**GOD’S WORD A LAMP TO MY FEET**

**(PSALM 119:105)**

***Daily Devotional Guide***

**JULY – DECEMBER 2020**

**God’s Kingdom Society (GKS), *The Church of the Living God***

**INTEGRITY Continued from last issue**

Wednesday, July 1, 2020

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

**Comment:** Being those entrusted with the word of God, the servants of God are required to speak the word faithfully. (Jeremiah 23:28) All other assignments given them by God they must discharge exactly as commanded. This did Moses for which God Almighty said: “My servant Moses … is faithful in all mine house”. (Numbers 12:7) St. Paul also commended Timothy (Timotheus), whom he called “my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord”. - 1 Corinthians 4:17

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

**Thursday, July 2, 2020**

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

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

**Friday, July 3, 2020**

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

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

**Saturday, July 4, 2020**

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

**Comment:** Cultivating integrity is a must-do for all Christians, if we must be taken seriously. And the motive must be genuine, springing from the heart, and not to deceive others and worm one's way into gaining favours or gifts. What we say and do in the open should align with the things we say and do in secret. St. Paul said we should serve or work “…not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ”. (Colossians 3:22-24) As Christians, we have a responsibility to truly represent Christ before the people we deal with in all social settings. (1 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:7) Christ charged all Christians in the following words: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven”. (Matthew 5:16) Our consciences must be clear as to what we do and say. And Apostle Paul who was a great servant of God, endowed with enviable integrity and industry declared: “And herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God,and toward men”.- Acts 24:16.

**Sunday, July 5, 2020**

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

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

**Monday, July 6, 2020**

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

**Comment:** When Abraham moved to Gerar, the King Abimelech wanted to marry Sarah whom Abraham made Abimelech to believe was his sister, an impression Sarah also confirmed. God however, directed Abimelech to release her to her husband after he took her into his palace that night. Really Abimelech was an innocent man, with genuine intentions. (Genesis 20:1-5). King Solomon declared: “The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.” (Proverbs 11:3) God truly delights in the upright or one with integrity, to the extent that He even helps them to maintain their integrity by keeping such persons from falling into sin. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” declared Apostle Paul, “but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) King David the Psalmist stated: “And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.” - Psalm 41:12.

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

**THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP**

Essence is that which makes a thing what it is, the core of the existence or relevance of that thing. Worship is to respect or have great regard for a person or thing. It is also seen as “…ceremonies or services in honour of God”. Worship in context of this topic is the totality of our behaviours both in services and in our homes which must reflect honour to God our Maker.

**Tuesday, July 7, 2020**

**Text:** “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. - John 4:22

**Comment:** Mankind by nature seeks to venerate things, hence in ancient times some worshipped phenomena that they could not explain or understand. For any worship to have meaning it must be directed at somebody or something. In the world today, some regard wealth or money as an object of worship. Much as the zeal to worship is commendable, caution must be given as to who and how one worships as to get the blessings of God and eventual salvation by His grace and power. Some others worship what they do not know as our Lord Jesus Christ stated in his encounter with the woman of Samaria as stated in the text for today. True worship is that which makes one to honour and reverence God Almighty, be it at service times or in our day-to-day lives. St. Paul stated: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” – Romans 12:1.

**Wednesday, July 8, 2020**

**Text:** “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” - Revelation 4:11.

**Comment:** True worship is that which is done to honour God Almighty based on the understanding that, He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, (Genesis 1:1; Jeremiah 10:10); the God of Salvation (Isaiah 45:22; Psalm 68:20), the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). The Bible is replete with exhortations to worship God. David declared: “O come let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the Lord (JEHOVAH) our Maker”. (Psalm 95:6,7) God Almighty deserves our worship and adoration through Jesus Christ . Let us search our our consciences and answer for ourselves whether we are serving God as we ought to do and whether we are determined to continue to do so. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.” (2 Corinthians 13:5, 6) With honesty of purpose each person should be able to judge himself aright by the grace of God and take the necessary steps needed to make amends. The Prophet Joshua in Joshua 24:15 told the israelites:“…choose you this day whom ye will serve …but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” - Joshua 24:15.

**Thursday, July 9, 2020**

**Text:** “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.” - Psalm 103:1-5

Comment: Some people do not make out time to reflect on the bright side of things, the good things they are enjoying and Who had made them possible. These benefits or blessings are numerous and they are not only material but spiritual. That one is alive in spite of the dangers that abound in the world today is a priceless gift. With life comes the possibility of serving God in truth and the hope of a better tomorrow. It is by the power of God we are healed when we are sick and by His grace we get provisions as to enjoy a high standard of living by His grace. God's forgiveness and forbearance accounts for our continued existence, for if God does not forgive us our sins nobody, no, not one human being would be alive today. “If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities” said the Psalmist “O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared”. (Psalm 130:3,4; 2 Peter 3:9) The “load” of benefits which God bestows on His children the world over are eloquent testimonies of His goodness for which a reciprocal act by way of worship is immensely fitting and befitting by God's grace.

Friday, July 10, 2020

Text: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” - Matthew 7:13, 14.

Comment: One who decides to worship God in truth and who does so sincerely and diligently should know that he has clearly pitched his tent on the Lord's side. The devil, the archenemy of God and man and all that answers to unrighteousness, will therefore see him as an enemy. The devil will try by all means to make the road to be rough and dreary but by the power of God he will do valiantly and triumph by His grace. The end result of true worship, which is salvation – complete deliverance from sin and its consequences including death - will be the reward of the faithful. Jesus Christ, stressing the importance of salvation, called on his hearers during his earthly Ministry to enter, in at the straight (difficult) gate, according the text under reference. It was because of this understanding that Apostle Paul exhorted the Christians in the early Church on the vital need for patience, watchfulness, prayer and continuance in well doing. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”. (Acts 14:22; See also 2 Timothy 3:12) This shows that the true worship of God calls for sacrifice and readiness to suffer reproach for Christ's sake with the hope that God will bless and reward all His sincere worshippers with salvation if they continue till the end by His grace and power.

Saturday, July 11, 2020

Text: “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” - Romans 12:11.

Comment: The worship of God is a serious business which calls for diligence and consistency. Worship is not something we do as we please, in a careless manner, or casually, as spectators on the sidelines. It should involve our whole selves, engaging our complete interest and participation. It involves more than merely attending services; it requires our complete attention. Attending of services requires both physical and psychological preparation. The combination of the two makes the service to be of benefit to a worshipper in the Lord, which, when translated into our daily lives leads to salvation. For one to attend in time, one must select and make ready one's clothes for dressing. This is more true for those who have difficulty in making selection because the devil could use indecision to rob one of valuable time. Money for transportation should be ready. If you would take breakfast decide on it and get something prepared down to save your time in the morning. Wake up early enough to be able to co-ordinate all the arrrangements as to give you enough time to reach the Service before it is declared open. Decide on how much you would put as offering to God for the week. Scripture says: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” - James 1:19.

Sunday, July 12, 2020

Text: “…The King's business required haste”. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” – 1 Samuel 21:8.

Comment: To be attentive is a very important aspect of worship. This is so because faith and other spiritual virtues would only come to believers who hear the word of God and those who do what they hear would get salvation at the end by God's grace. (Romans 10:17; James 1:22-25) One can secure the requisite attention by cultivating the habit of singing theocratic songs to uplift the mind before going to service and indeed at all times; reading of Scripture texts especially those that call for service to prepare the heart for God's worship; settling whatever quarrels one has before going for service; praying to God to open ones heart to readily receive His word that would be preached. (1 Chronicles 29:18; Psalm 10:17.) Taking stock of the goodness of God on one for the week as to prepare the heart for a thanksgiving service to God is vital, for indeed, every time of worship is a period of special thanksgiving to God for all His care and goodness to us His sheep every where by His grace.

Monday, July 13, 2020

Text: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes.” - Exodus 19:10.

Comment: Our God invites all His children to come and reason together with Him (Isaiah 1:18-20) and to be attentive as to be profited by such meetings. People of God should sanctify themselves (be in the right condition to appear before Him) before such meetings. This involves bathing oneself thoroughly, shaving, trimming of hair, avoiding contact with one's spouse, settling of quarells, abhoring hatred and malice in one's heart, etc. God views these preparations seriously. In the days of Moses, before God gave the Israelites the ten commandments, he instructed them to sanctify themselves so as to be fit to appear before him as in the text for today. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.” - Exodus 19:10, 14, 15.

The Prophet Samuel followed this example in his days when he invited the house of Jesse for sacrifice preparatory to anoint David. As it is written: “…And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.” - 1 Samuel 16:1-5.

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Text: “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” - Psalm 4:4.

Comment: Spiritual meditation is very important in the life of a Christian. Prayers, reading of the Scriptures coupled with spiritual meditations prepare the heart for a daily life of holiness in the Lord which bring one God's blessings and eventual salvation in the end by God's grace and power. When some people go to bed, they weary themselves with worries about imaginary threats or fears. And with plots of how to eliminate such threats, even if that involves violence, deceit or treachery. “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.” (Micah 2:1) But the communing a Christian does on his bed involves weighing his thoughts and actions on the scale of the Holy Bible in order to promote the cause of righteousness Joshua, the servant of God stated: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” - Joshua 1:8.

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

Text: “Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ's presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when actually you aren't at all?” – 2 Corinthians 13:5, Living Bible.

Comment: A genuine Christian life must be one that gives room for self-examination. This is necessary to ascertain whether one is living up to expectations in the Lord. The godly advice of our Lord and master, Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:24 that leave our gift before the altar and first be reconciled to the person we have a quarrel with before coming to offer the gift, shows that such examinations should be undertaken often so that our sacrifices will be accepted by God. “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:31, 32) For if we follow this admonition of Christ, which is part of God's grand design to help man serve Him with a pure heart always by His grace, we would live a life void of offence towards God and man. We are enjoined in the Bible not to allow the sun to go down on our anger, as it is written: “Be ye angry, and sin not: Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” – Ephesians 4:26.

Thursday, July 16, 2020

Text: “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and toward men.” – Acts 24:16.

Comment: In with St. Paul's admonition that even if we are angry, we should not allow it to lead us into sin, and that we should let the sun go down upon our wrath, (Ephesians 4:26), it would indeed be a joyful life to be able to settle all disputes before the next service day. Even if the Christian is the person offended, he should take steps to put issues behind him soonest as this enables one to relate with God and his neighbour with a clean heart. To worship God in this way calls for concerted effort by way of application of knowledge, prayer and meditation. When he appeared before the council in Jerusalem. Paul declared: “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” (Acts 23:1) It is when one has a free mind that he would properly digest the word of God, judge himself sincerely, put into practice what he has heard and relate freely with others. St. Paul spoke of the Christians at Thessalonica thus: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” - 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Friday, July 17, 2020

Text: “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.” - Ecclesiastes 5:1.

Comment: A worshipper who merely puts up attendance at services without paying attention is making “the sacrifice of fools” because he will not learn or gain anything which he will use to build up his Christian life. The Bible record says that the people of Berea were more noble than the people of Thessalonica, “in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”. (Acts 17:11) We need to pay attention at worship to make good our services to God. Singing of songs, listening to the sermons, writing of quotations, reading same from the Bible, responding to the Minister's questions etc. are various aspects of paying attention in service meetings. So let us embrace the worship of God with the needed dedication, understanding and zeal, for our blessings now and eventual salvation by His grace.

God declared through Isaiah the prophet that He had no delight in the sacrifices of the Jews because their hands were not clean. How would their sacrifices be acceptable? It is when we follow the following command: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow...” - Isaiah 1:10-20.

Saturday, July 18, 2020

Text: “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” - Psalm 95:1, 2

Comment: Service day for a convert is a day of great joy in that one is to appear before one's Maker in a worship situation. It is a time to bare ones mind to God by way of thanksgiving, songs, dances and prayers, preaching and hearing the word of God, and Christian fellowship with the people of God. This does not mean that the believer is not before God the other days of the week but this particular day or days set apart for worship, like the Sabbath days of old, is special and is of great significance to the believer. The significance lies in the fact that we invoke on ourselves the blessings and protection of God for the week, we learn about the word of God that purifies and cleanses us as to be fit for salvation, we exhort ourselves as to comfort one another when bruised by Satan as to hope and patiently wait on God who through Jesus Christ our Lord will see us through our trials, afflictions and temptations by His grace. These and many more make the service day a day to always remember. See Psalm 122:1. “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” - Psalm 100:4, 5.

Sunday, July 19, 2020

Text: “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.” - Leviticus 23:3.

Comment: Right from ancient times, God Almighty has always required his people to set aside some time to worship him. In the time of Moses, He commanded that they should keep the Sabbath day holy. (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12) The chief requirement of the Sabbath expressed in the law is to sanctify it. (Exodus 20:8) The other requirement of the law is rest: both for the sake of bodily and mental health, and chiefly to secure the quiet and uninterrupted employment of the sacred hours for religious purposes. The Sabbath is no longer observed in the Christian era and there are no particular days fixed for worship, though Sunday is generally used for Divine Services. Our Saviour has taught us that after a reasonable period of work we should rest. (Colossians 2:16-18; Mark 6:31) As more people come to know the truth, people of goodwill from several nations shall worship God in truth. This will be perfected in God's Kingdom fully established. (Psalm 66:1; 86:9) Services should be taken seriously no matter the day, hence St. Paul exhorted: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25) We should pray to be among the people who will be serving God day and night in the world to come. – Revelation 7:15.

Monday, July 20, 2020

Text: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” – Ephesians 5:18,19.

Comment: Music is the combining of voices and instruments to produce harmonious and melodious sounds. Music is pleasant to the ear and where the wordings are spiritual, it uplifts and soothes the mind. The case of King Saul who got relief through music readily comes to mind. As it is written: “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God (that is allowed by God) was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand. So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him”. (1 Samuel 16:14-23) Music was used in ancient times to conquer enemies (Judges 7:1-25) and to praise God (Exodus 15:1-21). This power of music is still potent today if used with faith in God. The type of music that does not elevate the mind, purify the thoughts, strengthen the heart and gives one joy, as in so many songs that glorify carnality, are a drag to the Christian endeavour. Hence Christians are encouraged to sing spiritual songs always as stated in the text, thereby expressing the joy of the spirit built on faith in Jehovah's goodness. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Ephesians 5:19, 20.

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

Text: “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” - Psalm 100:1, 2.

Comment: The worship of God calls for gladness and readiness to do His will. Music plays a great role in making the mind glad and prepared to hear instructions in righteousness that will lead to life by the grace of God. Little wonder then the Psalmist declared: “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” (Psalm 95:1, 2). With this great source of joy before a Christian worshipper, every time the opportunity to worship God avails itself, every sincere believer should look forward with joy to the gathering of God's people in worship. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. (Psalms 122:1, 2) Such interest in the work of God attracts His blessings as it is expressive of one's good heart condition. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.” - Psalm 122:6-9.

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Text: “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” - Psalm 100:1, 2.

Comment: Considering the soul-enlivening nature of music, it is not surprising that it plays a prominent place in worship for, God created man to “shew forth His praise”. (Isaiah 43:21) Participation in theocratic music during worship is most rewarding in that it gives joy to the mind and invokes the spirit of God on the worshipper. The Choir, a group of talented and trained singers, (2 Chronicles 23:13), plays the leading role in this aspect of worship. At the time of the dedication of the temple, a wonderful event occurred as the choir, “arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps” and “with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets” in praise of God, “...that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.” (2 Chronicles 5:12-14) This was evidence of the fact that God Almighty took pleasure in the songs they were singing and accepted their worship, had sanctified the temple dedicated to His worship. We should like King David be constant with this prayer: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” - Psalm 19:14.

Thursday, July 23, 2020

Text: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.” - 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

Comment: The Bible is replete with exhortations to prayers. Our Lord and master, Jesus Christ encouraged the people of God to form the habit of praying and waiting on the Lord. He gave a parable to the end “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”. (Luke 18:1-8) We must be sober and watch and unto prayer because the Devil and his agents are after the people of God. David declared: “Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me …” (Psalm 59:2-5) Constant communication by way of prayers to God through our Saviour Jesus Christ is one of the pre-conditions for being a Christian. St. Paul Stated: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” (2 Corinthians 3:5) It could therefore be understood why David the prophet declared: “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me...” - Psalm 55:17, 18.

Friday, July 24, 2020

Text: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” – Ephesians 6:18.

Comment: Prayer is the solemn act of worship consisting of giving honour coupled with thanks to God for His providence and request or solemn petition to Him for our needs that are in accordance with His will. It is a medium of communication with our Creator that underlines man's dependence on God.

The Bible says we should “Pray without ceasing”. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) We should pay heed to this admonition. Our Lord, during his days on earth, gave the parable of a Judge, “which feared not God, neither regarded man” who refused to attend to the petitions of a widow who wanted him to help her to secure justice. “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.” The lesson in the parable therefore is that if the “unjust judge” could still attend to the widow due to her persistence, then certainly God Almighty will not fail to answer His children “which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them”. Certainly, He “will avenge them speedily”. We should however pray to God to increase our faith which is a precondition for our prayers to be answered. - Luke 18:1-8.

Saturday, July 25, 2020

Text: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” - James 4:3.

Comment: True worshippers should endeavour to avoid at all times things that could prevent their prayers from being heard by God. As the text for today enjoins, one of the reasons why some people's prayers are not heard is because they ask amiss, that is, not according to God's will. We should strive to know the will of God as stated in His word. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:17) God does not want us to make selfish prayers, for one to have all the good things of life while others starve; for the death of our neighbour or for calamity to befall him; for one to be rich overnight or to have certain positions or benefits without working for them or being entitled to them. (Matthew 5:43-48; Proverbs 24:17; 25:21) But those who pray according to the will of God He does not fail to answer their prayers in His own good time. Apostle John stated: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” -1 John 5:14,15.

Sunday, July 26, 2020

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: These words, borne out of conviction by the blind man healed by Jesus Christ, is based on the understanding of the word of God. Though he could not read, he knew the Scriptures which builds faith. The miracle wrought by Christ emboldened him to stand up for the truth no matter the opposition. For us to enjoy the mercy of God we must exercise faith in Him by praying without doubting. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Matthew 21:21, 22) We must avoid vain repetitions and long prayers. (Matthew 6:5-8) The men who are married should not oppress their wives. (1 Peter 3:7) Above all, sin should be avoided, like a plague, because it ruins and deprives us of answers to our prayers. The Prophet Isaiah declared: “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that the will not hear” – Isaiah 59:1, 2.

Monday, July 27, 2020

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

Comment: Some ask why did God not avert the evil that befell them or could it be that the worshipper was not given to prayer? This question comes up sometimes when some consider the many evil things that at times befall the worshippers of God in this present life. The truth is that prayer, despite its force and potency cannot change the will of God. This is so because the omniscient God, knowing the end from the beginning (Acts 15:18) allows trials to meet His worshippers as a test of their faith and for their own spiritual growth. Jesus Christ, towards the close of his earthly ministry prayed to God to let the cup (suffering and death) pass from him if it is His (God's) will. He stated thus: “…O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt... O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” (Matthew 26:39, 42) It was necessary for Jesus Christ to drink that cup of dying for the sins of mankind. We should pray God to keep us in the hour of temptation so that in the end we shall come forth as gold by His grace. - Job 23:10-12.

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

 Text: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” - Matthew 10:29-31

Comment: The understanding that is inherent in our prayers, though we do not often say it, is that God's will should be done in our lives. We submit ourselves to the will of God knowing that as a faithful Creator, the Almighty Father cares for us and would not allow anything evil to happen to us. (Matthew 6:25-34) If God so cares for the life of birds, then it stands to reason that His worshippers' well-being is uppermost in His mind. “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? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:10-13) Even death, if allowed by God is understood by the faithful as an escape from the evil to come. (Isaiah 57:1,2) Scripture states: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”. - Jeremiah 29:11.

**LOOK UNTO ME AND BE YE SAVED**

Evil thrives in the world, it is not because God has forsaken the earth, or because he does not see, or will not punish the wicked. But, as Apostle Paul said in Athens, He has “appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) Those who faithfully continue in righteousness till the end he will reward in due time. But the wicked shall be punished. (2 Peter 3:9). “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” - Deuteronomy 32:4.

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Text: “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings”. – Isaiah 3:10.

Comment: As prophesied in the Holy Bible, many people today are addicted to satisfying their carnal desires contrary to the laws of God. (Luke 17:26-30) Because those who are given to godliness generally find themselves isolated and despised, the temptation is strong for them to deviate from the right courses to jump on the bandwagon. There is need therefore, for people of God to be encouraged and exhorted to continue in the strait path. One of such words of comfort is given to us by God Almighty through the Prophet Isaiah as in the text for today.

The “righteous” are those who have the fear of God and do His will by obeying His commandments by His grace. Such ones hate evil in all its forms. (Psalm 97:10) The statement “that it shall be well with him” implies that though the people of God are in distress or discomfort, the Almighty Father will reverse such situation completely at a future date. Solomon the prophet stated, “...Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.” - Ecclesiastes 8:11-13.

Thursday, July 30, 2020

Text: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.” - Psalm 37:37-40.

Comment: The words of David in the citation for today can easily be proven even from day to day experience. The man or woman who is upright in words and deeds and continues doing the right things will enjoy peace. He may not be materially rich, but he will not be assailed by accusations that he had cheated, lied, deceived or stolen from anybody. The benefits of honest living are more clearly seen over time because of the high regard people have for the man who relates with others with a perfect heart and loves his neighbour as himself. (Ecclesiastes 9:13-16) Truly, “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. (Ecclesiastes 7:1) Peace will be the lot of the man who does not follow the majority to do evil, but speaks the truth always. He ensures that records are not falsified or make an innocent person to be punished or denied justice. (Exodus 23:2, 7) Peace will redound on the person who is known for keeping his words or promises, whose yes is yes and nay, nay. (Matthew 5:37) Such ones will live to enjoy the fruits of their labour but the wicked will reap emptiness, curses even from those who initially supported them and will end up unlamented. - Proverbs 10:27.

