

April to June 2008

by
Rev Michael Koech

April 1 to June 21:
**“1st and 2nd
Timothy”**

June 22 to 30:
**“Christian
Liberty”**

About the Author



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Pastoral Epistles

Fortify the Pillar of Truth

The Pastoral Epistles of 1st and 2nd Timothy are letters written to Pastor Timothy by Senior Pastor Paul. The instructions given in the epistles were not only for Timothy, but were instructions to the church he served. These instructions are still applicable to pastors and churches today. Paul called the church the *Ground and Pillar of Truth*. Some of the topics covered in the epistles are not personal even though the letters were addressed to an individual. The apostle wrote to Timothy in his capacity as shepherd of the church and his messages were meant to fortify the truth of the gospel. In turn, the gospel builds the church as it becomes her constitution. All who are involved in the Christian ministry must read and understand the messages of these letters.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

1 TIMOTHY 1:1-4

ACTS 9:1-22

*“...an apostle... by the
commandment of God...”*

THE CALLING OF A SERVANT OF GOD (I)

Timothy was converted under the ministry of the apostle Paul in the cities of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:1-2). Later he became a pastor of the Church in Ephesus by the apostle's commission, having been trained and prepared for the ministry. His calling and duty is revealed in 1st Timothy, a letter to him from Paul, his spiritual father. Timothy's appointment spells out a pattern for the Church and her ministers. In today's reading, four factors are revealed regarding the calling of a servant of God.

Paul began with his own calling giving the background of his apostolic office, his conversion and subsequent calling to be a preacher to the Gentile nations. His calling was by the commandment of God. This was a special calling (Acts 9) so that Paul had no choice but to respond promptly to that call. That is why he called it a commandment. He was set apart the same way the other apostles were. It is beyond human prediction that Paul, a foremost persecutor of Christians, would be the first of the apostles of Christ. In his introductory remarks, he made clear that it was God who made him an apostle and not himself. He gave glory to God for what He did for him. These words are meant to give authority to the rest of what he will say in his letter.

A person cannot become a preacher of the gospel without going through the basics of the faith. He must acknowledge Jesus Christ alone as the hope of believers. This is of great importance because without Christ and His saving grace, there can be no Church and everything else that is said would be in vain. It was in Christ that Paul was forgiven of his sins. We too must accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour in order to have our sins forgiven. Accepting Christ is the foundation of a lifelong relationship with Him.

THOUGHT: Have I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour?

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for giving up Your rightful place in heaven and come down to earth to live and die for me a sinner.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

1 TIMOTHY 1:1-4

ROMANS 10:8-11

*“...if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature...”*

THE CALLING OF A SERVANT OF GOD (II)

Everyone who comes to Christ confessing his sins, in repentance and seeking forgiveness will receive new life through His precious blood that was shed on the cross. The sinner then is made a new person in Christ. This becomes the beginning of good things to come as he lives a new life of faith. This will be in contrast to his former life which was a life that is without hope and destitute of faith or obedience to God.

After his conversion and assurance of forgiveness of sins, young Timothy grew in his faith. Under the tutelage of Paul, he became an effective preacher of the gospel. He then oversaw the ministry of the Church at Ephesus. Timothy has the talent and is to make use of it in shepherding the church; it was a God-given duty to be thus employed. Such a noble responsibility cannot be neglected but must be approached with great zeal and love for the Lord and His flock.

One of Pastor Timothy's roles was that of defender of the faith, and this is to be preceded by the teaching of true doctrines. Verse 4 tells us that there were false doctrines going around. But Timothy was to teach what would assist believers in their growth in the true faith, and to keep falsehood at bay. In order to do this, every contrary instruction must be refuted with true facts (1 Pet 3:15). Verse 3 implies that the pastor needs God's people to work hand in hand with him in the ministry of the Word.

In summary, these four verses teach that Timothy's salvation through Christ alone marks the beginning of his ministry of teaching and defending the true doctrines for the greater blessing of God's flock. In the process, he was to ensure effective administration within his church involving others in God's work.

THOUGHT: Am I a “*new creature*” (2 Cor 5:17) in Christ?

PRAYER: As a child of God, may I love and defend God's Word.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

1 TIMOTHY 1:5-11

MATTHEW 22:34-40

“... love the Lord...
with all thy heart...”

THE VALUE OF THE LAW IN HUMAN RELATIONS (I)

Here, Paul dealt with the value of the Law in Christian service. Firstly, God gave Israel the Law under Moses for the instruction of worship and relationship with Him. Secondly, the Law was given for the good order of society and effective leadership. The primary purpose of these statutes needs to be known by God's people as they are applicable also to the New Testament Church. In the text, Paul gave logical reasons on its value.

The Law teaches godly virtues. The apostle here followed the exposition of the Lord Jesus Christ regarding the greatest law: Christian love. He was emphatic when he said that the end of the commandment was charity. This is the comprehensive summary of the Law and the apostle here placed emphasis on the second table of the moral code: the law that has to do with human relations, and this Jesus calls the second greatest law in the commandments. He qualified the expression of Christian love with the requirement of a pure heart, i.e. love must be genuine and unconditional. The best witness of a man's love is his conscience. It must be “good,” i.e. free from any guilt. When a person is haunted by guilt, anything he says or does will contain falsehood. It is therefore necessary that a Christian listens to the voice of his conscience.

