Text: “So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this...” - Matthew 13:27, 28.

Comment: As the children of God we should be tolerant in dealing with unbelievers or people of other faiths. This point is clearly made in the parable of the wheat and tares in which our Lord Jesus Christ likened the kingdom of God to a man who sowed good seeds in his field but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. Because they looked alike, the householder did not allow his servants to remove the tares lest he weed the wheat also. As the preaching of the truth spreads from one place to the other, people of different persuasions come into the fold, claiming to be converts. Some are genuinely convinced of the truth and are determined to do righteousness so as to gain life in the end, but others simply love the sweet melodies of the doctrines of God but are not ready to make the sacrifices required of Christians. They just want to hide under the canopy provided by God's organization to carry on with their iniquitous acts. (Compare Jeremiah 5:26) God will allow them until a time will come when “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity”. (Matthew 13:41) Before that time comes both the good and the bad should live together in peace. Those given to righteousness should not follow the pernicious ways of such wicked people but continue in righteousness for their own salvation.

Wednesday, September 14, 2016

Text: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” - Matthew 15:13, 14.

Comment: This text shows clearly that it is not every organization that calls on the names of God and Jesus Christ that belongs to Them. While God allows other religions or faiths to exist alongside the true faith, all false religions shall be exposed and destroyed by God in the end. But God will never mandate anybody to do that for Him. That was why when the disciples of Christ told him that the Pharisees took offence at his teaching he made the statement in the text for the day. The disciples were

concerned because the Pharisees were the religious rulers and had influence over the political leaders, the Romans.

For all their self-righteousness and pride the system of religion of the Pharisees was more of rituals and formalities than real substance. For this they were constantly chastised by Jesus Christ. They therefore sought, by every means, to destroy his influence among the people. From what Jesus Christ says, falsehood and false religious leaders would be cleared out of the earth in God's due time, since they were not planted by God. That being the case, it is vital that everyone should constantly examine his beliefs in the light of the Scriptures to be sure he is following the truth, lest all the exertions and sacrifices be in vain. St. Paul stated, "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?" - 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Text: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." - Romans 12:17-19.

Comment: Whenever grievances or squabbles among people are not settled quickly, such squabbles soon create big divides among them. Some may even resort to mob action to express their bottled-up anger or to settle their grievances. Everyone in the opposing side becomes a target. Usually any harm done to one side elicits revenge from the other. Incidentally, each instance of revenge is likely to be worse than the initial action. And the cycle continues. There can be no lasting peace and unity among people plagued by the spirit of religious intolerance, bigotry, vengeance, fanaticism, etc. People must learn to live together in spite of their differences. Christians should pursue peace through tolerance, patience, knowledge and use of peaceful means of resolving their differences. This requires understanding one another through constant discussions or dialogue so as to identify our differences (which we have to live with) and the areas where we share common interests. Human beings share the same commitments to justice, love, honesty, truth, good neighbourliness and so on. These are the ingredients for peace we should build on. Scripture says: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." - Romans 14:19.

Friday, September 16, 2016

Text: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." - Philippians 1:15, 16.

Comment: In the time of Apostle Paul, there were some who were preaching the gospel but not with the understanding that the principal mission was to declare the love of God for His people by reason of which He is calling His children wherever they may be. Such ones are carnally-minded and are more concerned with their personal glory. They resist the truth and contend vehemently with the true ministers of Christ. They have no real love or sympathy for or understanding of the condition of those they are preaching to. They do not relate in any way with those who do not share their beliefs. They easily feel threatened and tend to resort to abusive language in their preaching. Even when their errors are made bare they would not accept their errors. Even within the church the search for vainglory and to outshine others is present and this creates problems within the fold. This situation played itself out in the time of Apostle Paul and he stated. "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3) Christians should allow themselves to be guided by the word of God. "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ". - 2 Corinthians 2:17..