Friday, July 31, 2020

Text: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” - 1 John 3:7

Comment: Some people say there are no righteous persons on earth, citingJob 15:14-16. The fact, however, is that there have been and there are still people giving to doing things that are right before God. Such ones are righteous as Apostle John states. But no man in this world of sin, is perfect before God. This is because of inherited sin and the influence of satan the devil. Though, such one may make mistakes, they do not relish in such errors, but make efforts not to do so again. (Proverbs 28:13,14; Ecclesiastes 7:20) Thus, there are, by the grace of God, many men, women, boys and girls who are morally upright, humble and willing to do the Lord's will by His grace.

Abraham, Lot, Noah, Moses, Job, David, Joshua, Zechariah, Sarah, and so on were righteous. Though, they were surrounded by sinful men, they never compromised their faith but were always grieved with the wickedness going on around them. - 2 Peter 2:8

We should pray God to help us to be devout worshippers whom He will hear their prayers by His grace because we honestly and diligently keep His laws. Scripture says: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.” – John 9:31

Saturday, August 1, 2020

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: Though we are all born in sin, there are times when one is faced with what St. Peter calls “fiery trial” that would try one's faith. The problems that afflict man today are many and varied, filling him with “labour and sorrow” such that it is even a miracle that people not only live up to the three score and ten years but also enjoy additional years of grace as stated in the Bible. (Psalm 90:10; Job 14:1,2; 5:6, 7) Apart from the troubles people have to contend with daily, the devil targets the children of God to make things unbearable for them.

The 'fiery trial' refers to the wave of turbulence the convert will experience in his personal life for identifying with the cause of truth and righteousness. These persecutions are from the devil who is determined to frighten the believer and compel him to doubt his faith and seek help from the demons who infest the earth. The believer should stand firm in his trust in God, Who is the confidence of the ends of the earth in that He is faithful and “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.

Sunday, August 2, 2020

Text: “So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun..”. – Ecclesiastes 4:1-4.

Comment: In the last days or “perilous times” in which we are now living the troubles of mankind have multiplied in variety and magnitude. Some are persecuted because of their faith, we do lose our loved ones now and then, others lose their positions and/or privileges in work places, at school, etc.

The devil creates various problems to overthrow the faith of believers by making them to feel hopeless and therefore defenceless. He imposes wicked men to be rulers at various levels of society. These ones use the powers given them to react with a heavy hand if those under them complain. To show that God Almighty acts in His time to end these oppressions, He in due time brought about changes that ended the kind of oppressive conditions oppressed people faced. These experiences should teach all believers in the power of the Almighty to turn things round for them in His own time such that the past will be a mere story that is told. We are exhorted through Isaiah, “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.” - Isaiah 35:3, 4.

Monday, August 3, 2020

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

Comment: The people of the world need peace today than ever before. The Prophet Daniel had long prophesied that this age will be a time when “the wicked will do wickedly”. (Daniel 12:10) In the time of Jesus Christ, he declared that at this time there will be “distress of nations” and panic among people. (Luke 21:25,26) The confusion in the world is because the devil is still alive. But he would soon be killed by God Almighty so that there will be perfect peace on earth. (Romans 16:20) He knowing this, is doing his utmost to cause distress and instability in the world. However, God will continue to restrain him until his death is due. The charge to Christians, is given by the Lord, in Luke 21:34-36 “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

Text: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.” - Matthew 24:15, 16.

 Comment: After seeing the follies and brutalities of the First World War, the nations met and set up the League of Nations in 1919 so that it will prevent wars through joint efforts. Because people looked to it rather than to God the body became an abomination that brought desolation particularly to nations in Europe when the Second World War broke out in 1939. After the Second World War, the leading powers of the world set up the United Nations on October 24, 1945, as a kind of world government for nations to act in concert to solve the problems of the world. But the facts so far have informed a more humble and realistic view of man's capacity to tackle the challenges that confront him every second. It is only God Almighty Who will bring peace on earth. “The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.” (Psalm 29:11) Long ago had the Bible declared, that we should trust only in God Almighty and not in men, “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.

Wednesday, August 5, 2020

Text: “Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.” - Jeremiah 3:23.

Comment: God Almighty has never intended that anybody should be hungry in this world. Every reasonable person can see that our heavenly Father has provided food and other resources in abundance for mankind. It is just that the land is no longer as fertile as it should be due to man's sin and the recklessness of man in the name of development. Irrigation depletes the artificial application of water for crops that makes unproductive lands fertile. Too much irrigation depletes fresh water supplies, seriously damages the environment, including fish stocks and wreaks havoc on human populations. Chemicals used for farming pollutes the environment, destroying cropland, poisoning the water, and creating serious health problems among the population. Land available for agriculture is also disappearing as more space is being used for houses, shopping centres, industries, and roads to accommodate growing populations. The fact is that it is to God Almighty all should look to for salvation “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!” - Isaiah 31:1.

Thursday, August 6, 2020

Text: “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.” - Psalm 113:7-9.

Comment: The devil is the one responsible for childlessness among married couples. When God Almighty created the woman, Eve and gave her to Adam, He blessed them and said they should : “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth…” (Genesis 1:26-28) We could see therefore that God never intended any woman not to have children. But the reality, today, is that a significant number of couples have been seeking desperately to become pregnant. Many childless couples would “clutch at every straw”, and visit many doctors to receive all sorts of treatments, some to no avail.

For each barrenness, we should understand that it is the devil's work (and sometimes wrongly actions taken in the past). Couples in such condition, should draw comfort from the word of God and exercise faith in Him with Whom is no impossibility. (Philippians 4:6,7; Luke 1:37) God has promised to turn things round for the faithful by and by, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.” - Isaiah 66:5.

Friday, August 7, 2020

Text: “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.

Comment: David the Psalmist stresses the fact that God Almighty is the hope of His people and that they should cast their burdens on Him at all times through prayer. He will not fail them or forsake them. This however requires faith, humility, patience, understanding and so on. We should pray for strength to withstand temptations. St. Peter exhorted, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:6,7) Such faith was exercised by Jacob and his second wife, Rachel who prayed to God for her to conceive (Genesis 25:21) “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.

Hannah prayed fervently for a son and followed it up with a vow and “she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad”. This is evidence of faith. “All things are possible to him that believeth”, as stated Jesus Christ. – Mark 9:23; Psalm 37:3-5.

Saturday, August 8, 2020

Text: “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” - Psalm 89:48.

Comment: Occasionally we are thrown into mourning because of the loss of loved ones. Death has a profound effect on individuals in the family and even the larger society. The devil, however, afflicts some families with death more than others. When children lose their parents, they generally feel unhappy about it, wishing they lived longer. What of the heart-rending situation where parents are burying their children? There are cases where the only child of a family or the only child of a widow dies, just after completing his or her final examinations, just after getting a job or getting married. (Luke 7:11-17) The most important thing is, at whatever time, death comes, one should die in the Lord. (Philippians 1:21; Romans 14:7-9) It is also necessary to point out that, we should believe that it is God Almighty Who cares for us. The promise of the resurrection of the dead is our hope against death. St. Paul asserted: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”. – 1Thessalonians 4:13,14,18

Sunday, August 9, 2020

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: We should not worry unduly or fear for tomorrow but think positively knowing that as long as we continue to do what is right in the sight of God, things will turn out right according to the will of God by His grace. “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” - 1 Peter 3:10-13.

Though times are hard, God will always sustain His people by answering the prayer, “give us this day our daily bread” and “feed me with food convenient for me”. (Matthew 6:11; Proverbs 30:8). It is commonly said that “when there is life there is hope”. Jesus Christ said, the life is more than meat and the body more important than clothes. “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 6:25,30.

Monday, August 10, 2020

Text: “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” - Isaiah 32:17, 18.

Comment: The Bible gives the understanding that God will destroy the devil and bless and save His people in due time. There is need therefore for patience. The Prophet Isaiah says: “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.” (Isaiah 35:3,4) When all wickedness is put away by God and man attains perfection, then paradise will hold sway all over the earth. - Revelation 21:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Let us therefore march on with faith that the time will come when all our travails in this world and shall not even “be remembered nor come into mind”. (Isaiah 65:17) David the prophet declared: “When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” – Psalm 126:1-6.

**THE FRAILTY OF MAN**

Introduction

One of the signs that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to mark the advent of the last days, is widespread pestilence. (Matthew 24:3,7,8) In fulfillment of this prophecy, there was the Spanish Influenza which raged from 1918-1919, killing millions of people the world over. There have been the SARS, Dengue Fever and Ebola. In December 2019, there was the outbreak of the “Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). It is a strain of flu, which started in the Wuhan District of China and soon spread across borders, becoming a global concern.

These diseases and other crises of the last days highlight the frailty of man. Man must realize that whatever he has attained in science, technology and other fields of human endeavour, are by the grace of God. He must acknowledge God Almighty if he is to attain his highest potentials. The last days we are now living in have served to manifest the frailty of man and the fact that the Almighty God is the Owner of the Universe. – Psalm 20:7; Proverbs 21:31; Isaiah 26:4; 31:1.

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

Text: “And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.” - Matthew 17:14-15.

Comment: After the transfiguration, when Jesus Christ and his disciples descended from the mountain, there came a visibly shaken man with his son, and in obeisance implored the Lord saying: “Sir, have mercy on my son, for he is mentally deranged and in great trouble…” (The Living Bible) The gospel of Mark states: “And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.” - Mark 9:20.

Some people's deplorable conditions are due to the oppressive acts of the devil and his wicked agents to keep them in physical and emotional torment. The calamity of this young boy with seizures and melancholy was such that the disciples felt it was beyond them. “And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him”, the boy's father complained. - Matthew 17:16.

From this account, one can see that not all ailments or pestilences are from sins committed by men. Severe diseases with demoniacal connotations can only be cured by the Almighty Father through His son, Jesus Christ, hence, the Lord told the disciples that “Cases like this require prayer” (The Living Bible). We can see the importance of praying to Jehovah, the Healer of all diseases, no matter the situation. - Psalm 103:3.

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Text: “And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” - Luke 8:43.

Comment: The case of the “woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years” is another sober-minded account of the Holy Bible that expatiates, not only the virtues of faith, perseverance, humility, reverence, and joy; but also the themes of man's struggles and fears in the face of circumstances beyond his control.

This woman was at her wit's end after expending “all her living upon physicians”. Therefore, she sought divine intervention, “… and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.” - Luke 8:47.

Not all diseases are cured with medicines and vaccines. The severity and nature of some ailments have moved people to seek the face of the LORD, the Greatest Healer. God Almighty Himself asked the prophet, Jeremiah: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” In affirmation, Jeremiah said: “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee”. - Jeremiah 32:27,17.

Thursday, August 13, 2020

Text: “But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.” - 2 Kings 5:11, 12.

Comment: One of the ways God asserted His divine authority in the days of old was through Elisha's healing of Naaman, the leper. With pomp and circumstance, this captain of the Syrian army left his base to consult with the prophet of God for solution to the ravaging leprosy on his body, a skin disorder that brought banishment, isolation, quarantine, stigmatization and loss of pride to its victim as can be seen in the law of God in Leviticus 13:1-27.

He, however, lost faith when the servant of God sent his messenger to him, instructing him to go and bathe in the River Jordan seven times. He failed to realise that, for him to get a clean bill of health, he must obey the instruction from the servant of God. As he attempted to make his way back to Syria, the intervention of his servants, made him to accept the River Jordan: “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” Naaman's arrogance and initial refusal to acknowledge the River Jordan – God's gracious provision for his cure are all evidence of man's frailty. May the Almighty God deliver us from pride and arrogance and clothe us His children with humility.

Friday, August 14, 2020

Text: “And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also”. - Numbers 20:10,11.

Comment: This is an inspiring account of the Holy Scriptures that is of great lesson to God's worshippers in our spiritual journey to the symbolic Land of Canaan. It treats the themes of anger, disobedience, rashness, etc.

In the text under review, man's frailty was seen in the failure of the leadership to adhere to God's instruction to speak to the rock. Moses did as he was commanded, but was disrespectful in tactic: “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” In anger, Moses struck the rock twice. (Numbers 20:10,11) The consequence of his action was a serious sanction from the “Judge of all the earth”. “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” - Numbers 20:12.

The Psalmist stated: “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” (Psalm 106:32,33). Leaders in God's Organisation need spiritual circumspection in order to avoid the errors of anger, reckless speaking and impulsive actions that go against the will of God. – Ephesians 4:26,27, 29, 31.

Saturday, August 15, 2020

Text: “LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” - Psalm 39:4, 5.

Comment: This is an important remark by King David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, on the precarious estate of the sons of men. The text pointedly states man's frail nature and his inability to know the day of his death. King Solomon stated: “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them”. - Ecclesiastes 9:12.

Sin has dwindled man's lifespan to about 70 years that God has apportioned to men. (Psalm 90:10) Material acquisitions, academic excellence, energetic feats and any other success in the human sphere without the “knowledge of the holy”, is vanity as the LORD Himself said: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” – Jeremiah 9:23,24.

We pray the Almighty Father to continue to keep us from the attacks of the devil and his wicked agents.

Sunday, August 16, 2020

Text: “And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight”. - Mark 10:49-52.

Comment: This is another thrilling story in the Holy Bible that demonstrates the power of God over the devil in bringing succour or relief to those the enemy had kept in bondage and deprivation of the blessings of the Almighty Father. The record here is an attestation on the mission of Christ to the world that “… the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.” -Isaiah 35:5.

Bartimaeus, a poor beggar, was struck with the burden of living and doing his daily chores without the benefit of his sight. In this narrative, he would have heard of the fame of the Jesus but had not met him, until a chance meeting with the Lord transformed his life for good. “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” - Mark 10:47.

True to his divinity, as a compassionate Lord, Jesus asked him: “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” And he answered: “Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” This case, like many others done by Christ and the apostles, picture the deliverance God's children would enjoy in a greater measure in yonder bank, the Promised Home. – Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 33:6.

Monday, August 17, 2020

Text: “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. - John 5:6-8.

Comment: Ever before Jesus Christ was born into this world, it had been written in prophecy that he would bear the burden of the people and heal them of their infirmities: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” (Isaiah 53:4). The Bible in Basic English renders the text thus: “But it was our pain he took, and our diseases were put on him: while to us he seemed as one diseased, on whom God's punishment had come.”

The text in focus for today shows the unfortunate and hapless condition of a man who the devil had bound in captivity for several years. His desire for divine cure, in addition to his faith, drew the sympathy of Christ to him. The impotent man said: “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.” Jesus Christ healed him by saying, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.”

This again proves the genuineness of the power of Jesus Christ to heal people of their infirmities. Worshippers of God should resist the allure and smooth words of so-called miracle workers who deceive people with counterfeit healings. – Jeremiah 5:30,31.

Tuesday, August 18, 2020

Text: “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” - Mark 1:40.

Comment: In those days when Christ was teaching and healing people of their diseases, there came to him a man with the loathsome disease of leprosy that renders him unfit to relate freely with people in society. The law in the days of Moses stipulates that, the person afflicted with leprosy should be isolated from society. - Leviticus 13:3,4.

The faith of the leper on Christ Jesus, coupled with the reverence he accorded the Lord, and the humble manner of his approach endeared the Master to him as the Holy Writ states: “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.” - Mark 1:40-42.

The authenticity of Christ's healings drew large following to him as his disciples told him: “And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.” (Mark 1:36, 37). We pray to have faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour for health and cure.

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

Text: “And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.” – Acts 28:8,9.

Comment: In fulfilment of his promise to endow the apostles with power so that, “they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”, Apostle Paul did a couple of miracles for the barbarous people of Melita confirming the power of God in him. First, he shook off a venomous beast from his hand into the fire in fulfilment of Christ's statement to his apostles that, “They shall take up serpents… it shall not hurt them” (Mark 16:18), and second was the healing of the father of Publius, the chief man of the Island.

The helpless condition of the man, who “lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux” showed that mortals are prone to sicknesses. Truly, King David lamented: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5). Satan, the devil, the author of sickness, uses it as a tool to cause fear and torment against the people of God. they should not fear but trust in God always. (Isaiah 41:10). The current corona virus pandemic is a vain attempt by the Devil to cause panic and destroy people in the world, but God's intervention is gradually bringing relief to many nations. – Psalm 118:6; Hebrews 13:5,6.

Thursday, August 20, 2020

Text: “Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?” – 1 Samuel 20:30.

Comment: The text above shows the violent temper, envy, distress and hatred King Saul had for David, whom God said will replace Saul. David was of course the “neighbour”, Samuel the prophet talked about in his chastisement of Saul, for brazenly flouting God's command to annihilate Amalek. (1 Samuel 15:26) In his ungodly disposition, it was difficult for King Saul to come to terms with the fact that the next king of Israel, was David. - 1 Samuel 18:8; 1 Samuel 18:11.

At another occasion, when on the second day, David refused to dine with the King, the Bible states: “Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean.” But when found out that David's absence was known to Jonathan, his son, an embittered King Saul commanded: “Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.” – 1 Samuel 20:26-31.

Saul's jealousy, hatred, wrath, depression, etc were pitfalls in his character that brought some psychological disorder to him. And Scripture states: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” (1 John 3:15. See also Matthew 5:21,22; Galatians 5:21) We pray God to cleanse us from evil thoughts.

Friday, August 21, 2020

Text: “And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm… and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.” - 2 Kings 4:34, 35.

Comment: Because Elisha the prophet of God, passes through Shunem, a town of the tribe of Issachar, lying on the road between Samaria and Carmel, a kind and godly woman identified as a “great woman” decided to provide a room for him to refresh himself before continuing his journey. In recompense for her kindness, he prophesied that, “About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son... And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.” – 2 Kings 4:16,17.

On a day, the boy visited his father on the field, the devil struck him and he died. (2 Kings 4:19,20). The beleaguered mother did not make any arrangements for his burial, because she had faith that God would use Elisha the prophet to revive her son. Truly, faith can do seemingly impossible things. – Matthew 17:20; 21:21; Luke 17:6.

The Holy Bible exhorts us not to fret ourselves, but trust in the LORD. “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.

Saturday, August 22, 2020

Text: “And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death.” – Judges 16:15,16.

Comment: Samson's professed love for Delilah, a strange Philistine woman, turned out to be his greatest undoing. Concerning him, an angel proclaimed: “For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” – Judges 13:5.

As a judge in Israel, he used his strength to deliver his people from forty years of captivity from the Philistines (Judges 13:1). He was endowed with ability to perform exceptional feats, even prevailing against a wild beast: “Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid.” – Judges 14:5,6.

But the disclosure of his true secret to his wife,- that no razor should come on his head Delilah - was the cause of his downfall. (Judges 16:16,17) The “Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.” – Judges 16:16-31.

We pray God Almighty to help us to remain steadfast in keeping and doing the His commandments.

Sunday, August 23, 2020

Text: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” – Romans 7:19-21.

Comment: Apostle Paul's lamentation to the Christians in Rome vividly captures the frailty of the human being in abiding to the commandments of the Almighty God. The commitment of Ananias and his wife, Saphhira, to “keep back part of the price of the land”, was a display of insincerity and conspiracy to do evil. Their end was frightening:– Acts 5:10.

Judah's refusal to give Shelah his son to Tamar was because of misplaced fear. He too was not sincere in accusing the young woman of becoming pregnant through prostitution. in that, out of fear, he failed to give her in marriage to his son though he was grown. He said she should be punished for adultery when in fact he was responsible for her pregnancy. “Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son.” - Genesis 38:25,26.

Nebuchadnezzar's boastful remarks in ascribing the greatness of the kingdom of Babylon to himself brought trouble to him. He was afflicted with a strange form of mental illness called “lycanthropy” – man turning to beast. (Daniel 4:30-34). We should always humble ourselves before God knowing that we are merely human. – Jeremiah 9:23,24; 1Corinthians 1:31; 2Corinthians 10:17.

**WHERE COULD SAFETY BE FOUND?**

Monday, August 24, 2020

Text: “The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.” -Proverbs 21:31.

Comment: The present evils and calamities bedeviling mankind at the instance of Satan the devil had been a source of worry to all peoples of the world. Some due to fear and apprehension are asking why there is so much distress, uncertainty, injustice, oppression, insecurity, diseases, hunger, natural disasters, wars and so on in the world.

The Holy Bible clearly shows that God is not responsible for the ills or troubles of life because He (the Almighty God) is just and will not afflict the righteous. (Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 34:10-12). It is Satan the devil that is responsible for the troubles and calamities of mankind. – Revelation 12:12; 1 Peter 5:8.

Therefore, all persons should turn to the Almighty God Who only can give safety as stated in the text for today. The Bible says: “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. 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 33:16-22. See also Psalm 3:8.

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Text: “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” – 2 Peter 2:5.

Comment: The Almighty God used certain incidents in time of old to foreshadow things of great spiritual significance in His order of things. The story of the destruction of the first world and the deliverance given to Noah and his family of seven were used by God to picture the destruction of the wicked as well as eternal salvation which he will give to the righteous. – Genesis 6:1-22; 7:1-24.

The “Ark” that was built by Noah, where he and his family were saved, symbolizes God's Holy organization where God has promised to give peace and safety to all His faithful worshippers. – Luke 17:26-30; 2 Peter 2:5-8; Matthew 24:16.