The next godly virtue is unfeigned faith. It must not be an expression of the lips but a heartfelt one, without hypocrisy.

The neglect of God's Law has negative results. Vain jangling (v 6) is the expression used here to describe a meaningless sound. A careless lifestyle resorts to personal ideas that may seem right in one's eyes but the result that follows is lawlessness. Falsehood and loss of direction will also result. One manifestation is occupation with useless talk which does not build the faith of believers but is a sin of the tongue.

THOUGHT: Christian love is Christ's love.

PRAYER: May the still small voice of Your Spirit ring loud and clear in my ears.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

1 TIMOTHY 1:5-11

ROMANS 3:20-31

“...by the law is the knowledge of sin...”

THE VALUE OF THE LAW IN HUMAN RELATIONS (II)

Another negative result is selfish desire (v 7). Although destitute of understanding, they will desire to be seen of men as capable instructors. Their hypocrisy is clearly represented in the gospels as the Lord Jesus had many disputes with them. After Paul's conversion, he also had to face such opposition from the Jewish community wherever he went; he had such in mind when he wrote to Timothy. Even Christians today are victims of this self righteous spirit. It closes their minds and they do not respond to God's instructions.

The Law on the other hand has positive effects when it is used well as the apostle did (v 11). It was put in place to react against the unrighteous and to condemn all kinds of sins (v 9 - 10). Those who defile themselves with mankind are today's homosexuals. We do not have to feel guilty in obeying the Law of God. Every sin must be named as Paul did and be rejected. Those who are entangled in any of these sins ought to repent or retain for themselves God's judgment to come.

The knowledge of God's Law is also a means to withstand false doctrines as it is the standard moral code. The apostle ended by putting his stamp of authority that the glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust, and his spiritual son was also called to preach the gospel. The same power goes to true preachers of the gospel in every generation since then.

Every believer must be guided by the Law of God. Every Christian ministry must adhere to the teachings of this Law. Individual purity will lead to a pure church. There is great value in the keeping of this code. One who loves Christ will not deviate from the eternal truth. It is of absolute necessity that each of us allows Christ to work in our hearts to obedience.

THOUGHT: Call a spade a spade: A sin is a sin.

PRAYER: Let me daily examine my life and confess and repent of my daily sins.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5
1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17
PSALM 2

*“Serve the Lord
with fear.”*

A MANIFESTATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD (I)

The expression of Paul here that our Lord enabled him and counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry is a demonstration of the sovereignty of God that overrules all activities of men. The application of His grace comes to people of all backgrounds. The foremost persecutor of the church turned out to be the foremost preacher of the gospel. It is indeed a manifestation of the grace of God.

It is a story of a **sinner called to be a preacher of the gospel**. Paul in his wayward condition received a double call: first, to salvation and forgiveness of sins and second, he was called to be a messenger of the gospel. He related that the Lord counted him worthy and put him into His service. The expressions he used show that he regarded his calling as an honourable duty and gave himself to fulfil all that was required of him.

Though the calling to salvation comes first, it is the appointment to the ministry that took prominence here as it was the main purpose of the timing of his conversion. At the same time the basic requirement of the second birth has its place in the whole story. In verse 13, he described his sinful past in the worst terms: he was a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. We may or may not have a dark past but everyone is equally sinful before God. Confession and repentance lead to salvation.

It is always true that salvation is by grace alone. In Paul's testimony **the grace of God takes the credit** for his salvation. This is the only explanation for how such a hard hearted person could publicly confess Christ and preach faith in Him. Though his conversion and calling were supernatural and different from the way the Lord calls other people, it is still the work of God that saves sinners (v 14). And all are done by the good pleasure of His will.

THOUGHT: The Lord my God is the Sovereign God.

PRAYER: Though I am not worthy, yet You have called me to serve You, the Lord of lords and King of kings. Thank You, Lord Jesus.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 6

1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11

“...yet not I but
the grace of God...”

A MANIFESTATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD (II)

Grace is an expression of God's love for sinners. Though Paul acknowledged this severally in his writings, the work of the Lord is self illustrative. Mercy is an attribute of God that expresses itself in His dealing with Paul and all sinners. This is how His grace is applied to you and me even today (v 16). This offer is ever open for all to receive.

The heart of **the gospel is that Christ came to save sinners**. This is a universal truth and is clear throughout the Scriptures. “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). And, “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom 6:23a). But the Lord did not leave sinners in that miserable condition. Good news: “*The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom 6:23b). This is the bright side of God's relationship with a sinner. In the text, Paul restated the same truth and conveyed to the young pastor to carry it forward in his ministry. At the same time, the apostle did not forget to apply this to himself. All sinners need Christ to save them. The doctrine that he expressed here has been taught since the fall of Adam.

The manifestation of the grace of God is also evident when the redeemed **are living for the glory of God**. This is the apostle's wish in his benediction in verse 17. This is the primary purpose of the creation of man. When he is reconciled to God, his life becomes a reflection of His majesty and truly, the Lord deserves honour and glory from His creatures. Before Adam sinned, he was holy and had mutual relationship with his Creator, but when he sinned, he and his posterity are alienated from Him. But the atoning blood of Christ that was shed on the cross is sufficient to reconcile all to Him. In all this work of grace, God receives the glory.