Saturday, September 17, 2016

Text: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." - 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

Comment: In time of old, God allowed His people to avenge wrongs done to them. However, they still followed laid down procedures by allowing judges to look into the matter. But there were still highly recommended examples when people of God did not seek revenge for wrongs done to them. King David provides a ready example. He was a man of great courage and faith in God. King Saul, full of envy over David's growing popularity, made desperate attempts to kill him but God protected him. When David had the opportunity to kill Saul, he refused to do so saying that he would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. (1 Samuel 24:1-15; 26:6-25) Knowing that vengeance belongs to God, he had told his men, "David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish." (1 Samuel 26:10) David repaid the evil deeds of Saul to him with extreme kindness. In one of such encounters Saul told David, "...Thou art more righteous than I ..." (1 Samuel 24:17,18) King Saul later died in disgrace. This is a great

lesson for us to refrain from harming those who are opposed to us. We pray that those are given to taking vengeance would change their ways and practise righteousness for their own good.

Sunday, September 18, 2016

Text: “And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.” - Esther 4:3.

Comment: In the days of King Ahasuerus of Persia, his Prime Minister, Haman, hated the Jews in his kingdom because Mordecai, a Jew, one of the King's servants, refused to bow to him. Even though Haman knew that Mordecai did not bow to him because of he was a Jew, yet he planned to destroy them. The Bible says: “And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. 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 3:5, 6) It could be seen that Haman was highly intolerant of other people's customs and his bitterness, fueled by his ego, was such that he was prepared to destroy a whole nation. God came to the rescue of Mordecai and his fellow Jews. The King promoted Mordecai, but he caused Haman to be hanged on the gallows he had prepared for the Jews. It could be seen how far intolerance could lead people and how God rescues His people from the hands of the wicked who are intolerant of customs they see as strange. The Bible says: “All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?” - Psalms 35:9, 10.

Monday, September 19, 2016

Text: “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” - James 3:14-17.

Comment: Apostle James in this exhortation makes a clear distinction between the wisdom of God and that of the world. That which is worldly is concerned with individual or personal interests and not with the general good. Such people just want to dominate others. They always want their views to be taken and not that of others. They want all the good things in the world for themselves, their children, in-laws and relations but do not seek the same for others. They glory in their worldly knowledge and wealth and influence, and do not have a spiritual attitude to life. They “trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.” (Psalm 49:6) Personal interests impels one to read negative meanings into the actions of others and this, in many cases, lead to wrong conclusions. Self-interest results in struggles for positions and popularity within the congregation. This leads to backbiting, slander and setting of members against one another. The oneness of purpose on the basis of which the Church should work to promote the name of God for their own salvation is thereby undermined. (See 1 Corinthians 1:10) The result will be malice, hatred, in-fighting and reproach. But those who know the truth and follow it will be seen by all to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works and this gives honour to God and makes for progress. – Titus 2:11-14.

Tuesday, September 20, 2016

Text: “Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace ...” - Daniel 3:15

Comment: This declaration was made by Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon who erected a golden image, and required all his subjects to fall down and worship it. (Daniel 3:1-7) Information was later given him that three Jews serving in the court were refusing to worship this golden image. (Daniel 3:8-12) For persisting in their refusal despite his rage and threats, the Jews were cast into the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:19-23) That was the height of intolerance. His arrogance in asking which God could deliver them was a challenge to the power of the Almighty God and He showed His power by miraculously preserving them from being consumed by the fire. The King was compelled to eat his words. (Daniel 3:24-27) David stated, “Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” (Psalm 9:19, 20) It is also true that in several institutions or organizations in the world there are those who do everything possible to drag every person into their own clubs or societies so that they would control the entire system. They frustrate and even eliminate those who would not join. But yet the institution that employed them is a public one where everyone should rise on merit! The danger in intolerance is that it may push one to take rash actions on matters for which he does not have proper knowledge and to sin against God to one's eternal regret.