That God delivered Noah and his family who were righteous shows that in this age of untold distress, wickedness and even during the battle of the great day of God Almighty which is impending, only those who are righteous and remain in His Holy organization, would be protected, delivered and saved by His grace. King Solomon said: “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.” (Proverbs 11:4). Apostle Peter said: “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. See also Daniel 12:1.

Wednesday, August 26, 2020

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: When the Almighty God sent his angels to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his family had the grace to be found righteous in the midst of a perverse and ungodly people. God through his angels asked Lot and his family to “escape to the mountain” for safety and protection. Unfortunately, Lot's wife looked back contrary to the instruction given to them as stated in the text for today, and she became a pillar of salt. - Genesis 19:17, 26.

The “mountain” to which they were asked to flee to symbolizes God organization where God will give peace and safety to His faithful worshippers and thereafter, grant them eternal life in His Kingdom when it is fully established by His grace. See Isaiah 2:2-4; Matthew 24:16.

Apostle Peter state that God delivered “just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” (2 Peter 2:6-8). Let us, therefore, pray God to help us to serve Him in truth and righteousness in His Holy organization steadfastly till the end by His grace. St. Paul said: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” – Philippians 2:15.

Thursday, August 27, 2020

Text: “Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.” – 2 Kings 19:19.

Comment: Under the reign of King Hezekiah, the cities of Judah were invaded by Assyria, a very hostile enemy to them in those days. The King of Assyria, Sennacherib, boasted of his might and blasphemed the God of Israel. He issued threats and warned Hezekiah and his people not to put their trust in the Lord their God nor think that they could be delivered from his hand. He then sent a letter, in which he reproached the Most High, to Hezekiah. – 2 Kings 19:1-13.

On receipt of the letter, Hezekiah went into the house of God and prayed using the words stated in the text for today, among other things. In answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, God delivered Judah and sent His angel who killed in one night 185,000 men in the camp of Assyria. Thus, the king of Assyria despite his boast and blasphemies found his army defeated and was later killed by his sons. – 2 Kings 19:14-37.

Indeed, the Almighty God hears the prayer of His faithful worshippers (Psalm 65:1,2) and delivers them in time of distress. The Psalmist said: “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: 34:19.

Friday, August 28, 2020

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: The prophecy in the text for today was made by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ pointing to this age of the end of the world in which the political, religious and commercial elements of the world would be fully used by Satan the devil to create distress in the world. The “sea (the people) and the waves (the rulers) roaring” refer to the constant disagreements between the government and the people.

Jesus Christ then admonished: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21:28). This means that we should continue to trust in God for safety, protection, provision and sustenance by His grace. The Bible says: “He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.” – Job 5:19-22.

The Children of God, therefore, should not be moved by the signs or events of the last days but they should continue to “watch and pray” as Jesus Christ admonished in Luke 21:34-36. See also Romans 13:11-14.

Saturday, August 29, 2020

Text: “Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.” – Jeremiah 3:23.

Comment: The Prophet Jeremiah was used by God to show that man and man-made efforts to secure peace and safety without Him (God Almighty), would be in vain. The prophet further added: “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.

Trust in science and technology, international diplomacy, nuclear or conventional weapons, man-made organizations/societies, academic or philosophical theories and so on, cannot give peace and safety to man. Only God can! Isaiah the prophet 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!...Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit…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. See also Psalm 60:11,12.

It is an indisputable fact that it is ONLY God Almighty Who will give peace and safety to mankind especially those who have His accurate knowledge and worship Him in spirit and truth in His Holy organization by His grace. – Psalm 91:1-3; Isaiah 45:22; Philippians 4:6,7.

Sunday, August 30, 2020

Text: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.” – Haggai 2:6,7.

Comment: The Holy Bible clearly shows that the problems and calamities of mankind will not continue unabated. God Almighty has promised to set up His everlasting Kingdom where mankind will enjoy eternal life in perfect peace, safety and happiness. But before the full establishment of this kingdom, the evil system of things both in heaven and earth would be removed by Him, hence the shaking of the heavens and earth as stated in the text for today.

Apostle Paul explained that the shaking of heaven and the earth “signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain”. (Hebrews 12:26, 27) The universal kingdom of God is referred to as “the desire of all nations” because it has answer to all human sufferings and woes. There shall be no form of evil, oppression, distress or sorrow as experienced in the world today. (Revelation 21:1-5). All true worshippers of God should labour assiduously to be in God's Kingdom by His grace. (1 Corinthians 2:9,10). Apostle Peter said: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” – 2 Peter 3:13,14.

Monday, August 31, 2020

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: Jesus Christ made this statement, when the disciples asked him the signs of the end of the world. (Matthew 24:3) After warning his disciples, Jesus Christ spoke of the events that will mark his second coming and therefore of the end of the world and, as clearly expressed in the text for today.

The text does not refer, as some contend, to the dissensions, insurrections and wars among provinces that occurred in the Roman empire shortly after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, it fulfilled in the World War 1 of 1914-1918 when for the first time the whole world was engulfed in a global war. There was also the Spanish influenza which ravaged the world after the war and many persons died. There have been other diseases, coupled with earthquakes and food crises plaguing mankind till date, all in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus Christ. From that time the world has been marching into harder and harder times, hence Christ added: “All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

A good understanding of these physical facts which are fulfilling Bible prophecies will make the children of God not to panic but to continue to believe in the word of God and give themselves to prayer coupled with spiritual vigilance by the grace of God. – Luke 21:34-36; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9.

Tuesday, September 1, 2020

Text: “Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains”. – Matthew 24:16.

Comment: Jesus Christ foreknew that the Kingdom of God would be set up on earth in this last days (Isaiah 2:2), hence he warned that those in Judaea should flee into the mountains. The “Mountains” symbolize God's Kingdom organizations now established by the God through Jesus Christ all over the world using as instruments the remnant of the Saints.

Judaea under reference does not mean the literal land of Judah. The word Judah or Judaea means praise or praise of God. Judaea spiritually, as used by Christ means the people who love truth and righteousness and who are inclined to serve and praise God in any part of the world. This is the time such ones should seek to identify the Lord's established Kingdom so as to flee into it for safety and protection in obedience to Christ's warning.

Therefore, it is in such Holy organizations where our services and worship would be acceptable unto God that the children of God are expected to flee into by His grace. God said through the Prophet Ezekiel: “For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.” – Ezekiel 20:40,41.

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

Text: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” – Daniel 12:1.

Comment: The Prophet Daniel was used by God to foretell the impending doom that will befall Satan the devil and all wicked persons when God Almighty will use Jesus Christ to “destroy them that destroy the earth”. – Matthew 24:21; Revelation 11:17,18.

Since no can withstand the power of God because He is Almighty. All those who love to be saved should, therefore, flee Satan's stranglehold and place themselves under Jehovah's protection in His kingdom organizations now set up so as to be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. The Lord says: “Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.” - Isaiah 27:4, 5. See also Romans 11:26,27.

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

Thursday, September 3, 2020

Text: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” – John 14:27.

Comment: In order to enjoy true peace and safety, one must have the accurate knowledge of God. (Proverbs 3:13-17). This knowledge builds faith and one who exercises strong faith in Jehovah's promises will be blessed with His spirit so as to be calm, steady and resolute even in times of crisis. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” said St. Paul in Romans 5:1.

Faith is exercised when the Christian “casts his burden upon the Lord” by taking his problems to God in prayer. (Psalm 55:22). The belief that God will do what is best in each circumstance makes such ones to remain at ease having the understanding that “…with God nothing shall be impossible”. (Luke 1:37; Jeremiah 32: 27,17) Christ said: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). And the Prophet David stated: “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” – Psalm 119:165. See also Philippians 4:6, 7.

May God Almighty help us to worship Him in spirit and in truth always and to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness so as to be blessed His peace. – Isaiah 26:3,4.

Friday, September 4, 2020

Text: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” - 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Comment: The steady increase of wickedness is the bane of the present-day society. There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. People lie and kill, and steal, and commit adultery when they have the opportunity to do so. This now results in unhappiness and suffering in the land. - Hosea 4:1-3. See also 1 John 5:19. When people are given to wickedness, their prayers will not be answered – and this compounds their situation. - Jeremiah 7:16. See also John 9:31.

Sin brings ruin as King Solomon stated in Proverbs 14:34: “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” Therefore, all persons should acknowledge the Almighty God and return to Him in humility, soberness and true repentance so as to merit His mercy, grace, forgiveness, peace and safety a stated in the text for today. James the apostle declared: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” – James 4:8.The prayer of David the prophet is hereby recommended to us. He said: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.” - Psalm 51:10, 11.

Saturday, September 5, 2020

Text: “And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” – 2 Kings 6:16,17.

Comment: When the king of Syria found out that his evil plans against the King of Israel had been exposed by God through His servant Elisha, he then sent his army to capture the man of God. (2 Kings 6:8-14) But the servant of Elisha who came out and saw the “great host that compassed the city”, became afraid as it is written: “And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? Elisha reminded him of God's protection upon them and all His children by God's grace, as expressed in the text for today. To show how frail man is, all the armed men became blind following the prayer of Elisha and he led them to the King of Israel and instructed him to feed them and let them go. In spite of their arrogance and display of power, they were thoroughly humbled. - 2 Kings 6:13-21.

Indeed, God will certainly bless, protect and deliver or save His faithful worshippers who trust in Him. The Psalmist declared: “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” – Psalm 34:7,8.

Sunday, September 6, 2020

Text: “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” – Isaiah 32:17,18.

Comment: The Holy Bible clearly reveals that it is only in the Kingdom of God fully established that mankind would be blessed with everlasting life in perfect peace, safety and happiness by His grace. (Isaiah 33:20; 51:3,11) Those who deny themselves for God's sake to be doing righteousness now will be rewarded with peace and safety in God's Kingdom. Apostle John Stated: “…And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” – Revelation 21:1-5. See also 2 Peter 3:13.

The people of God, therefore, are enjoined to serve Him diligently in truth and righteousness in other to enjoy these bounties by His grace. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” – 2 Peter 3:11,14. See also Hebrews 12:28.

**COMMENTARY ON JAMES CHAPTERS 3 - 5**

Monday, September 7, 2020

Text: “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” - James 3:1, 2.

Comment: There is order in the work of God. There are those in the Church whom God has given the gift and the office of being leaders or teachers. (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29) But some people desire to be teachers merely because they are seeking for status and power and want to shine among God's people. They forget or do not know that the privilege also goes with responsibility in that those who preach to others must also live above board as they would be judged more strictly if after preaching to others, they failed to do what they preached. The leader should also be very careful as to what he says. (See Luke 12:47, 48; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Proverbs 18:21) People who see the preacher of truth and righteousness doing the opposite of what he preaches will give cause for unbelievers to make jest of the faith. On this score St. Paul stated: “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” He also asked, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? … For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.” - Romans 2:1, 21-24.

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

Text: “Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” - James 3:3-5.

Comment: The tongue is defined by Encarta Dictionary as “the movable fleshy organ attached to the bottom of the inside of the mouth of humans and most animals, used for tasting, licking, swallowing, and, in humans, speech”. Though it is a small member of the human body it is capable of doing a lot of good and also a lot of evil to the individual and to the society. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” (James 3:6) Though every kind of beast has been tamed, people generally find it very difficult to control their tongues. Thus individuals, groups, societies and nations have become enemies to one another due to misuse of the tongue. (James:3: 7-10) Because of the way they use their tongues, it is hard to classify some people as Christians. Such ones therefore give confusing signals to people. St. James asked, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.” - James 3:11,12.

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Text: “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” - James 3:13.

Comment: One who claims to have the accurate knowledge of God must demonstrate what he knows by his action. One who claims to know God but habours bitter envying and strife in his heart, is, to use the words of Apostle James, lying against the truth in that the truth teaches us to practice what we know. Anything short of that is hypocrisy. Jesus Christ our Lord asked the unbelieving Jews in those days, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46) The wisdom that teaches people to claim to be Christians whereas they are still ruled by their carnal desires, the apostle of Christ said, “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish”. (James 3:15) Two vices that proceed from worldly wisdom, he went on, are envying and strife. Envy is “the resentful or unhappy feeling of wanting somebody else's success, good fortune, qualities, or possessions” while strife is “bitter and sometimes violent conflict, struggle, or rivalry”. Where people are envious of one another and exhibit such in a violent manner there would certainly be “confusion and every evil work”. (verse 16) What we should cultivate is wisdom that is from above which “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”. - James 3:17.

Thursday, September 10, 2020

Text: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” - James 4:1.

Comment: Continuing to build on the point he was making on the dangers of carnal-mindedness, Apostle James gives this stinging rebuke to professed Christians who, instead of loving one another and seeking the kingdom interests first, are busy fighting themselves. The concern of the Christian should be how to increase in knowledge, to grow in righteousness through practice of the truth; how to impart the knowledge to others and to use his talents and material endowments to support the work of God in every way. But the one who professes to be seeking the world to come but is intent on building castles and living a life of ease and luxury in this world, is merely trying to do the impossible task of serving two masters. God will never answer the prayers of greedy people as they want to be rich overnight. “He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.” (Proverbs 28:22) In his letter to the Christians at Galatia, St. Paul stated, “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 5:14-17.

Friday, September 11, 2020

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: The lusts of the flesh are listed by St. Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 to include, “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like …” (Galatians 5:19-21) The eyes of such ones are not satisfied with riches. (Ecclesiastes 4:8; 5:10) What they ought to pray for which are spiritual, they would not, but all they inclined to seek are things they ought not to bother about – things that merely serve to satisfy present pleasures, those are the things they ask for: and God will not answer such prayers. God answers only prayers that are in accordance we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” (1 John 5:14) It is critical therefore that the children of God must determine to do the will of God all the time so that He will continue to hear their prayers. St. James further stated, “Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4) It is those who humble themselves to remain on the Lord's side without compromising their faith that will be blessed by Him in the end. “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” - James 4:6.

Saturday, September 12, 2020

Text: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” - James 4:7.

Comment: To submit ourselves to God means to subject ourselves to the doing of the will of God. There are those who oppose the truth out of ignorance. But in course of time, God opens their eyes to know Him and realize the futility of their kicking against the pricks. (Compare Acts 9:1-5) Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah and the 13th king of Judah was so given to idolatry that “he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards”. (2 Chronicles 33:6) He even placed a carved image in the temple! After repeated warnings went unheeded, God sent the Assyrians who carried him captive to Babylon. But while there he repented so thoroughly that God had mercy on him and he was returned to his kingdom in Jerusalem. - 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

The devil has many ways of luring people away from the way of God as he did for Manasseh who succumbed to the devil's influence. Christians should resist the enticements to backslide from the faith, cleanse their hands and hearts from sin, so that God will help them to stand firm and thereby gain victory over the devil. See James 4:8-10; 1 Peter 5:9; Ephesians 6:11,12.

Sunday, September 13, 2020

Text: “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.” - James 4:11.

Comment: Apostle James here refers to malicious words spoken against people behind them so as to reduce them before others in the Church. Unfortunately, many people do not bother to find out whether what they are told is true or not but instead spread such stories mostly for the pleasure of putting the other person down. These stories may have been taken out of context; they may be things that were overheard but were later given a totally different coloration because the words were misunderstood; some are half-truths and others outright lies.

Christians do not thrive in scandal-mongering but in helping one another. “Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth…” so said King David in Psalm 140:11. God Almighty also declared, “Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: …He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.” (Psalm 101:5-7) There are some who hate those who are diligent in the service of God and try to weaken them or put them down by speaking evil of them. Those who are doing so are finding fault with the word of God which is the basis of the faith of the true worshipper. One should be motivated and encouraged by those who are serving God with their hearts and set up stumbling blocks for them. See James 4:12; Romans 14:3,4,10-12; 1Corinthians 4:5.

Monday, September 14, 2020

Text: “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.”” - James 4:13.

Comment: Many people make the mistake of making plans for the future without reckoning that they do not own their lives: they may be dead before the day they scheduled to hold one assignment or the other. Hence, the text is followed by an observation, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.?” (James 4:14) It was Solomon the prophet who advised us, “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1) In the words of Apostle James, “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that.” James 4:15.

In the parable of the rich fool, our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of a rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully to the extent that his barns could not take all the produce. He then decided to build a bigger barn so that he would just be enjoying himself. Because he was making plans without seeking the help of God to keep him alive for the future, “…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 12:15-21.

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

Text: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” - James 4:17.

Comment: When God created man, He gave him the understanding that he was created by the supreme being. St. Paul therefore explained that the people of the world have no excuse for not giving reverence to God Almighty. “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 1:20-22) But in addition to giving man the faculties to know Him and worship Him, God Almighty still sends His servants to impart to people the truth about His purposes of creation and His Kingdom. In the inspired words of Micah the prophet, God has taught man what is good and, as Apostle John says, His commandments are not grievous. (Micah 6:6-8; 1 John 5:3) So if people have known what to do and fail to do so then they have themselves to blame. - Luke 12:47, 48.

Our Lord, referring to the unbelieving Jews said, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.” (John 15:22) With knowledge comes sin. We should strive and pray to be able to do righteousness always by God's grace. Our Saviour stated, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” - John 13:17.

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Text: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.” - James 5:1-3.

Comment: The text for today is a denunciation of those who became rich through corruption, deceit and oppression. Such rich unbelievers feel secure and are very proud, being impervious to the judgments of God. They “have their portion in this life”. (Psalm 17:14) Apostle James adds, “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth …Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.” (James 5:4-6) The words of James the apostle echo what had been stated earlier by the servant of God, Jeremiah, thus, “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; …But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.” - Jeremiah 22:13,14,17.

We pray God to help us to avoid the spirit of covetousness and oppression. The command of God is, “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.” - Leviticus 19:13.

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Text: “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” - James 5:7, 8.

Comment: Christians have to be exhorted to be patient, which is “to persevere calmly, especially when faced with difficulties”. This encouragement is necessary in view of the sacrifices believers have to make and the tribulations they have to endure for the cause of righteousness so as to partake of the world to come by God's grace. Indeed, our Saviour had promised that it is at his second presence he would reward the faithful. (Matthew 16:27) St Paul charged worshippers of God to “run with patience the race that is set before us …lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” - Hebrews 12:1-3.

In our day to day activities, we must exercise patience. Everyone wants to make progress in life. But delays and frustrating stumbling blocks may occur at any of the stages in life. Admissions into school may be delayed. Promotions may not be long in coming. One may not have marital partner or children at the time expected. Some ailments may not be readily amenable to treatment. Certain tribulations and persecutions may continue for some time. Because of impatience some have taken to quick-fix solutions, including therapies of unproven efficacy, ending up in worse conditions and even to fatal consequences. - Deuteronomy 18: 10-14; Isaiah. 8: 19.

The Christian must continue to look to God, and to do righteousness by His grace. Our Redeemer stated, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” - Luke 21:19.

Friday, September18, 2020

Text: “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.” - James 5:9

Comment: People of God are enjoined to love their neighbours as themselves and not to backbite and damage them. (Leviticus 19:18) Since no one should be condemned without being heard, (John 7:51), the person who receives an evil report about another person should find out properly and even strive to hear from the person involved. The Bible says, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established…” - Matthew 18:15-17.

Bearing bitter grudge against another person amounts to murder. (1 John 3:15) The evil report brought by ten of the spies led to great murmuring and even to an open revolt by the Israelites against Moses and Aaron. They even wanted to choose a captain to lead them back to Egypt! This was clear evidence of lack of faith and amounted to rebellion against God. God therefore told Moses and Aaron, that in view of their murmurings, all those who were 20 years and above who had murmured against Him shall not see the Promised Land. The Bible says that we should “Do all things without murmurings and disputing.” - Philippians 2:14.

Saturday, September 19, 2020

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 endured. 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: The servants of God go through many persecutions at the instance of satan the devil. A number of them and their works of faith are listed in Hebrews chapter 11. Towards the end of the chapter spoke of the prophets subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, turned to flight the armies of the aliens and women received their dead raised to life again. Many others were tortured and subjected to cruel mockings and scourgings, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. (Hebrews 11:32-38) These are the clouds of witnesses mentioned by St. Paul in Hebrews chapter 12, from whom we should draw encouragement lest anyone should become weary and faint along the way.

Job, the patriarch and prophet of God, was deprived of wealth and health, and at once plunged into deep affliction within a day by wave after wave of the Devil's onslaughts. Yet he remained faithful to God. The case of Job teaches us that the devil is the cause of our troubles; that he could do us nothing except God allows it and we should allow ourselves to be diverted by fiery trials in that if we look to God in our afflictions He would certainly help us. - Job 1:1-21; 2:1-10; 27:3-6; 42:10-17.

Sunday, September 20, 2020

Text: “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.” - James 5:12.

Comment: The Hebrew name of God Almighty is Jehovah, which means “self-existing One or One Who lives of Himself”. This is the name God commanded the Israelites through Moses that they should not take lightly and carelessly. No one should call the name of God to be witness to a lie, to assure people one would keep one's word whereas one has no intention of keeping the promise or is unable to do so. (Exodus 20:7. See also Leviticus 19:12; Deuteronomy 10:20) As time went on, some of the people started swearing falsely, thereby provoking God to anger. - Jeremiah 5:2; 7:9, 10.

When our Lord Jesus Christ came, he gave a new commandment that worshippers of God should not swear at all, “neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.” He then added, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” (Matthew 5:33-37) Thus, whether in the courts or in common conversation, we should pray for the faith to say the truth always and prove that oaths are unnecessary for the Christian.

Monday, September 21, 2020

Text: “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” - James 5:13, 14.

Comments: Because of the fall of man from perfection to imperfection, he has become vulnerable to several ailments at the instance of the devil. Every sensible person, should know that man is not sufficient of himself and so must lean on God Almighty all the time for deliverance and protection. David the prophet declared, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” - Psalm 73:25; See also Psalm 143:6-8.