THOUGHT: Condemned for hell but heading for heaven.

PRAYER: How can I thank You enough, O Lord!

MONDAY, APRIL 7

1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20

2 PETER 3:17-18

*“...the steadfastness of
your faith in Christ.”*

CHALLENGE TO STEADFASTNESS (I)

Paul's charge was a solemn commissioning of the young pastor set apart for a particular mission. The tone spelt out the seriousness of this plea. In return, the act required total commitment to the discharge of duties enshrined therein. This was what Paul was putting across as he challenged Timothy to steadfastness. Three things are evident in this charge.

There is a need to fight a good fight. The commitment to serve in the gospel ministry is a declaration of war against the forces of darkness. The apostle was familiar with this kind of war as he has had to face it from the very day he began to preach the gospel after his conversion. The Judaizers were often teaching a doctrine contrary from that which the apostles had taught, and everywhere as the message of salvation was preached they would raise an opposition. It was obvious that they would not heed Timothy's preaching so easily, but would resist and even persecute.

Missionary labour was not an easy task in those days. And it has not been throughout church history and even today. It is not only Timothy who needed such a charge but also everyone who endeavors to fulfill a missionary task. There will be obstacles of all kinds but there must be courage and determination to overcome them as the task has to be accomplished. The warning signal is always there as one enters this noble task. The presence of false religions and the great influence religion has on the hearts of people tend to bring confusion and one cannot differentiate the false and the true. Some have branded all religions as superstition. The Lord's messengers need to have the ability to communicate with clarity and to gain the confidence of people who have been misled by many voices. They have to put in the effort and at the same time depend on the Lord to guide them. This was Paul's experience at Corinth (Acts 18:9-10).

THOUGHT: (Read 1 John 4:4.)

PRAYER: (Pray for missionaries, especially those you know.)

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6

*“...we are more
than conquerors...”*

CHALLENGE TO STEADFASTNESS (II)

The Lord may not directly communicate with others the same way He did with Paul but the ability to assist in the task of preaching the gospel is the same. And the Lord would not fail to lend His hand in the service of His Kingdom.

Fighting a good warfare is the task of every soldier. The apostle here was not referring to physical warfare but a spiritual one. However, the principle is the same: never run away but fight till you win. The secret of victory is readiness. Thus with this solemn command from the spiritual father and fellow soldier in the gospel, Timothy was ready to face the task ahead of him. Every minister of the gospel must know that he is a soldier of Christ and must fight and win the battle.

Faith is a cornerstone of Christian religion and a mainstay of all its operations, so Timothy was asked to hold it in good conscience. Faith also is the body of doctrines held by Christians and each believer must be well instructed in these truths so as to distinguish false doctrines and follow that which is right. Good conscience is confidence in that which one believes and also assurance of freedom from sin. These words were directed at a pastor, but this affirms the fact that all people regardless of their standing in the church are vulnerable to temptation and also to sin. The standard of holiness is the same for all believers regardless of their standing. The challenge to steadfastness in every aspect of Christian living appeals to all alike. It is thus necessary that all of us hold fast to the faith that has been revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

THOUGHT: (Read Hebrews 10:23.)

PRAYER: Keep me ever faithful to You and Your Word, Lord.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20

DANIEL 3:8-30

*Serve God with
undivided attention.*

CHALLENGE TO STEADFASTNESS (III)

When there is no obedience to God's instructions, the consequences are regrettable. The apostle used the word "*shipwreck*" to describe the result of that negligence.

In those days, sailing was the only mode of transport to cross the seas and a ship accident was fatal. A well known shipwreck in recent history was that of the *Titanic* in 1912. It was a ship acclaimed to be the best and it was even blasphemously said that even God could not destroy it. But it was wrecked on its first voyage with a loss of one thousand five hundred lives.

Paul testified in 2 Corinthians 11:25 that he experienced shipwreck three times, one recorded in the Bible was when he sailed to Rome as a prisoner. This kind of accident is so destructive that it has been idiomatically used to define the ruin that comes to one's life upon disobedience to the Lord's precepts. The apostle's prescription is to deliver the disobedient to Satan. The intention of the discipline is the restoration of the offender and Paul was practical in this regard as he mentioned the names of two whom he had had to take such an action.

Steadfastness in the faith involves taking an active role in the spiritual warfare and holding on to the truths of the faith regardless of prohibiting circumstances. One has to press on to the very end. The fact of punitive consequences also ought to encourage believers to learn the fear of the Lord and to serve Him with undivided attention. Steadfastness is victory to eternal life.

THOUGHT: Steadfastness means steadily holding fast.

PRAYER: (Use 1 Corinthians 15:58.)

THURSDAY, APRIL 10

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

PSALM 30

*“Evening, and morning and
at noon will I pray...”*

A PLEA TO PRAYER (I)

In today’s reading, Paul revealed God’s desire for His people. He gave guidelines to prayer in four parts.

Supplication is an act of submission in acknowledging the greatness of God and that as creatures men look to Him as the Almighty. It is asking earnestly and petitioning humbly. In prayer, the petitioner has to acknowledge his lowly state and his supplication will have meaning. The Lord Jesus gave the example of two men who went to pray in the temple, one was a Pharisee and the other a publican, a tax collector (Lk 18:9-14). The Pharisee belonged to the highest religious class among the Jews while the tax collector came from a despised group of extortioners. The Pharisee spoke of all the good things about himself and even despised the other petitioner. The text says he trusted himself and thought he was righteous. The publican, on the other hand, recognized his lowly state and confessed that he was a sinner. Thus Christ’s verdict went in favour of the humble one who came with a penitent spirit and acknowledged that God alone could forgive his sins. His act explains the meaning of supplication and this ought to be the line of approach for every petitioner.