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

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

Comment: The Holy Bible clearly shows that God Almighty is exceedingly tolerant in His attitude towards men. If He were to punish people according to their sins, no one would be alive. David the Psalmist declared: “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” (Psalm 130:3, 4) Indeed, as the Psalmist said, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:13, 14) However, God's attribute of tolerance towards His children is to give them the opportunity to hear His word so as to repent of their sins. (See Romans 2:4) Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ enjoined us to emulate our heavenly Father's characteristic of tolerance by praying for and doing good to those who persecute us or who make themselves our enemies, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” He added, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” – Matthew 5:43-48.

Thursday, September 22, 2016

Text: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” – Colossians 3:12-14.

Comment: The value of tolerance in the life of a Christian cannot be over stressed. It should start from the home, in the relationship between the man and his wife, so that the children will copy from them and extend this way of life to the larger society. Tolerance teaches us that while we may not agree entirely with other person's views, we should recognise the fact that they are entitled to their own opinions as God created people to have independent opinions. (Genesis 2:16,17; Joshua 24:14,15; Deuteronomy 30:15) For people to live together, they should show kindness to and

forgive one another, which involves the understanding that we are in an evil world in which anyone could be in need of one thing or the other and in which one could offend his neighbor one way or the other. Peaceful co-existence entails forbearance (not responding to provocation, patience) and humility, which denotes modesty or respectfulness. Even if other people's views differ from ours, tolerance enables us to be at peace with them. It makes relationships to thrive, including marriage. Admonishing husbands on their duties towards their wives, Apostle Peter stated among other things: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered...Be ye all of one mind, having compassion, one of another as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." – 1 Peter 3:7, 8.

Friday, September 23, 2016

Text: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." - Matthew 5:39-41.

Comment: One of the topics our Saviour Jesus Christ addressed in his sermon on the mount was the need for Christians to be tolerant and to suffer themselves to be defrauded for the sake of peace. Though this may be taken as weakness but it is evidence of maturity and superior reasoning to refuse to fall into satan's trap of luring one into a prolonged, bitter or violent confrontation. It is usual for people who have been given some power or authority to become insensitive to the feelings of those under them and to preoccupy themselves with maintaining their seats even at the cost of other people's wellbeing. People have a keen sense of justice and become embittered when feel that individuals or groups want others to play on their intelligence. This creates crisis.

We admonish all those who have the opportunity to be leaders to sincerely make efforts to do that which is right for the people, to right the wrongs and correct injustices wherever and whenever such occur and to provide needed amenities for the people. The Bible says: "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness." (Proverbs 16:12) This means that leaders who want to continue in office must ensure that they do good and allow the people to enjoy their God-given rights. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God", said David the prophet in 2 Samuel 23:2,3.

Saturday, September 24, 2016

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

Comment: Everyone must recognise the rights or opinions of others as not to seek to impose one's own wishes or opinions on others. St. Paul says, he strove to please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit, “but the profit of many, that they may be saved”. (1 Corinthians 10:33) Tolerance is a virtue with which every child of God should endeavour to adorn his character. King David observed thus, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ...As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” - Psalm 133:1-3.

The people of God must continue to exhort and admonish the leaders and pray for them to do things in the fear of God and not set people against one another so “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” for their own blessings by the grace of God. (1 Timothy 2:2) Tolerance is enshrined in the principles on which good government is established and it produces fruits of peace, harmony, happiness, unity and good neighbourliness among people. It Moreover the Bible says, “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” - Psalm 34:12-14.

According to the Encarta Dictionary (2006 edition), the word good is an adjective indicating that something is approved of or desirable or of a high quality. Neighbourliness is a noun from the adjective neighbourly which means friendly, helpful, and kind, especially to a neighbour. A neighbour is defined as “somebody who lives next door or close to somebody else; a fellow human”. The title Good Neighbourliness therefore stresses the vital importance of being helpful or kind to each other in the fear of God.

Sunday, September 25, 2016

Text: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” - 1 John 4:20, 21.