As stated in the text for today, whatever may be the situation, we should be on the Lord's side. When there is occasion for joy, one should not be negligent to sing in praise of God Almighty. In time of distress or sickness we should pray to God and ask for intercessory prayers from elders of the Church on his behalf. Right from time of old, oil was used for medicinal purposes. Apostle James uses the oil as a picture word for the healing power of prayer, and gave the example of Elijah through whose prayer rain stopped and started again after three years in Israel. - James 5:15-18.

But for our prayers to be answered we must acknowledge our faults to one another and forgive wrongs done to us in that “…The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” - James 5:16.

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

Text: Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” - James 5:19, 20.

Comment: Christians are to help one another in the way of salvation. They should correct one who does wrong and not pretend they did not see the error or even encourage evil. One should not “suffer sin” upon his brother. (Leviticus 19:17) Our Lord Jesus Christ directed that if a fellow disciple wrongs us, we should go to him and tell him his fault, stating, “if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother”. (Matthew 18:15) In the same vein, Apostle Paul advised those who are mature in the church to strive to restore, with the spirit of meekness, anyone who is overtaken in a fault. (Galatians 6:1) Sometimes sharp words need to be used to chastise one who has erred grievously. Hence, speaking of the Christians at Crete who are accused of being “alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies (that is lovers of food, hating work). (Titus 1:12, 13) Solomon the prophet says, “…rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee”. (Proverbs 9:8) It is with that understanding that David said that the chastisement from the righteous is good for his soul. We should pray to have this understanding: “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head…” - Psalm 141:5.

**MANAGING RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY**

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Text: “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?” - Proverbs 27:23, 24.

Comment: In the foregoing text, we are advised to pay attention to our resources. Taking stock of what we have and what we have achieved in life both materially and spiritually is a form of management. Before feeding four thousand men, “besides women and children”, Jesus Christ demanded to know the state of the resources they had in stock, then he went ahead to multiply that to feed them. (Matthew 15:32-38) Even at the end of the day, Jesus told the disciples to gather up the leftovers so that they would not waste any.

We need to develop the strategies to manage and grow our spiritual resources by way of the gifts God has endowed us with. In Matthew 25:14-30, our Lord Jesus Christ related the story of servants who doubled the talents given them and the blessing they received compared to the one who was given one talent but did not do anything with it. He said: “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” - Matthew 25:29.

We pray God to help us to make the most of our talents given to us so that we will have abundance by His grace.- Matthew 25:29.

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Text: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?” - Luke 16:10-12.

Comment: This text shows that God entrusts more and more of His material resources to those who demonstrate they can be trusted to manage them effectively. We should use our spiritual and material endowments in ways that give glory to God Almighty. (Psalm 24:1; 1 Chronicles 29:11-15) We should use our talents to support the furtherance of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 6: 10) They should not hoard their money or use it for carnal purposes for which they will receive but vainglory or praise of men. When one has contributed much to the work of God, he will definitely set his heart on God and His perfect Kingdom. (Matthew 6: 19-21) The Almighty God has from time to time desired that His worshipers be generous in their spiritual obligations. If you are diligent in managing a little given to you, then you have shown that if more is given to you, you have the capacity to perform as well. Apostle Paul stated: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” – 1 Corinthians 15:58.

We pray God to continue to increase our understanding so as to do the in the way acceptable to Him always by His grace.

Friday, September 25, 2020

Text: “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” - Genesis 2:15.

Comment: Adam was given charge of managing the resources in the Garden of Eden. Everything created belongs to God. “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine”. (Psalm 50:10, 11) “The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1) Man was created by God to manage the earth as a steward. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:26). Whatever resources we are entrusted with both human and material, we have a duty to tend, nourish, and help them flourish to provide food for man and animals. We all have responsibility to be grateful to God for abundantly providing the resources of the earth for our use and pray Him to help us use them responsibly so that we can continue to enjoy the earth. – 1 Corinthians 9:9; Psalm 104:14.

Saturday, September 26, 2020

Text: “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.” - John 17:12.

Comment: Here Jesus Christ states in his prayer to God that he was able to effectively manage all the disciples given to him by God Almighty. As a good shepherd or manager, he cared for his disciples, trained them and gave them responsibilities to achieve great things. “And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” (John 6:39) Aside the twelve apostles, our Redeemer appointed 70 other disciples, who went out to win more souls. St. Peter charged leaders in the work of God to feed the flock of God “taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind…” (1 Peter 5:2-4) Those who were negligent in their duty of caring for the sheep of God but “fed themselves and fed not the flock”, God says He would punish. - Ezekiel 34:1-10.

A good way of managing people is to identify the hidden skills in them and help them to sharpen these skills for the benefit of the Church and the society at large. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” - 2 Timothy 2:2.

Sunday, September 27, 2020

Text: “Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens” - Exodus 18:21.

Comment: Jethro advised Moses, his son in-law, to make effective use of the human resources God gave him in administering the people. He suggested that Moses should choose few men among the people to whom he would delegate the duty of judging smaller matters. (Exodus 18:22). This participatory leadership style involves identifying men who have the fear of God, integrity and strength that could be entrusted with different levels of responsibilities. – 2 Samuel 23:3.

Managing human resources is a very difficult task because of people's different backgrounds, orientations and dispositions. Those in authority need to fervently pray to God to give them wisdom in selecting deputies that could work with them to achieve a common goal. Before choosing those to work with him, Our Lord Jesus Christ put it in prayer to God: “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.” (Luke 6:12,13) Effective management of human resources is about teamwork and community.

We need to pray God to give us His spirit to enable us do His work effectively and unitedly by His grace. – Psalm 133:1; Philippians 3:16.

Monday, September 28, 2020

Text: “His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” - Matthew 25:21.

Comment: The parable of the talents and its full interpretation as told by Jesus Christ is in Mathew 25:14-30. A master gave out his resources called “talents”, or money to his servants, while he embarked on a long journey. On his return, he called the servants to give account of their stewardship. Two of the servants effectively managed the talents given them. They were called “faithful” and were not only commended for being fruitful, they were also given more talents for further growth as reward for good management. The last servant did not do like the first two. He only “digged in the earth, and hid the lord's money”. He did not put it to use and did not increase it. That was poor management of his master's resources. He was reprimanded for not being diligent.

Successful stewards bring growth and increase of the resources under their charge, leading frequently to their being entrusted with even more assets and greater responsibilities. We are expected to do more than conserving the resources entrusted on us. We also need to go the extra mile to make them flourish and increase. St. Paul declared that he strived to ensure that the powers given to him by God he uses them for edification and not for destruction. – 2 Corinthians 13:10.

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

Text: “And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.” - Genesis 39:6.

Comment: The lead text is taken from the story of Joseph, a good manager of resources, as related in Genesis chapters 37-50. The citation for today says that Joseph's master put everything in his hand to manage and he did well with the fear of God. With the grace of God on him, even when he was put in prison, that stewardship quality was soon found in him as he was told to manage the fellow prisoners. - Genesis 39:22.

From managing his master's material resources, to managing human resources in the prison, he was later given charge of the whole of Egypt by King Pharaoh. “And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do … and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn...” - Genesis 41:55-57.

Joseph's wisdom and planning, saved the lives of people, not only in Egypt, but from all other nations. It's about managing everything God brings into our lives in a manner that honours God. – See Luke 16:10-12; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Text: “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.” - Ecclesiastes 11:2.

Comment: This text tells us about making full use of all the opportunities we have in resource management. We should look beyond our area of comfort and develop our resources across various spheres of competence and even beyond our shores if possible. There must be an outlook of diversification as we grow our resources and not to put all our eggs in one basket because we don't know what issues may arise upon the land. The Good News translation puts it this way, “Invest your money in foreign trade, and one of these days you will make a profit. Put your investments in several places - many places even - because you never know what kind of bad luck you are going to have in this world”.

The idea here is about multiple streams of income. One's resources can be well managed by spreading on different investment opportunities so as to spread the risks. Some of these investment opportunities will end well, while some may not, but on the average it's better than just a single source of income. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” - Ecclesiastes 11:6.

May God give us the strength to do His work always by His grace.

Thursday, October 1, 2020

Text: “ That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." - 2 Timothy 1:14.

Comment: In the text above, St Paul admonished Timothy to guide well the good treasure that had been entrusted on him through the holy spirit properly put. The treasure here is the accurate knowledge of God passed on to him. This treasure also includes instructions in righteousness and other statutes of God. God instructed Moses: “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” Deuteronomy 4:5,6.

The God's Kingdom Society (GKS) has many “treasures” by way of doctrines and Instructions of God, many of which have been put down in form of publications, that guide our day to day activities. (2 Timothy 3:16,17) These “treasures” should be well guarded, preserved and passed on to our children's children (Isaiah 38:19). “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” – 2 Timothy 3:14; Titus 1:9.

Friday, October 2, 2020

Text: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” - Luke 14:28-30.

Comment: Adequate budgeting is a vital aspect of resource management. Jesus Christ admonished that one should plan first before putting his resources to build a house, and be sure that he can start and finish the project. Every household, group, and committee should operate on a budget, or a financial plan that is needed to manage the group's resources effectively. Good managers use budget as a tool to plan and control the use of scarce resources. Those who can manage resources well are few. King Solomon says: “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6) Among the virtues of David as a youth was that he was “prudent in matters”. – 1 Samuel 16:18.

A good budgeting lets us know what we have and helps us to know when we need adjustment to our spending. Resource management is critical for organizations to ensure their resources are optimized and allocated to the right initiatives. It is in this wise that the Bible says that “a prudent man covereth shame”. - Proverbs 12:16.

We pray the Good Lord to provide for us and enable us to be prudent in the use of our resources for the benefit of His work in particular and the mankind in general.

Saturday, October 3, 2020

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

Comment: Today's text considers time as a valuable resource that we have to manage well. The Scriptures seriously stress the brevity of life, likening it to grass, or flowers that fade or a tale that is told. (Job 14:1,2). Our time should be well managed with each moment used wisely for God and not wasted. Time, as some say, is the most precious resource from God Almighty. As Christians, we are to manage our time well, having the knowledge that everything is just for a while and that there is time for everything, (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) We are advised in Colossians 4:5 to make the best use of our time.

In managing our time, we should seek first after the things of God, as He will make other things to fall in place for us. (Matthew 6:33) We should plan our schedule well to maintain a good work-life balance, being wise as serpents and harmless as doves. In the days of Nehemiah, the Governor of Judah, the people had to multitask themselves, combining the roles of builders, soldiers, guards, informants and so on, to protect themselves from attack by their enemies who wanted to stop the work. The Scripture states: “They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.” - Nehemiah 4:17.

Sunday, October 4, 2020

Text: “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” - 1 Peter 4:10.

Comment: The text of today focuses on the gift we individually received from God, being resources to be used to serve others as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. It is a fact that we are gifted differently. This means that others should or would benefit from our resources or talents, bearing in mind that we are just stewards by the grace of God.

In the Church, some are good speakers and can discourse the word of God fluently, some are seasoned administrators, some are good singers, some are good at instruments, some have the gift of counselling, and so on. (1 Corinthians 12) These gifts make us unique in one way or the other. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another”, declared St. Paul. He went on: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.” - Romans 12:4-8.

Monday, October 5, 2020

Text: “Precious treasure and oil are in the dwelling of a wise person, but a foolish man consumes them.” - Proverbs 21:20.

Comment: The aforementioned text talks about what happens when resources are well managed and when such fall into the hands of vain persons. When you go to the house of a good manager of resources, you will find treasures and foodstuffs conserved therein, but in the house of a waster, you will find nothing. King Solomon advised us to go to the ant to learn how to store foods for hard times. (Proverbs 6:6) The Preacher also said that “strong men retain riches”. - Proverbs 11:16.

This same economic principle of saving for the rainy days was earlier recommended to Pharaoh by Joseph. He advised that they should stock up on food during the years of plenty in preparation for the bad times. That strategy probably saved the Egyptian empire at that time from total collapse.

Joseph told his brethren that the famine was at the time of their visit, in its second year, and that there were still five more years to go. “And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.” - Genesis 45:6-8.

**THE PRACTICE OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

INTRODUCTION

Righteousness is the quality of being right or just. It is that act, deed, disposition, thought, etc that is right in the sight of God or in accordance with the will of God.

The singular fact that God Almighty is the Judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25), and He will reward everyman according to his deeds is a pointer to the fact that anyone who does not live up to God's standard (by practising the righteousness of God) but practises personal righteousness (what one thinks or feels is right) will have him/herself to blame in the end. King Solomon admonished: “… lean not unto thine own understanding… Be not wise in thine own eyes…” – Proverbs 3:5-7.

True Christians should take a cue from St. Paul who stated: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). Therefore, “Is it God's Righteousness you practice?” Let us examine ourselves.

Tuesday, October 6, 2020

Text: “For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.” – Psalm 11:7.

Comment: The text for today states that God Almighty is righteous and takes delight in persons who give themselves to righteousness. Moses the prophet describing God said: “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” – Deuteronomy 32:4.

Elihu attested to the fact that God cannot be associated with evil when he declared: “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 works of man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.” – Job 34:10-12.

Concerning those who do righteousness, God's countenance is continually on them for good. (Psalm 146:8). Truly, God delights in those who give themselves to righteousness and He will show His favour on them by granting them their desires – Proverbs 10:24,28.

In times of economic difficulties and other challenges, God Almighty will come to the aid of the righteous and help them out of their troubles. King Solomon stated: “The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked”. - Proverbs 10:3; Psalm 34:15,17,19.

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Text: “My tongue shall speak of thy word, for all thy commandments are righteousness.” – Psalm 119:172.

Comment: The laws, commandments and statues of God are righteous and will help man to practise the righteousness of God for man's own good. The very first law given by God to man was in the Garden of Eden where God instructed Adam that he should not eat of the fruit of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” lest he dies. (Genesis 2:16,17). Adam disobeyed that righteous law of God and the sentence of death was passed on him and the entire human race. (Romans 5:12). When Israel became a great nation, God Almighty handed down the ten (10) Commandments as well as other laws and sundry instructions through Moses the prophet to guide the children of Israel in doing what is right in the sight of God. – Exodus 20:1-17; Leviticus 18:1-30; 19:1-37; etc.

The Psalmist gave the understanding that the laws, commandments and statutes of God are righteous altogether and will bring great reward to those who endeavour to put them to practice. – Psalm 19:7-11.

Those who refuse to keep the laws of God mark themselves as unrighteous and hence will not be saved in God's Kingdom. – 1 Corinthians 6:9,10.

As true worshippers of God, we should pray and strive to keep the laws, commandments and instructions of God as this is righteousness on our part. – Deuteronomy 6:24-26.

Thursday, October 8, 2020

Text: “Brethren, my hearts' desire and pray to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” – Romans 10:1-3.

Comment: The Israelites were a special people to God Almighty. (Deuteronomy 7:6.). After teaching the Israelites the laws and commandments of God, Moses told them that the laws and commandments are righteous, and that should they keep such laws and commandments, other nations would esteem them as a wise and understanding people. – Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

God Almighty then warned the Israelites through Amos the prophet: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” – Amos 3:2.

At various times, majority of the Jews deviated from the commandments of God and went about practising their own righteousness by worshipping idols, ordaining priests from tribes outside the tribe of Levi, instituting feasts in the 8th month instead of God's ordained Feast of the 7th month, kings performing the duty of priests by burning incense etc (1 Kings 12:26-33). For these and other deviations from God's standard, God Almighty punished the Israelites severely with the highpoint of been conquered and taken to captivity by gentile nations as He had earlier on warned them through Moses the prophet – Deuteronomy 28:25,36,49-52.

As true Christians and spiritual Jews (Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 6:15,16), when we seek first the kingdom of God and practise God's righteousness, God will bless us with our daily needs. – Matthew 6:33; Psalm 106:3.

Friday, October 9, 2020

Text: “And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” – 1 Samuel 15:22.

Comment: King Saul is an example of one who practised personal righteousness as against God's righteousness. God Almighty gave him a firm instruction to completely destroy the Amalekites but King Saul went and spared the life of their King, Agag, and the best of their animals such as sheep, oxen, and all the choice things of Amalek he brought home for himself. Even when God Almighty sent back the Prophet Samuel to him, King Saul came out to meet Samuel and proclaimed that he had carried out the instruction of God. When Samuel inquired about the noise of the animals he could hear in the environment of the house, Saul attempted to justify his action by giving reason for his personal righteousness. – 1 Samuel 15:2 -15.

The reply of Samuel to Saul showed that Saul lost the favour of God in his kingship position. “And Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams …” – 1 Samuel 15:22,23.

As people of God, we should not carry out the instructions of God on our own terms or as we deem fit. It is personal righteousness which is outright disobedience and will bring God's punishment on one. – Job 36:11,12.

Saturday, October 10, 2020

Text: “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” – 2 Chronicles 26:16.

Comment: Uzziah was the king of Judah who did the will of God at the beginning of his reign and prospered. (2 Chronicles 26:1-5) But having been established, he left the practice of God's righteousness and started practising personal righteousness. In this regard, he went into the temple of God to burn incense upon the altar which was not lawful for him to do since he was not of the tribe of Levi nor a descendant of Aaron whom God had given that sacred duty alone (Numbers 16:40) He was immediately accosted by Azariah the priest and 80 priests and was told pointedly that he had transgressed the law of God for it was not his duty to burn incense a that was the duty of the sons of Aaron. Hence he was asked to go out of the sanctuary (2 Chronicles 26:16,17) King Uzziah became very angry at the priests for pointing out his errors while still holding a censer in his hand to burn incense. Consequently, God struck him with leprosy. – 2 Chronicles 26:18-21.

God Almighty is a God of order and decency (1 Corinthians 14:33,40) When one plays a role or duty that is not spiritually meant or assigned to one, it amounts to presumptuousness and self- righteousness which is a sin in sight of God. This we should pray to avoid. – Psalm 19:13.

Sunday, October 11, 2020

Text: “And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him therefore his errors; and there he died by the ark of God.” – 2 Samuel 6:6,7.

Comment: When King David was returning with the ark of God after recovering it from the Philistines, the ark of God was placed on a cart driven by oxen. As a result of the galloping movement of the oxen, the cart shook and the ark of God was about to fall off the cart but Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of the ark of God. For this, he was immediately killed by God because though he was of the tribe of Levi, he was not of the lineage of Kohath (in the tribe of Levi) whom God specifically instructed to be in charge of carrying the ark – Numbers 4:15; 7:9.

King David lamented that if they had kept to God's order by carrying the ark on their shoulders instead of putting it on a cart, Uzzah would not have made that grave error that led to his death. – 1 Chronicles 15:11-14; Joshua 3:14-17.

The striking lessons here is that a single mistake of personal righteousness can lead to dire consequences, even death. Uzzah obviously wanted to help to steady the ark of God, but he was not among those spiritually assigned such duty by God, hence, he suffered the terrible consequence of his action. King Solomon warned: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” – Proverbs 16:25.

Monday, October 12, 2020

Text: “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican, I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” – Luke 18:11,12.

Comment: The case of the Pharisee is a clear case of self-righteousness, or holier-than-thou attitude. This is personal righteousness. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican narrated by Jesus Christ gives an insight into the self-righteous character of the Pharisees, those “…which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despise others” – Luke 18:9.

While praying to God, the Pharisees enumerated his good works as evidence that he righteous, unlike the Publican whom he termed “unjust”. (Luke 18:10-12) The Bible tells us that it is not he who commends himself that is approved but he whom God commends. – 2 Corinthians 10:18.

God sees the heart of man, and He knows the intents and motives behind our righteous deeds in His Service. (Psalm 7:8) This is why regardless of King Amaziah's (outwardly) righteous deeds in the service of God, he did not get the favour of God because of he was not doing them from a good heart condition, with faith in God. – 2 Chronicles 25:1, 2.

 Finally, Jesus Christ warned us of the danger in the self- righteous character of the Pharisees when he said: “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” – Matthew 5:20.

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Text: “And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstling of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” – Genesis 4:3,4.

Comment: In making offerings to God, Abel gave the best of his flock as a choice offering to God, but Cain did not offer the best of his farm produce to God. Hence, God accepted the offering of Abel and rejected that of Cain – Genesis 4:4,5.

It should be borne in mind that, Abel knew that he should offer the best of his substance to God. This was later put down in writing at the time of Moses the prophet. – Numbers 18:12,17.

That Abel has been approved for salvation because of his acceptable offering to God is a fact of the Holy Bible. St. Paul speaking concerning Abel and his offering stated “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous…” – Hebrews 11:4.

God Almighty speaking through Malachi the prophet admonished worshippers of God that in making offerings to God, we should offer the best to God and not offer items that may not even be ideal to give as gift to a fellow human being who is in position of authority. We should have the faith to give God the first and the best of what we have, as expressions of our faith in Him.– Malachi 1:7,8.

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Text: “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” – Luke 1:6.

Comment: The account of Luke opens with the encouraging story of a married couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were both righteous before God by keeping His commandments so much that they were blameless before Him. (Luke 1:5,6). The Bible shows that keeping the commandments and laws of God is a mark of righteousness. ” – Deuteronomy 6:24,25.

Going further, the account of Luke reported the marital challenge that Zacharias and Elizabeth were having as a married couple. “And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.” (Luke 1:7). This simply shows that sincere and committed worshippers of God are never immune from problems (2 Timothy 3:12). In God's due time, while Zacharias was still performing his priestly work in the temple, God Almighty sent an angel to inform him that his wife Elizabeth (who had been barren for years) would conceive and bear a son to be named John (Luke 1:11-13). Truly, the Bible says that the desire of the righteous shall be granted. – Proverbs 10:24.