A prayer is making requests known to God, specifically, one by one. There are responsibilities in our lives that we may have committed ourselves to fulfil; for these we have to ask the Lord to give us wisdom and also help us to be able to bring to pass our pledges. Some commitments may be bound by a covenant such as marriage or parental responsibility, only the Lord has the ability to help us accomplish each of these demands. Therefore in praying we give priority to those things we have given our lives to carry out; in addition there are everyday occurrences such as health, food and other physical necessities, for these we have to seek the will of the Lord constantly and wait for His answer.

THOUGHT: (Read Jeremiah 33:3.)

PRAYER: Teach me to pray, O Lord.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11
1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4
PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

*“Continue
in prayer.”*

A PLEA TO PRAYER (II)

Intercession is praying for others and is a divine responsibility. Paul in all his epistles testified that he prayed for many. Praying ought not to be a burden to believers but it should be done with joy as it is a manifestation of Christian love for other saints. The Lord Himself is the best example in this regard. The gospels record His many prayers. A model intercession is in John 17. This also lays emphasis on corporate prayers in homes or at church prayer meetings. This is needed on the basis of the exhortation of the text and also the examples seen in the Scriptures. Lydia, one of the early converts in the church at Philippi, had a prayer group and the Lord blessed that church thereafter as is evident in Paul’s letter to them some years later. This is an instruction by example that a community of saints ought to have time and place set apart for prayer and this also fulfils the apostle’s exhortation.

Gratitude may be a heart’s response to any favour done by another person, however there are some who are destitute of courtesy and would hardly utter a ‘thank you’ regardless of how much good is done to them. They have assumed that it is their right to be served by others. When it comes to relationship with God, some Christians also need to be reminded all the time that they have a duty to give thanks to God for what He has done for them. Even though the instruction to that effect comes last in Paul’s exhortation in the text, it must naturally be the first in our prayer. The Lord who made us to be what we are and gave us all that we have deserves a THANK YOU from our lips at all times. Expression of gratitude is a precious Christian virtue that ought to characterise our conversation, and more so towards our Creator.

THOUGHT: *“In every thing give thanks...”* (1 Thess 5:18).

PRAYER: Grant me an ever thankful and prayerful heart, O Lord.

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

“...when thou prayest,
enter into thy closet...”

A PLEA TO PRAYER (III)

Besides self and others, the apostle lays emphasis on the need to pray for civil authorities also. Elsewhere we also learn that every establishment is appointed by God regardless of the nature of the private lives of those who hold the office. Proverbs 21:1 states that the heart of a king is in the hands of the Lord and as rivers of waters, He turns it whithersoever He will. This applies to both good and wicked kings. Nevertheless it is the duty of Christians to pray for them because they are the servants of God for His people. When the hand of God is upon a nation, there is peace and stability and all people desire such satisfactory atmosphere. Prayers by the saints bring about these blessings as the apostle asserted in his plea to God's people to pray. There is order in the land when there is a just government and the citizens find their consolation as there is the fear of the Lord in the administration of justice. The powers that be are entrusted with civil responsibility and Christians are to shine as lights in the midst of a wicked world and also as salt that retains its taste. This is the counsel of Christ. They will not know the right course of action or the will of God except they pray earnestly. Prayer sustains the right application of the law in a good government. It is thus our exhortation even today that we never neglect to pray for our government. This applies to Christians of every nation. While the value of civil government primarily has to do with physical well-being, every believer knows that that is not the main goal in life. Salvation is the ultimate hope (v 4). Salvation and eternal life is the greatest reward we can ever receive from the Lord.

The apostle gave sound guidelines on communion with the Lord. When we pray, we know that none of the things we need come our way by our own ability, but we look to the Father above for that provision.

THOUGHT: “Give us this day our daily bread...” (Matt 6:11)

PRAYER: Remind me of my need of You and keep me coming to You daily, O Lord.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 13

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-15

ISAIAH 49:7

“...my redeemer liveth...”

THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN WORSHIP (I)

Men are driven to God because of the truth revealed in His Word and the natural revelation of Himself. Worship is part of his service to God and thus the scriptures give guidelines of this engagement. These direct the orderliness of service and confusing practices are kept at bay. The text gives us the contents of true worship.

Christian worship can never be complete without Christ. Verse 5 says there is only one God and one Mediator between God and man. **Thus Christ is superior to all.** The emphasis here is on the existence of one God, and man can approach Him only through His incarnate Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The superiority of Christ is with regard to the man Jesus. That is why Paul referred to Him as “*the man Christ Jesus.*” This is a doctrine many fail to comprehend yet it is central to Christian worship. According to the Fausset Bible Dictionary, a mediator is “one coming between two parties to remove their differences.” Another dictionary explains what is involved in this office: “A mediator is one who intervenes between two persons who are at variance, with a view to reconcile them. This office involves the three functions of prophet, priest, and king, all of which are discharged by Christ both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation. These functions are so inherent in the one office that the quality appertaining to each gives character to every mediatorial act. They are never separated in the exercise of the office of mediator.” As much as we have Christ occupying this office for us, our prayers in worship are more meaningful because His promises are unchanging. He will be ever superior and this imparts to us confidence that our service to Him receives blessings in return. The Lord Himself severally spoke of His function as a mediator so that whatever one asks of Him, He will do it as He has promised.