Comment: Every true Christian should derive joy from being of help to or to be privileged to be used by God to help his fellow man. Ordinarily a neighbour is someone who lives next door or near to one. Solomon the prophet stated: "...for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off". (Proverbs 27:10) He also stated, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. not only one who lives near to someone but also anyone who is in need of our help at any time." - Proverbs 18:24.

But our Lord Jesus Christ makes us understand that, to use the words of Matthew Henry, "It is the duty of us all, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity". In the parable of the Good Samaritan, he showed that our claim to love God with all our hearts and might and our neighbours as ourselves will be meaningless if we are not prepared to make sacrifices of time, money and energy to help anyone who is in need.. The Bible teaches that our love of God is expressed by our love for our fellow man, ((1 John 4:7-10, 20, ,21) Christians, as the salt of the earth help to close the divides among people and heal the wounds caused by hatred through their practical show of love for one another. – John 13:34, 35.

Monday, September 26, 2016

Text: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." - 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Comment: This prophecy by Apostle Paul under the inspiration of God speaks of the last days as a time when the values that make for peaceful and happy relationships among men would be lacking among many. This is at the instance of the devil. Because of developments in the communications technology the world has become a global village such that people's lives are being increasingly shaped by global forces which are breaking down traditional patterns of life in various communities. The force of foreign cultures spread by television, video, radio, newspapers and books, have disrupted traditional concepts of neighbourhood. – communal life, respect for elders, care for the aged and for one another, integrity, moderate living, chastity, regard for marriage and the family unit etc. The increasing tendency for people to live as islands

to one another is contrary to the Christian spirit of helping one another in the race of salvation "for we are members one of another". - Ephesians 4:25

Christians should not be carried away by modernism but should hold fast to the truth. St. Paul exhorted: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." - Colossians 3:12-14.

Tuesday, September 27, 2016

Text: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." - Matthew 24:10

Comment: One of the signs of the last days as stated by our Lord Jesus Christ is that many people will generally be so concerned about their personal interests that they would readily betray and hate one another. One way of looking at this is that unlike in the past when people lived in rural settings and made their living from the abundance found in nature, many today are employed in government institutions and companies and therefore depend on salaries. Employers are few; job seekers are everywhere and the struggle to retain one's job is a matter of life and death. In this situation of survival of the fittest, people can easily betray or deny another so as to preserve what he has. Presently, there is so much suspicion, hatred, misunderstanding, greed, selfishness, and violence. Societies are generally richer and freer than in ages past, yet people are lonelier more insecure and generally dissatisfied and unhappy. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) It is certain that without a sense of shared obligations and norms that would link people with one another, they would be more or less islands to themselves and the idea of being our "neighbour's keeper" would be out. It is the love that Christians have for one another that sets them apart. St. Peter exhorted: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." - 1Peter 1:22.

Wednesday, September 28, 2016

Text: "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity." - Isaiah 59:4.

Comment: This an apt comment on the state of affairs among the unfaithful Jews in the time of Isaiah the prophet. Writing of people in his time, David the prophet said, “they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly”. (Psalm 62:4) Things are worse in the world today. The love for God and for one's neighbour has been largely ignored. The qualities that make for order, peace and progress such as honesty, truthfulness, diligence, justice, humility, the fear of God are lacking in the lives of the people. People now give heed to seducing spirits and speak lies in hypocrisy and have their “conscience seared (as with) a hot iron”. (1 Timothy 4:1-4) This reality has resulted in so much disorderliness and unhappiness. Several lives have been lost due to wars that have broken out because people who had lived together peacefully for years now see themselves as enemies. Where there are no “hot” wars, there are “cold” wars by way of riots, strikes, demonstrations, terrorist acts, etc. The solution is for people to exercise faith in the word of God and to pray for His guidance and strength always. “O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.” - Psalm 115:9-11.

Thursday, September 29, 2016

Text: “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.” “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” - Leviticus 19:32; Ephesians 6:4.