That God blessed Zachariah and Elizabeth with a child even at old age is a pointer to the fact that praying to God while delighting oneself in practising the righteousness of God will make one get the desires of one's heart. – Psalm 37:3-5.

Thursday, October 15, 2020

Text: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” – Job 1:1.

Comment: That Job was described as “perfect and upright” does not mean that he never committed any sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20). The statement simply means that Job was committed to living right with God by way of running away from anything evil and doing what is right in the sight of God. Job was so righteously inclined that he even made supplication and intercessions ceaselessly to God for his children if peradventure they might have sinned against God in their hearts. – Job 1:5.

In the heat of the tribulations that came to him in quick succession such as losing all his property, losing his ten(10) children and been plagued by sore boils from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, he did not turn away from practising the righteousness of God. He himself reaffirmed that he would not cease to practise the righteousness of God as long as he was alive. – Job 27:3-6.

That the end of Job was more blessed than the beginning is a pointer to the fact that continuing in the practice of God's rigorousness, regardless of trials and tribulations, is very rewarding. – Job 42:12,13,16,17.

Is our practice of righteousness such that God can make such statement of commendation about us? Haggai the prophet admonished: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.” – Haggai 1:7.

Friday, October 16, 2020

Text: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.” – Deuteronomy 22:5.

Comment: In the world today, even among worshippers of God, some still dress in unwholesome outfits with the argument that God sees the heart and not the outward appearance. The singular fact that God Almighty gave the instruction that men should not put on the outfit meant for women and vice versa is a glaring fact that God takes cognizance of gender suitability of clothing, that is, what clothing is morally suitable for each gender - male and female.

The text for today, went further to state that it is an abominable act before God for a woman to adorn clothing meant for men. Not all dresses are morally suitable for worshippers of God to put on. The general notion of some Christians that God looks at the heart and not the outward appearance is very wrong and amounts to personal righteousness. St. Paul admonished us not to follow the trend in the world but that we should have a renewed heart so as to know and do what is acceptable to God. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” – Romans 12:1,2.

Saturday, October 17, 2020

Text: “Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” – Matthew 6:16.

Comment: Fasting is voluntary abstinence from food and water for a period for spiritual reasons. Unfortunately, out of spiritual ignorance and in an attempt to show off their spirituality, some Christians today publicise their fasting, contrary to what our Saviour said in Matthew 6:17,18.

Besides, publicising fasting, it is also not a practice of God's righteousness to be fasting and yet engaging in acts of wickedness. This was made known by God Almighty through Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 58:3-8. “…Look, what good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarrelling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. Is this what I want …No, the kind of fast I want is that you stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly and give them what they earn. I want you to share your food with the hungry and bring right into your own homes those who are helpless, poor and destitute, Clothe those who are cold and don't hide from relatives who need your help. If you do these things, God will shed his own glorious light upon you. He will heal you; your godliness will lead you forward, and goodness will be a shield before you, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. - (Living Bible).

Sunday, October 18, 2020

Text: “And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” – Mark 9:1.

Comment: The fact that the righteous will be in God's Kingdom there is no doubt. In the text for today, Jesus Christ mentioned the special grace that God will give to some righteous persons who will live until the final end of the evil world. Such righteous persons will not taste of death but will pass from this evil world to the next world, the world without end.

Concerning those who have the special grace of passing through the great tribulation without tasting death, St. John 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 one of the elders answered, saying unto me, … These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” - Revelation 7:9,13,14.

The “robes” worn by the great multitude signify the righteousness of God practised till the end. Job the prophet spoke of righteousness, as a robe that spiritually clothes one when he said: “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.” (Job 29:14; Isaiah 61:10) It is a great blessing to be among those to be so clothed in God's Kingdom.

Monday, October 19, 2020

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

Comment: The Bible reveals that God has a controversy with the world because “there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.” – Hosea 4:1-3.

In the text for today, those who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land are those who give themselves to the practice of God's righteousness and as such they would naturally detest anything that runs contrary to the will of God.

When God destroyed the first world with a deluge of water because of the iniquity of the inhabitants of the world at that time, He spared only righteous Noah (and his family of seven) because of his righteousness (Genesis 6:1-8; 7:1). Also, when God sent angels to destroy the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrha for their grievous sins, He delivered Lot (and his two daughters) because of his righteous inclination. - 2 Peter 2:5-8.

God Almighty knows those who engage in unrighteousness and abominable acts and He will not spare them, hence the clear instruction given to the destroying angel “And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity… but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary…” - Ezekiel 9:5,6.

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Text: “Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.” – Daniel 4:27

Comment: In Daniel 4:1-17, King Nebuchadnezzar had a very disturbing dream in which command was given that the tree be hewn down and the heart of the king be changed to that of a beast until seven times pass over him. This is “to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

After listening to the narration of his dream, Daniel the prophet told the King how he would be driven from among men to dwell with the beast of the forest for seven years until he would realize that God rules in the kingdom of men. Then, Daniel counselled the King to “break off thy sin by righteousness…” as in the text for today. Unfortunately, King Nebuchadnezzar did not heed this warning by Daniel the prophet hence he suffered the consequence of his pride and arrogance as indicated in his dream.

As worshippers of God, we should not be proud but humble (Proverbs 6:16-19; 16:5,18). Whatever our accomplishment in this world, we should not take the glory to ourselves as Nebuchadnezzar did but we should give the glory to God who has given us the grace, to attain such position. This is righteousness on our part as made known by Jeremiah the prophet. – Jeremiah 9:23,24; Psalm 115:1.

Wednesday October 21, 2020

Text: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” – 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Comment: This timely admonition of St. Paul is to the effect that we do check ourselves constantly so as to ensure that our ways are always in line with the will and righteousness of God.

One of the qualities of Jesus Christ is love. He taught love by precept and practice. Jesus Christ attested to the fact that love is the greatest commandment of the law (Matthew 22:34-40). He demonstrated love in high degree when he laid down his life for us. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John 15:13,14; John 13:34,35) Being sinful mortals who are prone to make mistakes and offend one another (knowing or unknowingly), correction by pointing out an error to enable an offender make amends is necessary as an expression of love for one's neighbor. Harbouring hatred for an offender without correcting him/her is not a mark of God's righteousness. St. Paul admonished: “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.

Thursday October 22, 2020

Text: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” – 1 Corinthians 15:34.

Comment: The work of God is a work of righteousness. It is a work that is honourable and glorious (Psalm 111:3, 2) The work of God has so many activities such as attendance to service meetings where one grows in the knowledge of God (Hebrews 10:25; 2 Peter 3:18); contributing our financial resources for the growth of God's work (Proverbs 11:24,25; 3:9,10; Haggai 1:7,8); using our gifts, talents, technical abilities, skill to facilitate various aspects of the work of God where needed (1 Corinthians 12:4-7); fulfilling our kingdom obligation by way of payment of tithes and offerings – Malachi 3:8-12; etc.

These and many more are activities in the work of God. The soul-searching questions are: i) Do some not select Service meetings to attend? ii) Do some not shy away from contributing or donating their resources during Church launchings? Or donate little so as not to be seen as someone who has abundance hence starving the work of God with the resources God has blessed them with? iii) Do some not hide their talents, skills, gifts from the work of God while they exhibit same in the secular world to promote their own businesses? iv) Do some not default in the payments of their tithes and offerings?

James the apostle declared: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”. - James 4:17. See also Philippians 4:8,9.

**STRIVE TO BE SAVED**

INTRODUCTION

Since the salvation of God is of grace, why then would the greatest Teacher of all times charge believers to still put in effort to obtain it? Since eternal life is God's gift, of what need is there for one to struggle for it?

One of the profound features of God's word is that it is devoid of any form of contradiction. True to St. Paul's epistle in Ephesians 2:8, Salvation is God's prerogative. However, his statement in verse 9 “Not of works, lest any man should boast” does not in any way rule out good works as a prerequisite hence his exhortation in Titus 3:8 to the effect that all who have “believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.” So, it is God's expectation that all who have received His grace should justify it by proving themselves worthy of same.

In the following weeks, we shall expound on Christ's response to a question put forth to him, to wit: “…are there few that be saved?” – Luke 13:23.

Friday, October 23, 2020

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

Comment: What a colossal loss it would be for anyone to be rejected on the day of decision on the ground that his services in God's superior assessment were not “reasonable” because they did not conform to His will? True conversion and holiness are manifest in renewing one's thoughts and actions to align with God's standard. It is a total turnaround from evil inclination to a life patterned after the statutes of God. – Psalm 19:7; 119:5,9-11.

In his epistle to the Christians in Rome, Apostle Paul implored them to aspire for holiness because God Who has called them is holy. God desires that His children should be holy (Leviticus 11:44). His Son, Jesus Christ is holy (Luke 1:35; Psalm 16:10; Mark 1:24). During his first advent, Jesus Christ told a Samaritan woman: “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” – John 4:24.

At all times, Christian converts should do those things that please God, the opposite of which is personal righteousness (Romans 10:1-3) which has no reward from God. One who is aiming at everlasting life should not allow himself to be ruled by carnality (1 Peter 1:4) but should instead allow Bible principles and tenets be his life manual. One who strives to achieve this could be said to be offering unto God, a “reasonable service” which in God's time will never go unrewarded by His grace.

Saturday, October 24, 2020

Text: “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” – Hebrews 4:11.

Comment: A wonderful promise of ushering us into an endless life of bliss, rest, providence, etc has been availed us by the grace of God. What we make of it lies in our hands. Contained in the Holy Bible, the Book of books, are numerous instances of people who distinguished themselves as faithful men and women of old, otherwise called Ancient Faithfuls, as well as people who unfortunately received the grace of God in vain. It is sad to note that many of the natural Jews could not reciprocate God's love on them but made light of His abundant providence, miracles, protection and other benefits they enjoyed from Him.

In one of his writings, the Prophet Moses spoke about the grace God gave to the natural Israelites as His peculiar people. (Deuteronomy 4:7,8; 7; 7:6-8). That only Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who started the journey and arrived Canaan, amplifies the danger that goes with unbelief. Today, our destination is the Kingdom of God fully established here on earth. We should emulate holy men and women in the Holy Bible, who never set their hearts on the luxury, comfort and provisions this sin-ridden world has to offer but desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared them a city.” – Hebrews 11:16.

Sunday, October 25, 2020

Text: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” – Ephesians 6:11.

Comment: The All-wise God Who knows best the antics of the devil, has made provision for all candidates of salvation to be able to resist his attack if only they are sober, vigilant and give themselves to prayers (Luke 21:36; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Peter 5:8). Jesus Christ exhorts us not to be moved by the difficulties which the devil would bring on our way (Revelations 2:10) but that we should steadfastly resist the devil with faith in God till the end so that God would make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle us by His grace. – 1 Peter 5:9,10.

As we strive for everlasting life, we are expected to arm ourselves with the knowledge of God, which is “the sword of the spirit” and which is able to make us wise unto salvation. (John 17:3; 2 Timothy 3:15). “Having on the breastplate of righteousness” (verse 14) is another armour. The breastplate is a piece of armour worn to protect organs around the chest region, especially the heart. One cannot practice God's righteousness if one's heart condition is not good spiritually. (Matthew 15:19,20; Proverbs 4:23). Also, we should have faith, without which no one can please God or “be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”. (Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 6:16) We need prayer to have the “whole armour of God”. - Ephesians 6:17.

Monday, October 26, 2020

Text: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.” – 2 Peter 3:17.

Comment: In several portions of the Holy Scriptures, it is revealed that God would reward everyone according to their works. – Ecclesiastes 12:14; Job 34:11; Romans 2:6.

In the pursuit of eternal life, at no time should we allow ourselves to be distracted by the attitude of anyone, no matter how highly placed they may be, our personal relationship with them, their duration of service or wealth of experience they may have acquired over time. Whenever we are tempted to make a turnaround from the way of life because of the ungodly conduct of others, the text for today cautions us to beware. The gospel message which has divine promises should rather stabilize us, teaching us to “be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” (2 Peter 3:14). The ungodliness of others will not be a defense for anyone in the day of the Lord's wrath, instead, everyone “shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” – Ezekiel 14:14,16,18,20.

Rather than allow ourselves to be overwhelmed or discouraged by the errors of those given to godlessness, we should adopt the approach of Lot, “… that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.” (2 Peter 2:7,8; Exodus 23:2). Today's devotional is a call for knowledge, discipline and self-control.

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

Text: “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?” – Psalm 34:12.

Comment: While it is one thing to live long, it is yet more desirable to spend one's days in prosperity and pleasures. All of these are attainable in the perfect Kingdom of God by His grace. One who is striving to please God is doing so because he desires to be blessed with everlasting life and other attendant blessings in God's Kingdom fully established. As such, he is ready to put into practice the wholesome word as the Psalmist declared: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” – Psalm 119:11.

Apostle Peter enumerated practice of righteousness, peaceful coexistence, wise use of the tongue, abstinence from evil amongst others as the qualities expected from Christians in other to enjoy the goodness of God. (Matthew 5:9; Proverbs 18:21; 15:4). Because the God Whom we strive to please is not unrighteous to ignore our efforts, the apostle assures us that God's eyes “are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers” – 1 Peter 3:10-12.

These words of hope should inspire zeal, faith and commitment in us as to make us “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” – 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

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

Comment: The need for appraisals as we run the race of life is highlighted in the story of the Prophet Samuel. Not that we seek to make a public show of our righteousness but subjecting one's self to scrutiny and constructive criticism helps one to either improve in areas one may not be meeting up or continue in well doing. Either way, it helps to keep one in check by the grace of God.

In the course of discharging his duty as a priest and prophet in Israel, Samuel at an advanced age caused the people to openly accuse him of any wrong. Worth remarking is the fact that it was Samuel himself who was recalling a range of vices to their memory but the people were unanimous in their reply “…Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.” (verse 4). Of a truth, the practice of righteousness is achievable, God helping us. (Genesis 6:9; Job 1:1; 1 John 3:7). Like Paul the apostle, we could set a target for ourselves on a daily basis, “to have always a conscience void of offence…” – Acts 24:16.

God Who saw the faithful worshippers of old to the end will also see us through to the end will by His grace Romans 15:4.

Thursday, October 29, 2020

Text: “… And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” – Malachi 3:16,17.

Comment: Being humans, there comes a time when one is tempted to give up on the practice of righteousness owing to the weight of Satan's attacks by way of temptation. At that moment, he, being a spirit, makes us feel that either our efforts are just not enough to please God or that God does not take account of our services. It is at such times we ought to draw nearer to God in prayers, practice His righteousness and give ourselves to studies of the Scriptures even the more, “Lest satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” – 2 Corinthians 2:11.

There is every gain in serving God. This is contrary to the belief of some that “It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance…?” (Malachi 3:13,14). In His appointed time, God has promised to beautify the righteous with long life and other attendant blessings by His grace. – Psalm 149:4. In Hebrews 6:10, St. Paul wrote: “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

The lesson from today's devotional therefore is that we should “not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” – Galatians 6:9.

Friday, October 30, 2020

Text: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” – Hebrews 12:1.

Comment: The Holy Scriptures contain accounts of righteous men and women whose unwavering faith and patience as highlighted in Hebrews chapter eleven earned them a good report by the grace of God. They serve as refreshing examples for us whenever we are faced with opposing circumstances from the devil. In Hebrews 6:12, Apostle Paul encourages us to be “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” The Apostle further reiterated the need for patience, such that, “after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” (Hebrews 10:35,36). These references strengthen the importance of patience for all who seek for eternal life.

The “sin which doth so easily beset us” as expressed in the text for today, refers to those errors we are readily inclined to. While the New King James Version renders it “the sin which so easily ensnares us”, the Contemporary English Version conveys it as “the sin that just won't let go” and the Aramaic Bible In Plain English captures it “the sin which is always ready for us”.

The point is, every individual striving for the mastery must pray to acquire the spiritual maturity, restraint and discipline to detach himself from things God hates so as to wholly concentrate on the joy that is set before us.

Saturday, October 31, 2020

Text: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” – 1 Corinthians 9:24.

Comment: In carrying out his God-given mandate as an “apostle of the gentiles” (Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13), St. Paul draws a metaphor from sporting events hosted in Corinth such as boxing, wrestling and racing, to enlighten the Corinthian Church on how to imbibe certain skills that would aid them and indeed all Christians in the quest for Salvation. Unlike literal sporting events, the gains of Salvation are not limited to a winner rather; the glories, blessings and benefits therein are in abundance for all who would be saved by the grace of God.

Paul the apostle was not urging Christians to go into unhealthy competitions or rivalries among themselves but was only drawing a lesson from the discipline, vigorous training, persistence, self control, and other sacrifices athletes undergo, so that we might imbibe such qualities in the race of salvation. The Disciples' Literal New Testament captures the expression “So run, that ye may obtain” as “Be running in this manner: that you may take-hold-of the prize”

Christians generally are likened to athletes. In contrast however, ours is to obtain an “incorruptible crown” (1 Corinthians 9:25) which is eternal life. We “run” by investing our resources (time, efforts, material acquisitions, etc.) to further the course of theocracy. It should be borne in mind that Salvation is not of merit however, “but of God that showeth mercy”. – Romans 9:16. See also Ephesians 2:8,9

Sunday, November 1, 2020

Text: “And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.” – 2 Kings 13:19.

Comment: In the days of the Prophet Elisha, he instructed Joash, the king of Israel who paid him a visit to take bow and arrows, “Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot.” (2 Kings 13:17). Next, the king asked him to take the arrows and smite the ground. Again, in obedience, the king fired three shots and stopped. Elisha was wroth because Joash still had more arrows at his disposal. He expressed his disappointment on the number of arrows Joash had shot using the words in the text for today. The Bible states: “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition”. - 1 Corinthians 10:11.

As we “Fight the good fight of faith” so as to “lay hold on eternal life”, we should exhaust every opportunity that comes our way to please God. We should never be contented with the magnitude of sacrifices, amount of energy or duration of our services over the years. As long as the opportunities keep coming, we should not be weary. King Solomon declared: “In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” – Ecclesiastes 11:6; Hosea 10:12.

Monday, November 2, 2020

Text: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” “… Be not highminded, but fear” – 1 Corinthians 10:12; Romans 11:20.

Comment: Because of his sinful nature, man is sometimes prone to thinking so highly of himself when he reflects on milestones achieved in the course of serving God, such as sacrifices made, promotions, temptations, experiences gathered, etc. This feeling of accomplishment could be used by the devil to make one to become proud. Our successes and experiences in life should instill in us, humility, while attributing the glory to God. (James 4:13-17). Because the path to Salvation could be slippery, thorny and difficult, owing to satan's interference, St. Paul exhorts us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. – Philippians 2:12; 3:13,14.

The devil's dislike towards God's people will not make him relent in his desperation to snatch us from the path of life. This underscores the importance of praying without ceasing. But for Christ's intervention through prayer, the devil could have succeeded in having his way with Peter as he did with Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3). Doctor Luke writes: “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” – Luke 22:31,32.

Instead of resting on our laurels spiritually or otherwise, the Bible charges us to seek fresh opportunities by breaking up our fallow grounds. – Jeremiah 4:3; Hosea 10:12.

Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Text: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 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 4:6-8.

Comment: Like the radiant smiles on the face of an athlete receiving the gold medal before a mammoth crowd of spectators, or that of an orator being applauded after an impressive presentation, the righteous would be full of unspeakable joy when they would be justified on the day of decision by God Almighty. One could easily create a mental picture of the joy in the erudite apostle while he was making the above declaration. We can better appreciate today's text when we recall the painful ordeals he had earlier narrated in 2 Corinthians 11 concerning imprisonment, stoning, shipwreck, perils of robbers, weariness, hunger, thirst, etc. He said: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” – 2 Timothy 1:12.

Until Satan is destroyed by God, and all things are brought to perfection, believers would continue to strive against sin. We should be determined and constant in prayers to God that we should not backslide from the way of life. (Romans 13:11) The reward of salvation, should encourage us to endure all afflictions and despise Satan's enticements, so that we shall be among those to be told by the Saviour “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” - Matthew 25:34. See also Hebrews 12:2; 2 John 8.

Wednesday, November 4, 2020

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

Comment: Apostle John highlights the need for Christians to serve God Almighty faithfully and steadfastly till the end so as to obtain a full reward. We “look to ourselves” when we consciously direct our thoughts, (Proverbs 3:1; 18:21); utterances (Psalm 37:30; Ecclesiastes 5:2,6); and deeds, (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:12-14) after the righteousness of God. This implies that we should “be spiritually vigilant”. And having toiled over the years in the service of God, it is important for us never to allow the pleasures of sin or temptations at the instance of Satan the devil to make us derail from the path of life. – Hebrews 11:23-26.

All the sacrifices to the Almighty God through His Son Jesus Christ which we offer in His Holy organization must be guarded jealously so that our labours would not be in vain. Apostle Paul exhorts: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:9-15). Let us therefore, continue to do the will of God no matter the challenges. Christ said: “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. See also Hebrews 3:14.

Thursday, November 5, 2020

Text: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” – Luke 13:24.

Comment: Jesus Christ made the statement in the text for today in response to the question, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” (Luke 13:23). According to the Bible, the way of holiness is meant for those who are willing and able to abide by the standards laid down by God through His prophets. In contrast, those who do otherwise will not be able to pass over it. (Isaiah 35:8; Matthew 13:40-43). These standards by way of ordinances, judgments or instructions, make the way of salvation “strait”, a term which means that which is restricted, narrow, strict, difficult, etc, - meaning that it is not popular. – Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 26:9; John 3:19, 20.

Jesus Christ warned that we should “work hard to enter the narrow door to God's Kingdom” (Luke 13:24. New Living Translation). Though salvation is God's free gift yet, some level of work, commitment and righteousness are required to merit such favour from God. (Ephesians 2:8,9) Thankfully, God has promised to endow us with the strength to make i unto the end, “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” – Isaiah 40:29-31; Isaiah 26:2-4.