THOUGHT: Do I accept Jesus as my only Lord and Saviour?

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for reconciling me to God.

MONDAY, APRIL 14

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-15

HEBREWS 10:14-18

“... without shedding of blood is no remission.”

THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN WORSHIP (II)

The mention of one God and Christ in the same breath brings in the other important doctrine of the Trinity. In this we learn that Christ is fully God and He took upon Himself the form of a man in the flesh in order to identify with those He came to represent before the Father. He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, though they are three distinct persons, they are united as one God. This places Christ in the rightful place to discharge the responsibilities of His office.

As man's representative before God, **He had to pay the highest price for the remission of sin.** He offered Himself as a sacrifice. The text says that He gave Himself a ransom for all, this means that His sacrifice was in exchange for the penalty that God had intended for all sinners. Without Christ and His gift of redemption the faith that Christians profess will carry no meaning. His sacrifice satisfied God's demands so that all who put their trust in Him will have their sins forgiven and made holy before God. However, this must not be thought of as a mechanical forgiveness of sin in that when a person fulfils certain conditions he is free from sin. The application of Christ's sacrificial work is still by God's grace. This will include His predestination (prior election) and ultimately His call to salvation.

For those who are called, the ransom of Christ is all sufficient and nothing needs to be added. The Church of Rome for example have added prayers to Mary and the saints, veneration to relics, works of mercy, etc. All these are meant to add to the merits of Christ. This is not simply a violation of God's law but it is a sin against Him. Every believer must ever be rest assured that faith in Christ is all sufficient and nothing needs be added to contribute to the reconciliation for sin. The complex ceremonies of the Old Testament are done away with since Christ has come and He has fulfilled their symbolism. Christian worship thus must be as simple as that of the apostles.

THOUGHT: My works can never save me.

PRAYER: I come to You by faith, Lord Jesus, for You have paid the penalty of my sin.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-15

ROMANS 10:14-15

*“...how shall they hear
without a preacher?”*

THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN WORSHIP (III)

Knowledge of the place of Christ in worship means that all potential beneficiaries of His work of redemption must hear the gospel message. This means that **Christ must be preached to all**. The apostle testified that he was appointed a preacher and an apostle. He was not alone in that appointment, the other twelve had been appointed prior to the ascension of the Lord to heaven and their mission was the same. They were to bring the gospel to all nations of the world. Paul specifically stated that he was appointed a teacher of the Gentiles. The setting apart of these men to bring the message of salvation to the world lays emphasis on the most important factor: the announcement of the good news must reach every corner of the earth.

The conditions in those days were very difficult and it was impossible to claim that the gospel would reach the ends of the earth. However, the confidence is that the order came from the Creator of all things and with Him nothing is impossible. As much as this is true, it is also manifested in the way in which the messengers were appointed. The Twelve were confirmed to the office after three years of instruction by the Master Himself, while Paul was appointed directly from heaven and given the directions as to how he would carry out his mission. His message is simply referred to in the text as the truth. This means the affirmation of those things which had taken place in the life of Christ and God's purposes for these things. It was the incarnation of Christ, His life on earth and His teachings and finally His suffering for the sins of the whole world. These constitute the heart. God by the good pleasure of His will also appoints the time for the proclamation of the gospel to the people in places He has chosen.

THOUGHT: When was the last time I shared the gospel with someone?

PRAYER: Grant me a love for the lost, O Lord, that I will have the courage to share the gospel message.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-15

PSALM 42:1-5

“...they bowed their heads and worshipped.”

THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN WORSHIP (IV)

In Christian worship, a **door of communication with Christ is open to all**. This is what we commonly refer to as prayer. In Scripture, prayer is imperative and the apostle brings it up here. Any worship is never complete without this important channel. Verse 8 mentions men lifting up holy hands to pray. This of course does not place emphasis on the posture in prayer but the disposition of the heart. Holiness always speaks of the soul and not the body. Thus, holy hands are a figure of speech meaning that prayer is accompanied by personal sanctity. The requirement is that everyone who approaches the Lord must be worthy. The mention of wrath asserts that even one's mood in prayer is of great importance. All external disputes and other matters of relationship with others must not be allowed to hinder relationship with God. There is a need to trust God and know that He answers all prayers when they are offered rightly. Worship will be meaningful when such prayer comes from those who profess their love for God.

The last part gives attention to women in public worship. The point here also is the heart and not outward activities or appearance. Both the Bible and church history tell of women who have been greatly used in prayer for the advancement of the gospel. Immodest apparel or any other indecent appearance would distract other worshippers. Though women adorn themselves, their faith must never be related to the external manifestation. Outward beauty is their nature, but their relationship with God must not rest on these things. The question of prohibiting them to teach is meant for sustaining order in the church. It is not an entire ban on them speaking for Christ in any forum. The apostle however appealed to the time of creation when the Lord had assigned both man and woman their respective responsibilities and this order ought to be a natural guide in all functions. The focus at all times is on Christ who is Saviour of all.