Comment: A major area of concern in the world today is that many a time, the youths refuse to listen to their leaders. Agitations by youths in search of jobs, education, easy money, social amenities, etc. have led to violent confrontations with the security forces and to intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic hostilities. When youths take laws into their hands and resort to kidnapping, killings, destruction of property and so on, the danger looms large that such a society would descend into confusion and rightful political authority may give way to bandits and tribal war lords. In such a situation, man would be wolf to man and the concept of good neighbourliness would be thrown to the dogs. An example of how some individuals could whip up public anger for their selfish ends happened when St. Paul was in Ephesus those who were selling figurines of the goddess Diana felt their business was threatened by the preaching of St. Paul and created a tumult, and harassed the companions of St. Paul. (Acts 19:26, 27) However, the Town Clerk intervened and advised the people to follow the law as he stood the risk of being called into question for their disorderly conduct. (Acts 19:36-41) Scripture says “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly. (Proverbs

14:29) It also says, “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.” - Ecclesiastes 7:9

Friday, September 30, 2016

Text: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” - John 8:44

Comment: Though the devil is active in his wicked task of causing decay, destruction and death in the world, it is those who give themselves to him that are ready tools for him to use. This text also highlights the fact that people should know the source or cause of their troubles, and act intelligently or wisely. The devil is the one responsible for the perils, the conflicts and wars that now afflict peoples of the world. (John 10:8-10; Revelation 12:12). He has built barriers among men, religious, political and social, and created situations that make them to hate each other. He has created caste systems, and various degrees of wars, as well as poverty, oppression, injustice and so on. To avoid the breakdown of law and order in communities, it is imperative that we apply Bible principles to know how we relate with each other – and to the spiritual angles to the problems that afflict us daily. We should know who we are, why we are created, how we live, what we want and what we can offer to each other and not be fighting one another.. St. Paul stated, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” - Galatians 5:13-15.

Saturday, October 1, 2016

Text: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” - Matthew 24:7, 8.

Comment: True to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, there have been several wars and tumults since after the First World War of 1914 – 1918. Despite the end of the cold war, there has been an increase in conflicts around the world due to the struggle for dominance between the most powerful countries of the world. Even as at now, several countries are entangled in civil or international wars. Millions are pining away as

refugees in and around the various hot spots. Leaders are helpless in the cross currents of these events and keep shuttling from one city to the other in the search for solutions. Howbeit, while some are genuinely seeking for solutions to the problems, others are actively fueling them, for their own selfish ends. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19) World leaders will continue to beat about the bush unless they turn to God and His word in the Holy Bible. Scripture says: "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.

Sunday, October 2, 2016

Text: "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." - Job 2:9, 10.

Comment: The devil creates troubles in the world so that people will lose their faith and, as Job's wife urged him, would "curse God and die". Evidently the devil believes that even the most determined worshippers will turn against God when faced with intense persecution. Job did not do so, and was blessed in the end. He had the understanding that it is what God allows that happens. The "evil" he was facing was not from God but the devil, but since God allowed it, he was prepared to subject himself to the trial. We should pray to be given the strength to stand in the hour of temptation. (Revelation 3:10) It is only when people turn to God and remain steadfast in His service that He will help them out of their troubles and give them peace. "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." - Psalm 107:1-6.

Monday, October 3, 2016

Text: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." - Jeremiah 33:3.

Comment: Whatever may be the sufferings or difficulties any one may be facing, he should turn to God in prayer, seek knowledge and hold fast to the faith. Turning to God means imbibing the principles and rules that lead to the practise of righteousness and thus, of good neighbourliness. It is amazing the level of positive changes that take place in people who accept their errors, turn to God in prayer and determine to do righteousness. When the people of Nineveh, a great city of old, with over 120,000 inhabitants, received warning from God through Jonah the prophet that the city would be destroyed because of their sins, they repented so thoroughly that God forgave them their sins and spared the city. (Jonah chapters 1 – 4) Zacchaeus, a tax collector in the time of our Saviour Jesus Christ, became rich by over-taxing people and other dubious means. But when he saw Christ he received him joyfully to his house, confessed his sins and made amends for his excesses. Our Lord told him that salvation had come to his house. – Luke 19:1-10.