Let us therefore, endure and serve God faithfully till the end so as to be blessed with everlasting life in His Kingdom when fully established by His grace. – Matthew 24:12,13.

**COMMENTARY ON HEBREWS 11:32 - 40**

St. Paul, while rounding off his famous treatise on faith in his letter to the Hebrew Christians, highlighted the labours of the ancient faithful in the course of righteousness. They remained steadfast under the most trying conditions. Some were thrown into prison, some into the den of lions; they were beaten, mocked, bound, deprived of food, clothing and shelter, and lived as destitutes, even among their own people. They risked their lives; some were even killed in the most horrible manner rather than compromise the faith. “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, …obtained a good report through faith….” - Hebrews 11:32-40.

The instances in the Holy Bible where people of God suffered these persecutions are related hereunder to encourage the faithful in the race of salvation.

Friday, November 6, 2020

Text: “Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.” - Judges 16:23, 24.

Comment: Samson spent his life-time defending the people of God. Marriages between the Israelites and gentile peoples were not viewed with favour by God Almighty. Thus, when Samson decided to marry Delilah, a Philistine, the signs were already there that it would be a turbulent affair. After a number of failed attempts at discovering the source of his strength she at last succeeded. The lords of the Philistines did not delay in coming to cut off his hair and he became like an ordinary man. He was captured and became a slave to them. But as time went on his hair grew. On a day the Philistines came to make jest of Samson and to thank their god, Dagon, for delivering Samson into their hands, he prayed earnestly to God for strength to pull down the pillars of the house. Thus, Samson killed more people at death than in his life time. (Judges 16:18-30) Our Saviour declared: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” - Mark 8:35, 36.

Saturday, November 7, 2020

Text: “And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.” - 2 Chronicles 24:20, 21.

Comment:: After the death of Jehoiada the high priest, Joash the king and the princes of Judah forsook the way of God to serve idols. The text for today says that God moved Zechariah the priest to sharply rebuke the people for their trespasses. But instead of amending their ways, the king ordered that he be stoned to death. “Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it.” - 2 Chronicles 24:22.

That Zechariah was killed for condemning the king and the people highlights the dangers the faithful of old had to confront. Within that very year, a small company of the Syrians sacked the lands of Judah and Jerusalem, killed several people, seriously injured the king, after which his servants killed him on his bed. (2 Chronicles 24:23-25) It should be seen that anything that is wrong cannot last or endure. When people backslide from God, grievous punishments follow. The story also warns us not to repay good with evil as was done by Jehoash in killing Zechariah the priest who was the son of Jehoiada the Priest, whom God used to bring him to the throne. See 2 Chronicles 22:10-12; 23; Romans 15:4; Proverbs 11:19,21; Proverbs 17:13

Sunday, November 8, 2020

Text:“For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it.” - Jeremiah 32:3.

Comment: Because the king and people of Judah had given themselves to the worship of the devil, God Almighty used Jeremiah the prophet to warn them, telling them that if they would not repent, He would make Jerusalem and the temple they took pride in to suffer the fate of Shiloh, where the name of God was in earlier times before it was destroyed and abandoned. (Joshua 18:1; 19:51; 1Kings 14:2.) For warning the people against sin the leaders determined that Jeremiah must die. (Jeremiah 26:1-10) However, some of the elders, together with Ahikam, an officer of the king, intervened to prevent them from their wicked plot.

Again, when the Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem, Jeremiah was instructed by God to tell them to submit to their rule to avoid death and destruction. This was seen as treason for which the leaders of the people convinced King Zedekiah to cast Jeremiah into.a well. But God also delivered him. When we stand up for the truth, even in the face of danger, God will give us victory in the end. St. Paul in his writings recalled God delivered them “from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:10).. He added that God Almighty shall deliver him “from every evil work, and will preserve him unto his heavenly kingdom. - 2 Timothy 4:18

Monday, November 9, 2020

Text: “And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.” - 2 Kings 2:23-25.

Comment: Soon after the exit of Elijah, the people started seeing the manifestation of the power of God through Elisha. For instance, as he tarried in Jericho, the people complained to Elisha that the water in the area was not good. What did he do? “And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.” (2 Kings 2:21) And the waters were healed permanently. As he was proceeding to Bethel, a place where the ark was kept for several years, some children came out and started mocking him openly. It is worthy of note that after the kingdom was divided, the people of Bethel gave themselves to Baal worship and was thus renamed Beth-aven, i.e., "house of idols." Instead of Bethel, “House of God”. - Hosea. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5, 8; 1 Kings 12:28-33; 13:1.

For openly making mockery of the servant of God, Elisha cursed them in the name of the Almighty God, which is JEHOVAH and immediately two she-bears came out of the bush killed 42 of them. (Compare Genesis 12:3) The faithful would face mockery and even open humiliation in the service of God but God will vindicate Himself. They will be victorious in the end by His grace.- John 10:25; Matthew 10:25.

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

Text: “But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” - 2 Chronicles 36:16.

Comment: The citation for today echoes a familiar strain in the history of the Jews: that of stubbornness or disobedience to admonitions form the servants of God. God does not force people to worship Him. But He provides abundant evidence of His love for mankind on the basis of which all right-thinking people should what is right to do. Right from Eden, the devil had taught people to believe they would never really die but could “be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5) Thus, through force and deceit, the devil succeeded in drawing most of the Israelites to His side. But since God will not punish without giving sufficient warning, He continued to send His servants to preach to the people.. Instead of repenting in sack lot and ashes, they manhandled and mistreated the prophets until their cup was full and most of the people were either killed or carried into Babylonish captivity. (2 Chronicles 36:17-21) The travails of messengers of God is hereby brought into focus in the text for today as proof of their strong faith in their Maker. It shows that majority is not always right as far as spiritual matters are concerned. St. Paul asked: “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar…” - Romans 3:3, 4.

Wednesday, November 11, 2020

Text: “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;” - 2 Corinthians 11:23-25

Comment: St. Paul in the text for today mentions some of his ordeals in the work of God. Five times he was held down and flogged, though within the bounds allowed by the law. (forty stripes, Deuteronomy 25:3) After St. Paul had healed a man at Lystra, a multitude gathered to worship them, an act which Paul and Barnabas did not delay in correcting. While there the devil brought some trouble-makers from Antioch who mobilized people to stone Apostle Paul and left him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But God revived him and he departed to another city to continue the work. “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend” St. Paul. (2 Corinthians 11:32) At. Melita a viper bit him as he was warming himself in the fire but God delivered him. It is noteworthy that in spite of the challenges, St. Paul did not slacken his pace but continued with the word. ((Matthew 24:12,13) Again we must highlight the protection St. Paul received in the journeys he underwent as an example for the people of God. See Isaiah 43:2. St. Paul stated: “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” -1 Timothy 4:10.

Thursday, November 12, 2020

Text: “And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.” - Genesis 39:20.

Comment: After Joseph had been sold as a slave to Ishmaelite traders for 20 pieces of silver, he was bought by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, who, in course of time put him in charge of his house. The devil however moved the wife of Potiphar to seek to have an amorous relationship with Joseph. This he resisted because he knew it was not right in the sight of God. (Genesis 39:7-10) For standing up to the demands of the faith, Joseph was thrown into prison. He suffered for an offence he did not commit. (Compare 1 Peter 2:20-23) But as a writer said, the experiences provided Joseph with the “training which was necessary for the high office he was destined to fill, and in the school of adversity learn the lessons of practical wisdom that were to be of greatest utility and importance in his future career.”

Joseph did not doubt the providence of God; his faith in God was shaken. Eventually he came from prison to be second in command to the Pharaoh. Scripture says: “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.

Friday, November 13, 2020

Text: “Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people.” - 2 Chronicles 18:25-27.

Comment: Sequel to a visit by Jehoshaphat, Ahab the king of Israel begged him to join forces with him The false prophets he called told him what he wanted to hear: that he would win in field to fight a war against the people Ramothgilead. Nevertheless at the behest of the king of Judah, a true servant of God was consulted. It was then Micaiah the prophet came and told him that he would lose the battle and that the prophets he had around him had made false prophecies. In his zeal to please the king, Zedekiah the son of Chena smote Micaiah on the cheek. Ahab the king followed up by commanding that Micaiah be cast into prison under hard conditions. He even believed he would return in peace. But Ahab died from the wounds he had at that battle, though Jehoshaphat escaped death only by the grace of God. He was a man of faith. People of God must speak the truth at all times, no matter the circumstances. See 2 Chronicles 18:13. It is the devil's agents who lie with straight faces, without batting their eyelids because of money and position. Solomon warns: “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue Is a vapor driven to and fro by them that seek death. “- Proverbs 21:6, American Standard Version.

Saturday, November 14, 2020

Text: “Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.” - 2 Chronicles 16:10.

Comment: Asa the king of Judah presents a case-study of a man whose initial years as king was marked by diligence in the service of God but who later backslided and died as an enemy of God and His people. When he was besieged by a large Ethiopian army he relied on God and was delivered. (2 Chronicles 14) But when the people of Israel came against him in the 36th year of his reign, he sought help from the king of Syria. God then sent Hanani to chastise him for seeking the help of men, saying: “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.” (2 Chronicles 16:9) Instead of accepting the correction and amending his ways, the king threw the Hanani into prison and oppressed some of the people at the same time. Hanani suffered for righteousness sake. In course of time Asa fell sick. But he would not even seek the Lord but depended on physicians until he died. The Bible says: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” Hebrews 10:35-36.

Sunday, November 15, 2020

Text: “And Naboth said to Ahab, Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.” - 1 Kings 21:3, 4. American Standard Version.

Comment: The story of what happened when Naboth refused to let go of his father's vineyard shows the extent people could go in exercising their powers when they do not have the fear of God. Ahab had told Naboth to sell his vineyard to him or receive the equivalent in another place. Since the Bible says the land should not be sold forever, (Leviticus 25:23) Naboth refused to sell to the King what was his inheritance. While King Ahab sulked over the matter, Jezebel the wife did a strange thing in the land of Israel but certainly not unusual among people who relate with demons. She wrote letters in the King's name, used his stamp to seal it, that Naboth be put on trial. She got two equally unprincipled men to swear falsely that heard and saw him blaspheme God and the King. That was how Naboth was stoned to death under the pretence that he violated the law of God. (1 Kings 21:19,24-26) God used Elijah to declare God's judgment on Ahab and his house. Naboth died for sticking to the law of God, for which He would have life by God's grace. Ahab, Jezebel and all his sons died violently for their wickedness. See Psalm 7:15,16; Galatians 6:7; 2 Kings 9:22-27.

Monday, November 16, 2020

Text: “So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.” - 1 Samuel 21:6.

Comment: During the phase of his life when Saul the king was pursuing him from pillar to post, David, came to Nob to meet Ahimelech the high Priest. At David's request, the priest gave him the hallowed bread, which is meant for the priests, but which he said David and his men could eat if they had kept themselves clean. (See Leviticus 24:5-9) Since they met the condition, he gave them the bread. Incidentally, one of the servants of Saul, called Doeg, an Edomite, was there when this discussion took place. (1 Samuel 21:7) Later, while David was expressing frustration at his inability to arrest David, it was this Edomite that revealed that Ahimelech the priest had given bread and the sword of Goliath to David. Consequently, Saul summoned the high priest who did not deny what he did, adding for good measure that David was one of the faithful servants of the king and also his son- in- law. So angry was Saul that he commanded his soldiers to kill the priests. But they refused. It was Doeg the Edomite who carried out the order. He also slew everyone he could find in the city of Nob.

Having been over-reached by the devil, Saul was busy demonstrating the Devil's character by killing and destroying. Ahimelech demonstrated great faith by standing on the Lord's side even at the risk of death. He is an example to people of God today. See Mark 8:35,36; Acts 5:29; Galatians 1:10.

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Text: “And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite. Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.” - 2 Kings 1:7-9.

Comment: When Ahaziah the king of Israel fell down from his upper chamber, he sent messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron to find out if he would recover from his injuries. This was contrary to the law of God. (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 18:10-12) Consequently, God Almighty directed Elijah to meet the messengers of King Ahaziah and ask him why him he should seek help from Baal-zebub and not God Almighty. He was also to tell the messengers that the king would die from the sickness. (2 Kings 1:3-6) The message was passed. But the king's response showed gross arrogance rather than humility. Two captains leading 50 soldiers each came and spoke roughly to Elijah and were destroyed; but the officer leading the third band spoke humbly to Elijah, following which the angel of God asked him to follow them. But despite hearing directly from Elijah, the king did not show contrition and so died from his condition.

The lesson is that people of God should avoid interfaith, else their conditions would be worse. (Isaiah 8:19; Matthew 6:24) The story also shows the benefits of humbling oneself before God, even if one is following orders. Those who sin should take warning and repent thoroughly else they would die in their sins. – Ezekiel 18:30-32.

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Text: “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.” - 1 Kings 19:1, 2.

Comment: Following the famous contest at Mount Carmel in which God “answered by fire” and 450 prophets of Baal, the god of fire were killed, God Almighty vindicated Himself as the only One deserving of worship. Consequently, Jezebel sent word to Elijah that he would be put to death within 24 hours. Elijah had to run for his life and while he sat under a tree, “he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers”. (1 Kings 19:4) Though the devil and his agents continually persecute the servants of God, and create obstacles for them, yet God will always help them. God directed birds to be bringing food to Elijah. Jezebel, despite her control of the powers of state, besides her witchcraft, could not carry out her threats in that God protected Elijah. It was Jezebel who died in a disgraceful and very violent way. (2 Kings 9:30-37) The Bible says: “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken…the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” (Psalm 9:15, 16) “He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him…” - Ecclesiastes 10:8, 9.

Thursday, November 19, 2020

Text: “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?” – Job 3:20-22.

Comment: Job's humanity told on him in the face of his fiery trial, as in the citation for today, in that he felt that death was better than the sickly, miserable life he was living. This followed the loss of his children and wealth – in a day. Even his wife had abandoned him. It should be pointed out that, on realizing that he had lost everything, Job worshipped God, showing that his trust was not in his possessions but in God Almighty. (Job 1: 21) The devil's thinking that Job would “curse God and die” did not materialize by the grace of God. Rather, Job was victorious in the end by God's grace. The account of Job has been recorded for our learning, to teach us patience and to give us comfort. As St. Paul said “the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world”. (1 Peter 5:9) Writing on the lessons from the story of Job, Apostle James states: “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.

Friday, November 20, 2020

Text: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” - Hebrews 10:35, 36.

Comment: Bible understanding shows that those who shrink back from the battle between good and evil will not get life. It is those who persevere by virtue of their faith in God that will be helped by Him and saved in the end. (Matthew 24:12, 13) It is to encourage true worshippers that several examples are recorded of men and women who remained undaunted even under harder conditions than we face today. St. Paul says: “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) He also wrote: “And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection…” (Hebrews 11:32-38) The recipe we should follow is to be “rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing stedfastly in prayer”. - Romans 12:12

**The Vice of Slander**

According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary, slander is the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation Encarta Encyclopedia says slander is the use of the spoken word to injure another's reputation, as distinguished from libel or written defamation. Statements considered slanderous include calling an individual a forger or murderer; saying that an individual is suffering from an offensive disease, such as leprosy or syphilis; or calling a doctor a quack. Some use false representations of situations and persons to supplant the upright and to get the favour of those in authority.

It is uncharitable and wicked to make a false accusation against someone in order to put him into trouble or present him in a bad light before people. Those who spread injurious accusations knowing it to be false or without hearing the side of the accused person is just as guilty before God. People of God must avoid the vice of slander. One who is in authority should not tolerate those who slanderer people before them, just to supplant them and secure positions for themselves and their children or cronies, else else various vices will take root among those under him and his administration would be in peril. “If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.” (Proverbs 29:12) It is important to examine the problem of slander in the light of the Scriptures.

Saturday, November 21, 2020

Text: “Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. …Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.” - Psalms 50:17-20.

Comment: A slanderer is one who utters false or malicious statement, tale or report designed to injure the reputation of another person. In Biblical terms a slanderer is a false accuser. The law of God is that “Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” (Exodus 20: 16) The fact is that some people take pleasure in deliberately misrepresenting other people. For instance when King David fled from his son Absalom who had raised an army to overthrow him, Ziba his Caregiver, met the king on the way and told him that his master had stayed back at Jerusalem because he hoped that the kingdom would be restored to him. Annoyed, King David had directed that Ziba should inherit Saul's property. It was when the king returned to Jerusalem and saw Mephibosheth himself that he found out that it was Ziba who failed to facilitate his master's movement. What Ziba told the king therefore was a lie, a slander, meant to present a bad picture of Mephibosheth to King David. - 2 Samuel 19:24-30.

People have had their homes broken, some have lost their jobs and others killed because of false accusations “Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.” - Psalm 101:5.

Sunday, November 22, 2020

Text: “Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.” - Exodus 23:1, 2.

Comment: Many people are tale-bearers, backbiters and busybodies in other men's matters. They have a habit of poking their noses into people's private affairs with a view to telling tales. There are some whose tendency is always to exaggerate rumours that are already false. If they receive or hear a report against some other person they do not want to hear the version of the person who is accused before they give their own verdict or set on the devil's work of spreading such false matters. St. Paul wrote: “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.” ( 2Thessalonians 3:11) “And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.” - 1Timothy 5:13.

In the course of their shifty lifestyles, these characters spread injurious accusation knowing it to be false, without hearing from the accused person. “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.' - Proverbs 18: 13.

The faithful should always pray God to help them not to be backbiters and tale-bearers knowing that is not only those who directly commit an offence that are guilty before God but those who condone or take pleasure in the offence.—Romans 1: 32.

Monday, November 23, 2020

Text: “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” - Matthew 12:35-37.

Comment: Slander carries with it other vices such as whispering, evil surmising and so forth. To surmise is to conclude that something is true on the basis of only limited evidence or information. It is mere guess work. And some of those who indulge in these things call themselves Christians. See Luke 6:46. The words in the text for today were stated by our Lord Jesus Christ in reaction to the blasphemies of the religious leaders of his time in regard to the source of his powers. It was because they did not have faith in what our Saviour was doing that they were making blasphemous statements. “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” (Matthew 7:16, 17) Thus, except such slanderers repent, they shall bear their own judgment.

It is because of evil heart condition that people wish other people evil and go on to spread damaging stories about them. See Proverbs 17: 5; Proverbs 24:17, 18. Nobody is free from trouble in this world of sin. No one should therefore rejoice that someone else is facing difficulties. No one should make himself an enemy of another person, when such ones had done them no wrong. “An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.” - Proverbs 11:9

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

Text: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” - Matthew 5:10-12.

Comment: In one of the exhortations in the Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour charged his disciples not to be daunted or dismayed by the fierceness of the opposition by opposers of truth and righteousness as expressed in slanderous, abusive but false statements made against them. The Lord also bore the weight of such intense persecutions arising from envy and the devil's vile influence. Hence he stated: “…If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?”- Matthew 10:25.

No matter how one tries to be discreet, slanderers will find excuse to gossip and misrepresent their neighbor. It has been said that “Innocence itself cannot secure a man's reputation. Not every one that keeps a good conscience can keep a good name.”

Our Saviour told the natural Jews: “For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! “ (Luke 7:33, 34) Believers should have faith in the exhortation by St. Peter to wit: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” – 1 Peter 4:14.

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

Text: “Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.” - Isaiah 33:1.

Comment: God Almighty has long ago pronounced woe on those whose stock-in-trade is to malign others. The point that must be brought home to those who take pleasure in slandering their neighbours is that they are putting themselves in danger of God's judgment. See Psalm 50: 19-22.

A number of times when women lose their husbands, some people accuse the widows of being responsible for the death of the men. Some go to the extent of harassing the women on the basis of mere suspicion - at a time when their hearts are heavy in sorrow and when they deserve sympathy the most. To maltreat a widow is a sin. (Exodus 22: 22-24) Experience has shown that some who are loudest in calling others witches, are the very witches themselves. We must point out however that witchcraft is a sin, and everyone involved in the practice who does not repent cannot escape God's vengeance. (Deuteronomy 18: 10-13; Revelation 21: 8) The end of witches is never blessed—but marked with anguish and ignominy. However, no one should take the law into his hands or defame the character of another on mere suspicion. The Bible exhorts: “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." - Romans 12:19 Revised Standard Version.

Thursday, November 26, 2020

Text: “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” - Proverbs 10:18, 19.

Comment: Some people sail under false colours, presenting a friendly attitude outwardly but inwardly nursing evil against them. Such ones take pride in their ability to hide “hatred with lying lips”. That is no virtue but a vice and those given to it should repent to be children of God indeed. King David stated: “Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts....” (Psalm 28:3-5) Those who slander their neighbours or carry false tales to cast aspersions on them do a lot of havoc in society. David suffered a lot from these misrepresentations, especially when he was being pursued from pillar to post by King Saul.

 St. Paul said some people were spreading the lie (and were affirming they heard him say) “Let us do evil, that good may come” ! He asserted that such statements were slanderous and that the purveyors of such lies deserve damnation. (Romans 3:8) We should avoid slander and practice the truth so as to be saved. We pray God to help us withstand slander and not to do so ourselves, directly or indirectly. “An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.” - Proverbs 11:9. See also Psalm 50:16-23.

Friday, November 27, 2020

Text: “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.” - 1 Timothy 3: 8, 11.

Comment: It is because those who hold positions of responsibility in the Church should be those who are careful in the way they use their tongues that St. Paul laid it down as a rule that those to be appointed deacons should not be “double-tongued” - those who say different things to people on the same issue; people who are hypocrites and outright liars. He also warned that the wives of deacons must not be slanderers as they should serve as good example to others. He also charged the older women, who are entrusted with the duty of teaching the young ones, not to be false accusers. – Titus 2:3-5.