THOUGHT: When I pray, God sees my inward heart condition rather than my outward posture or adornment.

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to come to You in sincerity and in truth.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-15

1 PETER 2:9-10

“...feed the
church of God...”

THE CHURCH AS PILLAR & GROUND OF TRUTH (I)

The church is a sacred institution that stands to present the oracles of God before the people. In the Old Testament, the priests and the prophets played this role. The coming of Jesus changed this. He took up all the former offices and ordained the New Testament Church under the apostles. These in turn appointed overseers to communicate with God’s people. The Church is rightly described in the text as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (v 15) because on her was entrusted the preaching of the good news of salvation. If the Church is likened to a building, the support and the foundation on which it stands must be strong enough to hold it firmly in any circumstance.

The church must be a stronghold of faith, a gathering of believers who hold to the true doctrines of God. As a stronghold, the church becomes a place of refuge for those who want to seek God. They can receive assurance of salvation and hope of eternal life through Jesus, who came into the world to seek and save sinners. This is the heart of the gospel message. As a communion of saints who have been rescued from their lost condition, the Church is built up as a body of Christ (see also 1 Pet 2:9-10). Believers ought to rejoice that they have this divine security.

In ancient times, a city’s assurance of security was its fortress and strong walls. The Church of Christ has all the assurance because Christ is her fortress of hope. In turn, the Church must be committed to defend the faith at all costs.

A strong fortress will be of little use without qualified soldiers to man it. It is equally true with the church. She cannot live up to her reputation without qualified personnel. **The church needs worthy officers.** Paul gave a lengthy list of the qualities of church officers. Read verses 1 to 13.

THOUGHT: I ought to be a member of a local church.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be a committed member of my church.

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-15

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

“...ye have ministered
to the saints...”

THE CHURCH AS PILLAR & GROUND OF TRUTH (II)

A church officer must be blameless and clean in all aspects of his life. He is to be a husband of one wife. This quality may be a problem in many parts of Africa but God's Word cannot be changed to suit our own environment. The truth of Scripture has to stand. A bishop must also be apt to teach. Therefore, he may have to diligently and humbly go through teacher training.

Deacons are assistants in the church ministry. They were first appointed in Acts 6 to assist the apostles in attending to the physical necessities of the church. Throughout the ministry of the missionary-apostles, these helpers were there to supplement their work.

The wives also are not separate in the service of their husband leaders. They are to be supportive, thus they are to possess similar credentials as those of their husbands. Wives can influence their husbands for good or for bad. Their contribution thus cannot be underestimated. When they do well, it will go a long way in yielding positive results in the spiritual service of their husbands.

The church must have worthy members, that is a converted membership wholly committed to Christ and living a life that demonstrates a true calling. They are to be active in all that are needful in the church, eg: being punctual in scheduled functions including the worship service. They are also to make use of their material possession for the welfare of the church through tithing and love gifts. They are also to be instructed in the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. This will enable them to defend the faith.

When a church has worthy officers and committed members, such a communion will be useful to the Lord in fulfilling the will of Christ. And they will not miss the reward of Christ when He comes again.

THOUGHT: “...like people, like priest...” (Hos 4:9).

PRAYER: (Pray for the leadership in your church.)

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-10

JUDE 3-4

“...there were false prophets
also among the people...”

WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS (I)

In the life of the church, there has to be both building up of believers and also the defence of the faith. This is so because there is truth to be taught and there are false teachings to be refuted. The Bible has much to say about false prophets and false teachers. This writer came across a disturbing article by Ruth Gledhill in a local newspaper (*The Standard* dated 10 October 2005) entitled, “*Go slow on the Bible: Prelates warn that not everything you read has historical accuracy.*” The article began thus: “The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church in Britain has published a teaching document instructing the faithful that some parts of the Bible are not actually true.”

In the midst of such open opposition to the Word of God, the faithful flock needed to be warned and Paul did so in today’s reading. Teaching the truth and refuting false teachings are the duty of a pastor. This shepherd also has to have a right attitude and approach in attending to his duties so as to sustain the flock on the right track in following their Lord.

One indication of falsehood is **departure from the faith** (v 1). This comes primarily by rejection and attack on the Bible. Are there some who reject the historicity of the first 11 chapters of Genesis? They are in fact rejecting the whole Bible! Do some reject the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation because Revelation chapter 17 identified the Church of Rome as the Harlot Church? Will some reject the divine inspiration of all Scriptures (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1: 20-21)? There is no room to cite every attack that has been made against the Word of God, but they are sure signs of departure from the faith.

THOUGHT: What will happen to the city if the watchman does not do his job?

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor, that he will faithfully defend the Word of God.)

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 20

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-10

2 PETER 2:1-3

*"...If ye continue in my word,
then are ye my disciples indeed."*

WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS (II)

Another indication of falsehood is **seducing spirits** (v 1). Paying lip service to the Bible by saying that the Bible is only correct in matters of salvation, and subjecting it to change with times is nothing but double-talk. To say that Christian fundamentalism is intolerant and breeds anti-Semitism and other inter-racial hatred is a misunderstanding of what fundamentalism is all about. Fundamentalism is the holding on to all the truths of the Bible as the Word of God and is decisive in matters of faith and practice. If anyone could be said to be a fundamentalist in the early church, it was the apostle Paul. Before his conversion, as a Pharisee, he violently oppressed the disciples of Christ. However, after his conversion he was truly humbled. He submitted to the violence meted out on him but never raised a finger in defence. He taught the true doctrines and stood on the Scriptures as the Word of God. He was a true fundamentalist and thus the term must not be misused to justify a rejection of the Bible. It is never an alternative to deny the Bible just because others have misused it for their political agenda.