What of the woman described as a “sinner” who met Jesus Christ in the house of Simeon, a Pharisee? She so clearly showed her repentance that Jesus Christ told her “Your sins are forgiven.” “Your faith has saved you, go in peace.” Luke 7:36-50 (New King James Version. It is when people refrain from sin, which means refraining from offending God Almighty and our fellow human beings that they good neighbours to one another. See Romans 13:8-10.

Tuesday, October 4, 2016

Text: “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.” - Luke 10:36, 37.

Comment: That we are neighbours to one another is the moral lesson which Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior taught us in what is now popularly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan. A lawyer had asked Jesus Christ “who is my neighbour? “ (Luke 10:29) Jesus Christ did not answer the question directly but related the story of a certain man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, a road frequented by armed robbers, They attacked him, stripped him bare, wounded him and left him half dead. A priest saw him but passed another way. A Levite passed also, saw him and passed by. It was a Samaritan, that helped him. “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take

care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” (Luke 10:33-35) From the parable it was clear who was neighbour to the injured man. It was then Jesus Christ charged the lawyer, “Go, and do thou likewise”. Christians too should be busy doing likewise. See 1 John 3:17,18.

Wednesday, October 5, 2016

Text: “Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” - Hebrews 13:1, 2.

Comment: As Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher that ever trod this earth, has taught us, we are duty-bound to help or show kindness to any person, of whatever nation or religion, he might be, as the Samaritan did in the popular parable by Jesus Christ. That is why the word neighbour, as defined, is not just the person living next door but anyone who needs our help, who could be someone we do not know. It is evident from the parable of the good Samaritan therefore that good neighbourliness requires that we should be willing to deny ourselves for the good of others, that we should play down, if not forget our differences. In other words, we must learn to do good to all men.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to do good with the hope of receiving reward from God and not limit our works of kindness to those in a position to pay us back. He stated, “Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” -Luke 14:12-14.

Thursday, October 6, 2016

Text: “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.” - 1 Thessalonians 3:12.

Comment: As Christians, we should be growing in Christian virtues, especially in the quality of love, as stated in the text for today. When it is well grounded in one, he could even stretch his hands to the needy who are afar off. Thus we have seen appeals going out from one corner of the world beset by calamity to other nations and seen how responses have come. These include case of earthquakes, the care of refugees in war

zones, the humanitarian crisis created by the wave of migrations to Europe, victims of human trafficking, the Ebola epidemic, terminally ill people and so on. Millions of people have been inspired to help people they will never meet. Certainly, this sense of “global citizenship” is in line with feelings one should have for one's closer or even immediate neighbours. The extent to which we are affected by global changes reinforce our sense of solidarity with people affected by emergency situations. God commanded the people of Israel in those days, “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.” - Deuteronomy 15:7, 8.

Friday, October 7, 2016

Text: “If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him” and that “Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again” - Exodus 23:5.

Comment: The law that we should do good even to those we may regard as foes was given by God Almighty right from ancient times. No humane person who loves his neighbour as himself would see his neighbour's property in danger without endeavouring to preserve it; even if what is involved is an animal. It could be seen that before animals' rights activists started flourishing in modern times, God had made provision for the welfare of animals in the Holy Bible. Relieving an ass of its burden may be a comparatively small matter, but it is a test of how we would respond to greater challenges, involving fellow human beings. If God could be so concerned about the comfort of animals, He will no doubt be even more regardful of the welfare of man. Because the devil does things contrary to nature, he teaches his adherents not to do good to the poor and helpless but to those who are associates in Baal worship. That is one of the deceits of the devil. St. Paul exhorts, “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): Moreover, the Bible shows that the fast that is most important to God is not that of abstinence from food but of giving bread to the hungry, helping the homeless and clothing the naked. -Isaiah 58:6, 7.