We should recall that it was the unsupportive attitude of Michal to the work of King David, by way of derogatory language, as the ark was being returned to Jerusalem, that made her remain isolated and childless (for King David), until her death. (2 Samuel 6:20-23) If Saphira had helped Ananias, her husband, by advising him against lying in regard to the proceeds from the land they sold, they would not have died untimely. - Acts 5:1-11.

It could be seen that wives play important roles in ensuring that their husbands succeed in their careers by being of good behavior. Indeed, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.” - Proverbs 14:1.

Saturday, November 28, 2020

Text: “And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.” - Genesis 39:13-15.

Comment: Because the devil will always find a way to bring down the faithful, he moved the wife of Potiphar to seek to lie with Joseph. No wife should betray her marital vows regardless of whether the man involved, like Joseph is “a goodly person, and well favoured”.

Joseph politely turned down her advances, knowing the consequences spiritually and otherwise. The woman, unfortunately was a selfish and short-sighted person whose concern was not about present or future consequences but the satisfaction of present pleasures. Since he would not accede to her requests through persuasion, she decided to force him. Joseph did what she least expected by abandoning his garment for her and running out of the room. Angry at being rejected, she called the young men in the house and told them the opposite of what happened. The accusation was of course completely false. It undid all the good that Joseph had done for which he was made overseer of the house. In anger, the master threw him into prison. (Genesis 39:1-23)Though the devil meant evil, God used the imprisonment to make Joseph, in due time, the second in command to the Pharaoh. We should stand firm on the side of truth for every lie will eventually fail. See Psalm 109:28; Job 8:20.

Sunday, November 29, 2020

Text: “And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.” – 1 Kings 21:2, 3.

Comment: Displeased that Naboth would not let him have the vineyard he requested, Ahab, the King of Israel could not eat. This was despite the fact that Naboth's refusal was based on the law of God. (Leviticus 25:23) The wife noticed it and assured him he would have what he wanted. The woman was so devilish that she wrote letters in the king's name and seal, directing the elders and the nobles in Naboth's hometown (Jezreel) to get the required minimum number of witnesses, “two men, children of Belial” to say they saw and heard Naboth blaspheme God and the King. Jezebel was not a worshipper of God but being an agent of the devil, she gave people the false impression that what she did was according to the law. Consequently, Naboth died because of a false charge. Feeling victorious, Jezebel invited Ahab to take possession of the vineyard “for Naboth is not alive, but dead”. (1 Kings 39:15,16) We should pray, like King David that God would prevent us from presumptuous sins. Actions do have consequences. God instructed Elijah to meet Ahab and hand down His judgment, the summary of which was that he and his wife would die violently and shamefully and that the dynasty of Ahab would be wiped out. “…In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” - 1 Kings 21:17-24.

Monday, November 30, 2020

Text: “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.” - James 4: 11.

Comment: Generally, all Christians are admonished not to speak evil of one another. What Apostle James is saying in the text for today is that some people who do not keep the law themselves, have the bad character of finding fault in others who are doing their best in God's service. When one is condemning adherence to the law of God or active support for the work of God, it is the commandment of God one is judging or condemning. The laws of God are for man to obey; not for human beings to find fault with them. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? “ - Romans 9:20.

Slander is an evidence of lack of Christian love, meaning that if we put into practice the love of God, we would not slander others. “…and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to hi neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law,” - Romans 13: 9, 10.

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

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

Comment: This statement by our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that we should not deliberately use words that will provoke, undermine or humiliate innocent people. “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” (Proverbs 26:22) People cannot just say anything they like against God, His work and get away with it. Even when one is angry he should exercise restraint and be careful in regard to the words he uses. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” - Ephesians 4:29.

This by no means rules out the principle of righteous judgment by which evil is condemned. (John 7: 24; 1 Timothy 5: 20) The condemnation or exposition of evil, provided it is based on truth, is justified. What the Bible warns against are evil-speaking or slander and similar evils. Whoever has been slandering his neighbour should repent in order to obtain divine mercy otherwise in God's judgment he stands condemned. – Proverbs 18:21

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

Text: “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” - Revelation 12:10.

Comment: The name devil from the Greek word diabolos, means “a slanderer or false accuser”. In the text for today he is called "the accuser of our brethren" (that is of the true servants of God on earth). Smith's Bible Commentary says that Satan slanders “God to man and man to God”. This is true. For instance, in Job 1:6 it is written that “the fire of God” fell from heaven, and burnt up the sheep, and the servants. Of course it was the devil that caused the fire to come from the sky, which made people believe it was from God. The devil has also boasted that no one can remain faithful to God under adversity. He brought afflictions on Job so that he would sin against God and be punished. - Job 2:3, 4.

Many people today are afflicted by demons and by chronic ailments. The devil created these situations to make the people feel their problems are from God. In the days of our Saviour on earth and in the time of the prophets and apostles a number of such people were healed to show that the devil is the cause of their troubles. (Mark 5:2-13; Luke 9:38-42; Matthew 11:4, 5) Believers should pray to stand firm on the side of God and thereby prove the devil a liar. – Hebrew 6:4-6; Ephesians 6:10-17.

Thursday, December 3, 2020

Text: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” - 2 Corinthians 11:3.

Comment: In his conversation with Eve, the devil misrepresented both the letter and the spirit of the commandment God gave to Adam. Eve had told devil that they had been commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, or even touch it, lest they die. But the devil told her they would not surely die but that by eating it, their eyes would be opened and they shall be as gods “knowing good and evil”. This is a blatant lie. Again, the devil said that if the couple ate the fruit they would become superhuman, having more knowledge than God had permitted them. But God increases human knowledge in stages.

The Garden of Eden was the part of the earth that had been prepared for man's habitation then. The devil knew this but misrepresented God as if He did not want man to have certain aspects of knowledge. However, the couple ate the fruit and lost the perfect conditions in the Garden. They were driven into the harsh conditions outside the Garden. After some time they died, contrary to what the devil had said. (Genesis 3:1-19; 5:5) Believers should be knowledgeable to be able to stand up to the devil's devices. – 2 Corinthians 2:11; Psalm 91:4.

Friday, December 4, 2020

Text: “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” - 2 Timothy 2:17-19.

Comment: Whoever makes a false accusation against his fellow man in order to get him involved in trouble or to put him in a bad light before others is very uncharitable and wicked. The royal law according to the Scriptures demands that “as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise”. (Luke 6:31) At the time of Apostle Paul, some people spread the lie that he and his colleagues preached that the resurrection had already taken place. The apostle of Christ said such falsehoods corrupt one's spiritual life and could lead to destruction. Compare Matthew 15:12-14; Isaiah 9:16.

Also in those days, some of the Jews stirred up the people by bringing up false witnesses to say that what Apostle Stephen was preaching amounted to changing the law of Moses. For these accusations he was dragged before the Sanhedrin, (the supreme council of the Jewish people) and from his defence they picked up other reasons to stone him to death.

Zacchaeus, the penitent tax collector openly told our Saviour he would restore fourfold whatever he took from people by false accusation.. (Luke 19:8) Those who pay heed to the stern warn warning to depart from iniquity for the fact that they are Christians will have life everlasting in that the Kingdom of God once established, stands for ever. - Isaiah 2:2; John 5:24; 6:47.

**CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE**

According to The Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia, “culture” is the “way of life of a society, without implication of refinement or advanced knowledge”. And The American Peoples Encyclopedia defines it as “The total round of human activities, not due to heredity, shared by members of a group”. Because it is founded by God Almighty, Christianity cannot be compared with the culture, customs or traditions of any people on earth. It is unfortunate therefore to observe that many people in the world including professed Christians do not hesitate to descend from the lofty standards laid down in the Holy Bible to follow the devil's devices as well as human constructs or imaginations in order to be acceptable socially. The fact is that any culture that conflicts with the tenets of Christianity should be done away with in this age of enlightenment. - 2 Corinthians 6:14,15, 17, 18.

Saturday, December 5, 2020

Text: “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” - Matthew 15:2, 3.

Comment: During his days on earth, the Scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem sought to know from our Lord Jesus Christ why he was not observing the tradition of the elders. This tradition is explained in Mark 7:3, 4, thus, “For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.” What this event highlights is that people, over time, do create various traditions which they then pass from generation to generation. Sometimes an ethnic group copies the customs of their neighbours or have such traditions gradually infused into their ways of life through marriage, and various forms of social, economic and diplomatic relations. But as our Lord said in the citation for today, people should not break the laws of God in the name of observing tradition. The laws of God give people dignity, peace and prosperity by His grace. (Deuteronomy 4:6-8) It is well known that some people still keep to certain traditions when it has become outdated and no longer meaningful. People of God are enlightened and should not be led by the nose. – Acts 17:30, 31; Isaiah 60:1.

Sunday, December 6, 2020

Text: “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” - Deuteronomy 7:6.

Comment: God Almighty created the nation of Israel from one man, Abraham, for the purpose of using them to transmit His laws as well as examples of right conduct to mankind. He told Abraham: “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis 12: 3) This promise was repeated by the leader of the angels who went to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and by the angel who spoke on behalf of God after Abraham had passed the test of faith by offering his only son as sacrifice to God. (Genesis 18:17, 18; 22:16-18).

Most of the laws God gave to His people, as stated in the Ten Commandments and other laws, have become the standard for nations of the world. For instance, the law of circumcision which God gave to Abraham was held sacred by the Israelites across their generations. This has been copied by nations of the world who accepted circumcision in view of its health benefits. However, before the knowledge of God got to people in far-flung parts of the world, they had been observing aspects of the law of God since man was created with the basic understanding of right and wrong. It is by maintaining our peculiarity as Christians that we have “riches, honour and life”. – Proverbs 22:4; 1 Peter 2:9

Monday, December 7, 2020

Text: “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.” - Psalm 115:4-7.

Comment: Due to the influence of the devil and the preference of human beings to do their own will, many people, in course of time abandoned the true, plain and simple worship of their Creator to worship idols, the work of their hands. They started worshipping the heavenly bodies, human beings, demons, and even creatures such as snakes, crocodiles, cattle, trees and so on. The worship involves pouring of libations, and making of sacrifices which they deposit at road junctions, graveyards, beaches and so on. St. Paul charged us thus: “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” - 1 Corinthians 10:20.

These perversions people follow require them to keep laws that are strange and contrary to human nature and make it compulsory that they bow down to human beings like themselves. See Isaiah 45:23.

Indeed, ignorance has reduced man into making “an ass of himself”. We should pray not to be inclined to any evil thing. The truth is that the devil has right from Garden of Eden spread the lie that human beings could be superhuman and all-wise and therefore in no need of their Creator. (Genesis 3:1-6) Yes, well did the Psalmist say: “Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beast that perish.”—Psalm 49: 12, 20.

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Text: “Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;” - Jeremiah 18:15

Comment: Though the devil exploits human weaknesses to lead them into error, God Almighty in His mercies still sends His word to people so that they would not remain in error. “Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted …Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them…” (Psalm 107:17-20) The vanities, peoples of the world give themselves to, lead to instability, violence, wars and spiritual backwardness. Speaking through Jeremiah the prophet, God Almighty stated: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” - Jeremiah 2:13.

Unfortunately, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, so many people, in their quest for power, money, protection and so on, have gone back to ancient rituals and cults which their forefathers abandoned. As a result, there are intensive membership drives to draw as many people as possible into various groups. The verse that follows the text for today says that because they had turned full circle into idolatry, the land would become “desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head”. (Jeremiah 18:16) We should courageously keep to the faith and quit ourselves as men. – 1 Corinthians 16:13.

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Text: “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” - Acts 14:17.

Comment: When Paul and Barnabas, both of them apostles, (Acts 14:14), travelled to Lystra, a town in Asia Minor, God used him to heal a man who was impotent in his feet from birth. The amazing thing was that the man did not learn to walk but stood upright on his feet and leaped and walked. (Acts 14:8-10) Astonished, the people declared: “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” And they moved to do sacrifices to them. When the apostles heard this, they ran to them to correct them as stated in the text for today. What is clear from what the apostles said is that a significant part of what is called “culture” among the nations, are basically what they have to do with the worship of ancestors, demons and idols. Hence, the tradition of second burial ceremonies and the ceremonies for seedtime and harvest, fishing and hunting, birth, marriage and death to invoke the pleasure of the gods and success in the undertaking.

We should pay heed to the words of the apostles that God Almighty “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” but now demands that people should “turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein”. - Acts 14:8-16.

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Text: “And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.” - Mark 12:17.

Comment: During Christ's ministry on earth, certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, asked him if it was lawful to pay tax to Caeser. Clearly, the Jewish leaders were setting a trap to ensnare Jesus Christ. If he says, no, they would arraign him before the Roman governor, as teaching sedition. On the other hand, if he says, yes, they would say, he is supporting the Roman government. Instead, he asked them whose was the image and name on the coin, and they said “Caesar”. Taxation is the means by which government raises money to address various issues facing the society, especially that of improving human welfare, to enable them keep order, carry out development projects and improve human wellbeing. Until God's Kingdom takes over the affairs of the whole world, Christians will continue to give such support. But where the laws of human governments conflict with that of God, the divine law supersedes.

We should recall that after the leaders of the Jews had told the apostles “…Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us”, Peter and the other apostles replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:28, 29) We should not give to Caeser the honour that belongs to God. – Daniel 3:24-28; Isaiah 45:22, 23.

Friday, December 11, 2020

Text: “Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain…” - Jeremiah 10:2, 3.

Comment: The above text is a stern warning to the people of God to avoid compromising their faith by copying heathenish customs and traditions just to please men and because of promises of protection, money and power? Are some people in this digital age not still secretly worshipping idols and sneaking out in the dead of the night for secret meetings inside shady places? The warning from God Almighty in the text for today which harps on the vanity of idol worship continues thus: “for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also it is in them to do good.” (Jeremiah 10: 2-5) Those who worship God should serve Him in sincerity and truth. Our Saviour stated: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” - Matthew 6:24.

Saturday, December 12, 2020

Text: “Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God.” - Leviticus 18:30.

Comment: Professed Christians, should not, in the name of maintaining their cultural heritage, involve themselves in ancestor worship, and observe rituals for various gods. It is common knowledge that some persons spend large amounts of money, sometimes even tax payers' money, for rituals to get appointments, protect themselves while in office and to secure their positions.

The Bible says that Manasseh, king of Judah, did “worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” in that he worshipped “all the host of heaven, caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards”. He even placed an idol in the house of God in Jerusalem.

The good thing was that when God Almighty chastised him by allowing him to be carried captive by the king of Assyria, he humbled himself, seeing that the gods he trusted could not help him in any way. For the rest of his life he served God diligently. (2 Chronicles 33:1-20) Those still given to idolatry and spiritism should learn from the example of King Manasseh and turn to God now before it is too late. See Ezekiel 18:14-18, 21-32.

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Text: “So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.” - 2 Kings 17:41.

Comment: The text for the day refers to what was happening in the land of Israel when the Assyrians deported the Jews from Judah and brought people they had conquered from other nations to stay in the land. This was a punishment from God in that the Jews “left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.” (2 Kings 17:16, 17) However, when lions started attacking these strangers in the land of Judah, they sought to know how the God of the land should be served. The Jews had to send a priest to teach them how to serve the true God. Unfortunately, instead of serving God Almighty wholeheartedly, they mixed the worship of God with the worship of their own gods. Herein lies the low regard which the Jews had for the descendants of these strangers, called the Samaritans. This is the point in the text for today. We should not dilute our faith by indulging in mixed worship. – See Deuteronomy 10:12; 1 Kings 18:21.

Monday, December 14, 2020

Text: “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” - 1 Corinthians 10:14-17.

Comment: There are times when some believers face chronic ailments for which they are told their chances of recovery are slim; some are desperate to have the fruit of the womb; some feel they are being attacked spiritually and so must seek ways of defending themselves. But miraculously they recovered and lived on to old age by the power of God - without resorting to idolatry. A Christian should not join or take part in pagan activities as this is a sin to the core. To the Christians in Galatia, St. Paul wrote: “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you…” – Galatians 4: 8-11.

If there is anything of pride or rather glory, which any country or people should present to the world, it is not, definitely NOT, her strength in idol worship, or display of demonic masquerades; obviously, it is not the parade of scantily clad men and women. Scripture says: “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” - Proverbs 14:34.

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Text: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” - Acts 17:30, 31.

Comment: Things that are indecent and even abominable in various cultures should be treated as things of the past. The forebears of various nationalities relished in those things because of gross ignorance of God's purpose in those days. When St. Paul travelled to Athens he found that the city was wholly given to idolatry. He knew they were doing so in ignorance. He had to preach to them about the Creator of the world, that he does not dwell in temples made with hands and does not need offerings of sacrifices, He told them God had made people in all nations of the earth to worship Him, “though he be not far from every one of us”. - Acts 17:27.

Now that the light has come true Christians should maintain clean worship. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” - 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

Text: “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” - Romans 2:14.

Comment: We should be able to discern and discriminate as to choose what in the people's culture are noble, decent and of merit socially, morally and intellectually. There are certainly aspects of African culture that can be projected with dignity and honour, and used in Christian worship. Our songs, dances and modes of dressing should be aimed at giving glory to God Almighty and not the devil. Before man fell, Adam knew what was good in the sight of God. Even when Eve brought the fruit along with the lies from the devil, Adam was not deceived. But as time went on and human beings increased on the earth, mankind, under the influence of the devil, evolved ungodly customs. “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator…” - Romans 1:23, 25.

We should mark the words of St. Paul: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” - Philippians 4:8.

Thursday, December 17, 2020

Text: “Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? that ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood; ye that rejoice in a thing of nought, that say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?” - Amos 6:12-13, American Standard Version.

Comment: The citation for today highlights the fact that it is a useless, wasteful and hurtful exercise for horses to be running upon rocks or for one to try to use oxen to plough on rocky terrain. When instead of justice and righteousness, one gets the opposite, then the result would be as dangerous as poison. When things are upside down, the society will suffer. This is the situation the cultures of several societies have put them. Practices such as female circumcision, drinking of human blood, subjection of widows to strange practices and so on are unchristian. It is strange also that some cultures still reject twins by abandoning them to die, while in other places they are put up for adoption. In several societies, people depend on sorcerers to tell them the future or solve problems they may have. All these are contrary to the Bible. (Leviticus 17:10; Genesis 17:10-14; Exodus 22:22-24) No true Christian will have anything to do with such aspects of the people's culture. Now that the light of Christ is shining people should “turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” - Acts 14:15, 16.

Friday, December 18, 2020

Text: “Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” - Romans 3:29-31.

Comment: The idea that Christianity is the “white-man's religion' or a part of Western civilization is very wrong indeed. This is the ignorance of our people. The European or American has no right whatsoever to lay claim to Christianity more than the African. The fact that the Europeans came in contact with the gospel earlier and had the advantage of first being in possession of copies of the Holy Bible does not in any way place them in a position of superiority over Africans in God's order of things. Africa is favourably mentioned in several incidents in the Bible. Joseph was next in command to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt and God used him to save Jacob and his children, and the people of Egypt people alive in the seven years of famine. The Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years. (Exodus 12:40,41) It was to Egypt, Joseph was asked to take the young child Jesus before Herod started his massacre of the innocent children. Christianity is for all in the world, irrespective of nationality, race or colour. (Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 1: 6-8; Galatians 3: 13-16. St. Peter stated: “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” - Acts 10: 34, 35.

Saturday, December 19, 2020

Text: “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” - Acts 13:46, 47.

Comment: Christianity aims at directing all men to the clean worship of the Almighty Creator through the only Mediator, Christ Jesus. This of course involves retaining those aspects of their traditions and cultures that are in harmony with the will of God in the Holy Bible. It was the stubbornness of the Jews and their failure to understand and appreciate this divine purpose of Christ's mission on earth that led to their rejection of Christianity to their own grief and ruin. And their suffering even up till now cannot be separated from their attitude of treating the grace of God with contempt. - John 1:10, 11; Matthew 23: 37-39.

And so today, a person of any nationality who accepts Jesus Christ and worships God in truth stands a better position to enjoy the favour of God than a Jew who is an agnostic or a non-Christian. In true Christianity, there is no room for discrimination or racial segregation. - Galatians 3:27, 28.

Any nation that will not serve God through Christ will be detaching itself from being part of God's Kingdom fully established under the kingship of Jesus Christ. “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” - Acts 3:23. See also Isaiah 60: 12; Jeremiah 10: 10, 11: Revelation 14: 6, 7.

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

INTRODUCTION

Planning for the future simply connotes that we look forward to a better place, situation, condition or statues for ourselves. The future signifies hope and hence the need to make plans for it. There is a popular say that “he who fails to plan; plans to fail” which opines to the fact that everybody should endeavor to plan.

A better life both in this world and in the world to come is inherently what every human being desire. To plan for the future in whichever way, we must lean on God and follow His rules as enshrined in the Holy Bible. The Psalmist described it as “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:105) So whatever plans we have for the future, the word of God will show us the right path to follow.

Sunday, December 20, 2020

Text: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” - Philippians 2:12,13.

Comment: Planning for the future is a holistic endeavour and should primarily include conscious efforts to gain eternal life in God's Kingdom when fully established. God Almighty made a promise of a perfect system of things to replace the old order that was polluted at the instance of the enemy Satan the devil. - Isaiah 65:17, compare 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1-4 etc.