Our text also mentions another sign of falsehood: teaching that **forbids marriage** (v 3). Although there is no evidence that Paul was ever married, he however wrote positively at length for its support. In 1 Corinthians 7, he devoted a whole chapter to it. It is clear from the gospels that Peter was married as Jesus healed his mother-in-law. But, contrary to the Scriptures, the Church of Rome has put in place a law that forbids her priests and nuns to marry. And, contrary to expectation of holiness, this practice has become a channel of extreme immorality. Abstention from meats is also to be found in the church's laws on fasting. The apostle gave his verdict in this regard saying that *"every creature of God is good and ... be received with thanksgiving."* Besides the Church of Rome, there are many other cults today that have all the signs of false teachings.

THOUGHT: *"...the truth shall make you free."* (Jn 8:32)

PRAYER: Grant me diligence in the study of Your Word and grant me understanding so that I will not be misled by false teachings.

MONDAY, APRIL 21

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-10

1 CORINTHIANS 2:12-14

“...he shall feed his flock like a shepherd...”

WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS (III)

This epistle was written to a pastor and he was expected (as a true teacher of the gospel) to give warning as was meet. It is **the duty of a pastor** to remind the flock of the doctrines that he has taught them. The hypocrisy of the Roman clergy mentioned earlier is shown when they said that in the last 40 years the Catholics have learned more than ever to cherish the Bible in rediscovering it as a precious treasure yet they subjected it to historical-critical analysis and ended up rejecting it altogether. A true servant of Christ cannot be deceived by such subtleties. He is to be well instructed in the faith and will expound sound doctrines at all times. He should also rise above idle talk and become a counselor of good things that edify the believers. In order to come to this end, the minister of the gospel has to be diligent and show himself to be a true shepherd and not a hireling. The devotion to his duties as a representative of Christ must be evident to all and nothing else should override that holy calling. This is what the apostle Paul wanted to see in the young pastor, Timothy. He made a comparison with bodily exercise which he said was profitable, but he noted that godliness was profitable unto all things for both life now and that which was to come (v 8).

The achievement of the end of the ministry has to include a **right attitude in approach**, as the fear of God ought to be enshrined in every move. In so doing, one should look to eternal values and not temporary gains. Commitment to the truth without compromise is the way forward. There can be only one truth and it has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures and it is indeed the Word of God and not of man. Paul also wrote to the Corinthians and expressed the same truth in 1 Corinthians 2:12-14. A true shepherd does well to give heed to them.

THOUGHT: Commitment to the truth without compromise is the way forward.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be more concerned about my spiritual health than my physical health.

TUESDAY, APRIL 22

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-16

ROMANS 10:7-15

*“...my flock became meat...
because there was no shepherd...”*

A PASTOR AS A LINK IN SALVATION (I)

Timothy was exhorted here on his duty as God's messenger to start from where he was and to ignore any misconception regarding his external standing but to put into use his abilities as God would enable him to fulfill. A person who has been set apart for this duty must start from where he is without taking into account external opinions. There must have been a general opinion among the Jewish elders that they knew better by virtue of their age, thus Paul knew that the youthful pastor may be subjected to such bigotry. He told him not to be disturbed by that kind of reaction, but to carry on with his duties faithfully. His first course of action was to live **an exemplary life**. Personal testimony communicates much better what one is saying as the followers will always imitate the leader. Earlier Paul had given the required qualities of a pastor. These qualities would become the standard. The need for external conduct worthy of imitation cannot be emphasized more. Though passive, it is an absolute requirement. It helps to win the confidence of the congregation and they would be willing to listen when they have seen a life example.

The active duty of the pastor is to **teach the truth** (v 13). This requires him to have personal study and to prepare his messages well. He also needs to apply these words to his flock in helping them meet their personal needs. The truths of the Bible are to be taught systematically and upheld at all times. Then the people will grow and become a testimony to the community around them and become a means of multiplying disciples and continuation of missionary movement to reach out to other lands. At the same time, the young will learn from the parents and pass on to their children as well. Thus the witness of the gospel is retained in successive generations. A pastor as a teacher ought to be engaged in this ministry as his main duty and other things that contribute to the advancement of Christ's commission to the apostles will follow.

THOUGHT: Does my pastor teach the truth from the Word of God?

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor.)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-16

ACTS 20:27-32

*“...I fed
the flock.”*

A PASTOR AS A LINK IN SALVATION (II)

The command to **exhortation** is today commonly referred to as counselling. This can be done through the pulpit by addressing common problems of the believers and giving guidance for their solution. Other cases may require personal talk when confidential matters require such privacy. Whether public or private, God's Word is to be the guide in all decisions reached.