Salvation which is the target of every believer is the ultimate reward from God Almighty to anyone who continues in the race of salvation abiding to the set rules till the end. See Romans 6:23, 1 Peter 1:9,10, Psalm 3:8; 68:20 etc. It is in this vein, that St Paul, writing to the Philippian Christians enjoined them to continue in the true faith and practice of righteousness, obeying God's instructions even in his absence, thereby working out their own salvation “with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12) Gaining eternal life or salvation requires conscious effort in planning one's life to make positive sacrifice in the service of God and humanity. It entails overcoming distractions, trials and temptations, while worshipping God in truth unto the end. Jesus Christ stated: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.” - Matthew 24:12,13

Monday, December 21, 2020

Text: “Prepare thy work without and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterward build thine house.” - Proverbs 24:27.

Comment: The Bible tells us that “…wisdom is profitable to direct.” (Ecclesiastes10:10) This point is buttressed by the text for today. Solomon, the richest and wisest king in Israel is simply telling us two things in the text; firstly, to have a plan and secondly to do first things first. It is the wisdom of God that will direct us in the plans we make for the future. - James 1:5.

We are enjoined in the text under reference to avoid running into spending on pleasures immediately money comes our way. Although such pleasures may not be sinful, we need to first work to ensure the continuity of the sources of the funding. A farmer does not go into sowing or scattering seeds without first tilling the ground or else, the seeds may not germinate or may not do well. Success in any project in life follows the same natural law of prioritizing and taking time to do the first thing first.

When given money or grants, we should prayerfully engage in lawful, legal and profitable ventures that can increase or sustain their desired projects, and not rush into starting a building, buying expensive cars etc. In some cases, the money gets exhausted without completing the work we decided to do first. Such are the persons our Saviour referred to that started building a house without first taking stock of their resources to ascertain if what they had can complete the building. - Luke 14:28-30.

Tuesday, December 22, 2020

Text: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” - Hebrews 12:28.

Comment: God Almighty, the creator and possessor of the universe has promised His children of an everlasting kingdom free of pains, sorrows, death, oppression, injustice or any form of unrighteousness. It is such a perfect and peaceful kingdom that even among the beasts, there will be peace and harmony. (Isaiah11:6-9) The Kingdom of God is a place where all the yearnings and needs of mankind will be provided. Haggai the Prophet referred to the Kingdom as “the desire of all nations”. - Haggai 2:7.

The promise of God in granting mankind the opportunity of enjoying everlasting life in this Kingdom is sure. But to be granted the grace to enjoy these blissful promise, we must work for it by living a life that is worthy of the grace of God. (Philippians 2:12). We must obey the rules as enshrined in the Holy Bible – the road map to success in this present world and life everlasting in God's kingdom fully established. (Joshua 1:8, 2 Timothy 3:16 etc) It is therefore expected of every Christian who desire to inherit the Kingdom to remain focused. The person must have a game plan or sequence of actions to enable him or her run the race of salvation till the end and be fervent in prayers to God to help him actualize it. - Matthew 24:12,13.

Wednesday, December 23, 2020

Text: “And the LORD answered me, and said, write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. - Habakkuk 2:2.

Comment: It is a good thing to keep a journal or note book when setting one's goals or plans for the future. Keeping your goals listed somewhere visible is of great advantage. Seeing one's targets or plans everyday will serve as constant reminders and steer the person away from distractions.

In the Holy Bible, God Almighty often instruct His prophets to put in writing revelations and visions for future reference and for study purposes. (Deuteronomy 27:8, Isaiah 8:1, Jeremiah 30:2 etc.) He advised Joshua to meditate on what is written in the Book law day and night, when He said: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success. - Joshua 1:8.

In the text of today, Habakkuk was instructed concerning his vision to 'write the vision and make it plain upon tables' (Habakkuk 2:2). Good plans for the future should not be ambiguous, the stages or steps to follow should be clear. When goals are penned down it becomes easier to keep track of your progress. You feel encouraged to do more when you can see how much progress you have made. “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” - Proverbs 14:23.

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Text: “A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.” - Proverbs 16:9.

Comment: It is natural for human beings to make plans for a day, weeks, months, and years to come. Most times these are well thought-out plans, steps, road maps, strategies etc, aimed at achieving set goals at set times. But we should know that all plans and strategies will amount to nothing without the direction of God Almighty. Apostle Paul exhorts Christians – 2 Corinthians 3:5.

The effect of COVID 19 on the plans of the nations, companies and individuals attests to the fact that human plans outside God is nothing. Although the pandemic was at the instance of the devil, but it reminds the whole world that we need God in whatever we plan or do in life. Unexpectedly, the pandemic caused the entire world to be locked down. Businesses world over closed, nations budgets automatically changed, social activities stopped and life style changed worldwide with social distancing becoming a way to curb the corona virus. The Bible says, “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”. - Romans 9:16. See also Proverbs 3:5-6, Joshua 1:9

Friday, December 25, 2020

Text: “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” - Proverbs 4:7.

Comment: Wisdom is the baseline for a successful planning. The quality of wisdom at work in any human activity or organization determines the quality of result derivable. The quality of wisdom applied determines the result expected. It is wisdom that makes stars in any field of endeavor. In making a good plan for the future, an accurate and deep understanding of the desired result is vital. The knowledge of the expected goal will serve as the road map for an effective planning. Wisdom, says King Solomon, “is profitable to direct”. - Ecclesiastes.10:10.

The need therefore to seek proper knowledge of what we are to do cannot be overstressed. One can access the required knowledge or information through reading, consulting people who have done the same thing in the past or are in that line of business, part time studying, apprenticeship etc. It is important to note that, we should at all times depend on God Almighty the giver of all good gifts for the gift of sound wisdom. Sound wisdom can be received from God through prayers to him” If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him”. James 1:5.

Saturday December 26, 2020

Text: “Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land.” - Genesis 41:29-30.

Comment: Today's text is the interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh the King of Egypt by Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob, who was sold to slavery by his brothers. The advice of Joseph to Pharaoh on how to overcome the problem that would face Egypt underlines the need to plan at the time of abundance against the rainy days or periods of lack. This recommendation by Joseph, a prisoner who was later set free and elevated to a position next to Pharaoh in Egypt, (Genesis 41:28-44) has become a guide to the world in planning for the future. Nations now have food reserves, energy reserves, currency reserves and others for future use. Wise people also learn from the wisdom by saving little by little when they are working to re-invest or take care of possible periods of scarcity.

Applying God given skill and wisdom, Joseph successfully brought Egypt through agricultural period of lack. During the seven years of abundance, Joseph developed a stockpiling system to store the grains for use during the coming drought. When the seven years of drought came, he opened the store house and provided enough food to bring the nation through the famine.” - Genesis 41:57.

 Sunday, December 27, 2020

Text: “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.” - Proverbs 21:5.

Comment: A diligent man or woman according to the Longman Dictionary is “someone who works hard and is careful and thorough”. Because he wants to be careful, a diligent person takes time to plan his or her works or activities before execution. The thinking or thought process centered on the steps to achieve the desired goal is planning.

According to the text of today, the time taken by the diligent to plan is of great advantage, while some people may see it as waste of time King Solomon, the wisest king in Israel said that it “tends to plenteousness”. On the contrary lack of planning or being hasty to execute one`s work without thinking through the required activities may end up in error which could result to loss of resources.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ emphasized the need for planning before embarking on a venture. He said “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish.”.- Luke 14:28-30.

We should therefore act wisely by being patient to plan our works and prayerfully execute such for desired result by God's grace.

Monday, December 28, 2020

Text: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.” - Proverbs 6:6-8.

Comment: King Solomon, the richest and the wisest King in Israel laid emphasis on the wisdom of the ants. He requests human beings to learn from the ant by trying to understand their ways. Describing the ants, he says “The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer” (Proverbs 30:25). The ants plan and work for the future. During the summer, they gather into their storage house all the food they need, and when it is winter or rainy season they stay indoors and enjoy their labour for planning ahead. They are wise enough to know that a time will come that would be difficult for them to get food or march searching for food, building ant cities, etc, so they prepare themselves by storing up food in their storage. “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Proverbs3:1) We plan for our future lives by saving and investing today against tomorrow. We can learn new trades, study and take advantage of various insurance schemes, invest in Bank Fixed deposits, Treasury Bills etc. These investments if wisely done will amount to future gains. “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.” - Proverbs 13:22.

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

Text: “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” - Proverbs 15:22.

Comment: “No man is an island” is a common saying. Everyone needs counsel, suggestions or advice of others to plan and achieve plans for individual, groups and societal growth. This is so because no one individual has knowledge of all that he needs in life (Proverbs 12:15). Many organizations both profit and nonprofit have folded up because of lack of professional consultation or wise counsel. The objectives or purposes of setting up such organizations are not achieved and resource lost. (Proverbs 15:22).

In making plans it very important to get guides from persons who are experienced in your area of interest. it might require the services of financial experts, builders, health worker etc, depending on your area of planning and investment interest. Ensure that the counsel you get are from the right persons. If you are planning for business, seek advice from persons who are successful in the business. King Solomon said “Where no counsel is, the people fall but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” Proverbs11:14.

In career or business planning, you need to have a mentor who you look up to and consult for necessary guides and information. For girls who are married or planning to get married, the Bible provides for the elderly women to teach them to love their husbands, keep their home (Titus 2:3, 4) In our plan for salvation, the Bible (Joshua1:8) and Church elders are there to guide you. – Proverbs 3:5-7; Joshua 1:6-8.

Wednesday, December 30, 2020

Text: “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 37:4, 5.

Comment: Just as our faces are different, so too are our desires. Different people desire different things. These include, but are not limited to, ensuring good health, building houses for residence and commercial purposes, buying new cars, getting good jobs, acquiring new skills, studying abroad, getting married, giving birth and raising children etc. These desires are the things we hope and plan to happen in our lives both now and in the future.

We are not sufficient of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God hence we depend on Him for the provision of our life expectations. (Psalm 37;4, 5) God Almighty cares for us and expects us as His children to bring our plans and good expectations to Him (1Peter 5:7). The Psalmist exhorts “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55:22) God Almighty knows the things we need in life, His thoughts and plans for our lives are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give us the good desires of our heart. (Jeremiah 29:11). Being aware of God's immeasurable love for us, we should always bring Him into our plans; have strong faith in Him, seek His guidance and He will surely see us through. Matthew 21:22.

Thursday, December 31, 2020

Text: “There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” - Proverbs 19:21.

Comment: As human beings, we make plans concerning our lives, studies, careers or businesses, future partners, children, etc. Some people ask the question “where or how do you see myself in the next four years, what are my plans for next year, next month, next week etc.” Whether our plans are long term or short term, it is important to note that, the Lord's counsel is what we need for them to stand and succeed.

No matter how good our plans are, no matter the efforts and resource we commit towards achieving the plans, they cannot come to be if they are not the will of God. As Christians, we should therefore trust God and not be angry when our plans fail to come through after we must have done our best. Our God is all knowing, He knows what is best for us though we may not always understand. If we patiently wait and follow the ways of God (Psalm 27:13,14), we shall surely end up in His good plans for us. - Jeremiah 29:11.

The purpose of God cannot be changed; it will always come to stand. (Isaiah 46:8-11) Christians should always exercise understanding and fear of God knowing that it is the purpose of God that will stand “For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” - Isaiah 14:27.

Friday, January 1, 2021

Text: “Be careful for nothing; but in everything 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 heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:6,7.

Comment: Worrying or being anxious over our expectations and plans in life cannot give any solution. Some people get disturbed over the level of unemployment in the society; what will become of them when they graduate? is there hope of making it in life; can they be able to own their own business, build house, buy their own cars? etc. To some parents, the future of their children is their major source of concern. There are persons who are afraid of retirement; can their pension and gratuity be enough for them? Some of these people have plans for the future, yet they are still afraid of the future.

To get worried over whether we can achieve the plans or not amounts to faithlessness. (Hebrews 11:1,6) Our future is in the hands of God, we should therefore trust Him to handle and perfect our plans for the future. We should rather take our fears to God in prayers (Matthew 21:22) with assurance that He will grant us our expectations. Jesus Christ encouraged Christians to “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” Matthew 7:7

Saturday, January 2, 2021

Text: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” – Matthew 6:33.

Comment: We seek the favour of God in our problems and plans by showing interest in His kingdom work. As the creatures of God, we should reciprocate the love of God on us by loving him. (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, etc) We express our love for God by loving our fellow human beings, (1 John 4:20,21), making conscious efforts to practice his words, and giving support to the things of His Kingdom.

Jesus Christ our Master and Savior, before asking us to first show interest in the things of the Kingdom in order to gain our life desires, addressed the common questions each of us faces in order to survive. (Matthew 6:25-34) These are often referred to as the basic needs of man: what to eat and drink (food), what to wear (clothing), where to live (housing). Addressing these desires of man, Jesus said “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and these things shall be added unto you.”

Seeking first the Kingdom of God removes our minds from carnality and makes them to be focused on righteousness and keeping of God's commandments. When we are carnally minded, we become far from God, (Romans 8:7-8); the spirit of God which would have directed us in our planning will be far from us. Being spiritually minded, brings prosperity. (Psalm 122:6,7) It makes us to read and practice the word which makes our ways prosperous and successful. - Joshua 1:8.

**GOD IS MIGHTY TO SAVE!**

Sunday, January 3, 2021

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 healing of a man born blind by our Savior, Jesus Christ, rather than instilling awe and thanksgiving in leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees questioned the power of Christ and its source. In reprimanding them for their faithlessness and ill will, the man made the statement in the text above John 9:1-41.

The Holy Scriptures give the condition under which God will hear our prayers: Christ teaches us to pray in secret, and not to use vain repetitions (Matthew 6:5-8); our prayer should be made to God through our Savior, Jesus Christ, we must have faith in the prayer, realize our insufficiency and believe that God will answer it (1 Timothy 2: 5; Hebrew 9:14-16; 11:6); our prayers must not be selfish, or tainted with sin. In the words of Saint Paul, “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” 1 Corinthians 14:15.

Wise King Solomon wrote under inspiration, “The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Proverbs 15:29; Psalm 34:16) “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth” -Psalm 145:18.

Monday, January 4, 2021

Text: “The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion” – Psalm 20:1, 2.

Comment: This was a song of king David, the sweet psalmist of Israel by which he magnified the LORD's power. He was a man who knew what greatness was and also suffered vicissitudes of various magnitudes. In all, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God.

As a young man, king Saul sought to kill him, when he killed Goliath. God protected David and arrested his enemies (1 Samuel 19:1-3,8-24); twice he almost lost God's favor (2 Samuel 11:12; 24:); and his son Absalom dethroned him and sought to take his life. Israel had a civil war that claimed Absalom's life and put down the insurrection (2 Samuel 15:16-18). The life of king David inspires humility, devotion, total repentance and implicit faith in God, all of which will be described as total “submission” to the will of the Almighty God. No wonder the LORD referred to him as “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22) and established His covenant with him, even the “sure mercies of David”.

The prophet Joel spoke of the protection that comes from invoking the name of God thus: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” - Joel 2:32; Isaiah 46:13; Micah 4:7; etc..

Tuesday, January 5, 2021

Text: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” – Philippians 2:9-11.

Comment: God made man to show forth His praise (Isaiah 43:7,21). The Holy name of God Almighty, Jehovah is powerful and should not be taken in vain. Among the Ten Commandments given to the Jews through Moses, it is stated, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” - Exodus 20:7.

Confirming the glorious majesty of His name, the LORD says: “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11). There is none that can be likened to, or compared with Him in majesty. - Isaiah 46:5; 40:18.

However, after Christ's mission on earth, by which he shed his blood to reconcile fallen man back to the Father, God highly exalted him. (Hebrew 1:1-6; John 5:23). Jesus Christ our Saviour declared: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matthew 28:18) By praying to God through Jesus Christ, men obtain salvation, deliverance and protection, to the glory of God the Father. “…whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you”. (John 15:16) “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” - Acts 4:12.

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Text: “And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies”- 2 Samuel 22:2-4.

Comment: David, the son of Jesse, a warrior with God's favor, (1Samuel 16:18) came to the limelight when he killed Goliath, a giant of Gath, with a sling and a stone by faith in the name of the LORD of hosts. (1Samuel 17:45-51) Indeed, he had a glorious military career, even as the anointed king of Israel, and prophet. However, when he became old his strength of course diminished. But for the mercy of God, he would have been killed by Ishbi-benob, a giant and relative of Goliath whom he had killed, but Abishai the son of Zeruiah succored him, and killed the giant by God's grace. - 2 Samuel 21:15-22.

David and his men eventually slew the remaining giant relatives of Goliath by the power of God. The text for today is part of a song of thanksgiving that David sang in praise of the MOST HIGH GOD who spared his life. Seeing how God delivered the Jews from slavery, Moses in his valedictory speech to the Israelites before his death, sang in praise of God, “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. …Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he”. - Deuteronomy 32:1-4.

Thursday, January 7, 2021

Text: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” – Psalm 46:1-3.

Comment: The Almighty God had inspired His holy prophets to foretell the dooms and travails of mankind in these perilous times, otherwise known as the last days (2Timothy 3:1-5; 2Peter 3:3,4; Jude18). He also gives hope to His sheep, “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee” (Psalm 91:7).

In the fourteenth year of the reign of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria seized all the fenced cities of Judah, boasting of his military might and challenged the God of Israel (Isaiah 36:1-7,18-21). King Hezekiah humbled prophet Isaiah, the Lord assured Hezekiah that the adversary would not come to the city, but would be destroyed in his own land. Sennacherib then sent a letter with more blasphemies, warning king Hezekiah not to be deceived by his trust in God. Hezekiah spread the letter before God's alter and called on the LORD (Isaiah 37:1-20).

The LORD defended the city for His name sake, and for David's sake. That same night, an angel smoth 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their sleep. Seeing their corpses in the morning, Sennacherib fled to Nineveh, and was slaughtered by his two sons while he worshipped before Nisroch, his god (Isaiah 37:33-38). king Solomon was inspired to state, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” Proverb 18:10; 2 Samuel 22:3.

Friday, January 8, 2021

Text: “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” – Isaiah 59:1, 2.

Comment: Jehovah's love for His children is so great that He will never forsake them (Romans 11:1-4) The text for today makes us to understand also that there is nothing too hard for Him to do for His children who trust in Him. (Genesis 18:14; Numbers 11:23; Luke 1:37). Therefore, if at any time they pray, and call on His Name, but do not get an answer, they should search themselves thoroughly. Perhaps, “sin lieth at the door”. - Genesis 4:7.

After the LORD had destroyed the heathen nations and their gods, out of the land, king Manasseh of Judah built again the high places and altars that Hezekiah his father had broken down. He raised altars for idols in the house of the LORD, sacrificed his children by fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. (Jeremiah 7:30, 31) He used enchantments, familiar spirits and witchcraft. Therefore, the LORD sent the captains of Assyria to take him away in chains and all Judah with him into bondage. With much afflictions, Manasseh became sober, and humbled himself greatly, before the LORD. God had mercy on him, and had him brought back to his throne in Jerusalem. The king then removed all the altars, temples and idols out of the land, rebuilt all what he destroyed from the Temple of God. He turned the hearts of the people to seek the LORD, and commanded that they worshiped the LORD, God of Israel. – 2 Chronicles 33:1-20.

**SAMPLE PRAYERS**

Before Service

1.O Gracious Father, the most loving and Almighty Father we thank Thee for making it possible for us to assemble in order to worship Thee in truth and with sincerity of heart by Thy grace. We pray Thee gracious Father to accept our services and direct us with Thy Holy Spirit so that all that we shall do here today will end well by Thy grace and power to the honour, glory and praise of Thy holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For God's goodness generally

2. O Gracious Father, the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth, the Preserver of all mankind, we thank Thee immensely for bringing us into existence for which we owe Thee faithful service. Gracious Father. Look not on our sins which we shamefully but sincerely acknowledge before thee. We pray thee gracious Father to forgive us and prevent us from sinning against thee so that we may identify what is pleasing in thy sight to the glory and praise of thy holy name.

And may we Thy children be blessed with the good things of life and be saved in thy kingdom all to the honour, glory and praise of thy holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

3. O Gracious Father the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth we thank Thee immensely for thy blessing on us thy sheep everywhere for Thy name's sake and in exercise of Thy loving kindness. We sincerely acknowledge our sins before Thee and beseech Thee to forgive us and help us to live in the way that is pleasing to Thee always,

We pray Thee Gracious Father to continue to protect us Thy children all over the world so that the devil may not hurt us or kill us, but that we should live to fulfill in a grand style the divine purpose for which we have been created all to the glory and praise of Thy holy name through Jesus Christ Lord Amen.

For healing

4. O most loving and Almighty Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of faithful Africans who have served Thee all through the ages, we beseech Thee to continue to help us Thy children all over the world to serve Thee in truth and to show forth Thy praise according to the prophet Isaiah.

We pray Thee to bless us accordingly with Thy holy spirit so that we may live to show forth Thy righteousness among the children of men.

We pray Thee to help Thy children who are plagued with different diseases by the devil. May they be cured so that they may go about in good health and in thy strength to preach thy word to the sheep who are lost so they may join us in thy holy organization to serve Thee in truth - all to the honour glory and praise of Thy name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

5. O Gracious father the creator of heaven and earth, the preserver and strength of spiritual Israel, the most living and Almighty father, we thank thee immensely for all thou has used all to say and do here in this service.

We pray thee Gracious Father may it please thee to accept our service and help us to do what is pleasing in thy sight always so that thy Holy name be glorified and honoured by the children of men, we beseech thee to help us to do thy will so that we shall be at peace with thee in thy kingdom which is the hope of suffering humanity all to thee honour and praise of thy holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Gracious father the creator and possessor of heaven and earth, we thank thee for all their has used us to say and do here today. We pray thee to bless us from heaven.