Today, the world has influenced the area of counselling. Secular psychology is applied to the extent that the Word of God is neglected and replaced with humanism. This is not only to be discouraged but is to be rejected completely. God's revelation must be the standard in each case. In the application of Scripture in counselling, one needs to learn from Bible characters like Solomon who asked wisdom from the Lord so as to know what course of action to take in difficult situations. Another is the prophet Nathan who had to confront King David because of the grievous sins of adultery and murder which he had committed. Nathan brought David to confession without much effort. Though he was fearful of the king's reaction, he did by God-given wisdom what he knew was right. Many other servants of the Lord had to confront different people of their transgressions and even though some reacted violently, their messages stayed. Exhortation is a part of Christian ministry that requires dependence on the Lord and in conformity with His will.

Any Bible teacher who is well instructed in the faith and committed to the duties of his calling cannot afford to be slow in instructing the flock, more so the needy ones. This charge to Timothy comes to those who occupy similar positions today. The cooperation of believers (together with much prayer) will greatly aid the yielding of positive results.

THOUGHT: Turn to God's Word when advice/counselling is needed.
PRAYER: May I learn much from the lives of Bible characters that I may have the wisdom to live a life that is pleasing to You, O Lord.

THURSDAY, APRIL 24

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-16

2 CORINTHIANS 10:12-18

*“...that I abuse not
my power in the gospel.”*

A PASTOR AS A LINK IN SALVATION (III)

The calling of a pastor to his office is a divine appointment as the Lord endows a person with the necessary gifts. With the endowed gifts, he will also receive recognition from the church.

This was the case with Timothy. When Paul first met him, Paul saw the potential in him and in order to remove the obstacle of acceptance among the Jews because of his Greek background, Paul (the elder pastor) circumcised him. He also instructed him on the requirements of his duties and the best methods he needed to communicate the heavenly message. Timothy was a gifted preacher and this was seen as a confirmation of his calling. This put him on the candidate list for a higher office and with that choice, the presbytery or council of elders gave him an official recognition: he was set apart for the sacred service by the laying on of hands.

Having been ordained, he was destined for a lifetime ministry. The exhortation that went with this move was that he should not neglect his gift. The use of that talent goes with the responsibilities outlined for this upcoming pastor. However, many a time, the people whom he has been called to serve would misunderstand his actions and respond unfavourably. Under such circumstances, the pastor ought to be patient yet firm on the truth. On the other hand, the believers ought to know that they are responsible to God for how they react to the counsel and instruction of their shepherd. This will determine the effectiveness of their witness before others and the blessings they will receive from the Lord. The message to the pastor of the church also goes indirectly to those whom he ministers. There is a need for mutual understanding in the maintenance of Christian fellowship: the shepherd does his part and the flock cooperates in bringing to pass a visible obedience to Christ.

THOUGHT: A pastor's ministry is a lifelong ministry. There is no retirement.

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor's commitment to his pastoral ministry.)

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-16

JOSHUA 1:8

“...that I might
meditate in thy word.”

A PASTOR AS A LINK IN SALVATION (IV)

The next word from Paul in verse 15 is the everyday attitude of Timothy in the faith. Meditate is the same word that the Lord used in charging Joshua when he took over the leadership of Israel from Moses. It was not an easy task for him to undertake. He was given to understand that the primary answer to all the difficulties that went with it is the Word of God. Note the Lord's refrain to His servant in Joshua 1:8.

Meditate means more than reading. It means a continuous preoccupation with an idea and letting it guide your decisions. Since Joshua obeyed the Lord's exhortation, the Lord also fulfilled His promise in his life for we see his faith at the end of his life was strong as ever. In addition, the Lord saw him through the hard task that was before him in the settlement of the children of Israel in the Promised Land.

Though there is no evidence that shows the end of Timothy's ministry, the mention of the Church of Ephesus in Revelation gives an idea of the progress of the church in the intervening years. The weaknesses mentioned in the message may not be due to the pastor's failure but other people may have been responsible. Bible history ended without telling us much in this regard, but with the reputation given in Paul's writing of Timothy, one would be led to the conclusion that he gave heed to the instructions given to him. The value of his ministry was indeed evident to all even at the time of writing of this epistle. This is what every ministry should be: it ought to be acknowledged by all that it is of God and the one who has been called is a true shepherd and not an hireling (cf. John 10:1-10).

A minister will serve in the office of his calling meaningfully and remain in that call, never wavering as he learns to trust the Lord who called him. The part he plays goes a long way in bridging the gap between the Lord and those whom He has chosen to inherit eternal salvation.

THOUGHT: How do I meditate on the Word of God daily?

PRAYER: “*Thy word is a lamp unto my path.*” May I use it daily to guide my walk every day.

SATURDAY, APRIL 26

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-15

LEVITICUS 19:32

*“...submit yourselves
unto the elder...”*

RELATIONSHIP WITH HONOUR AND LOVE (I)

In the church, and in the community at large, there are different classes of people. Among Christians, there is a need of guidelines for interpersonal relationships that will not manifest any selfish or sinful motives. Today's text deals with this subject. It touches on widows, elders, elder women and youth. Paul's exhortations were meant to encourage a harmonious spirit of love in the church where the young pastor had been called to minister.

Paul was here restating the requirements of the fifth commandment. A wider understanding of this precept is that all superiors deserve courteous treatment from the juniors. The elder women also have to be treated with the same courtesy. These instructions may be natural in some traditional communities but they all originate from the Law of God. The church must be the best example in this regard. Such a manifestation of obedience should not be lacking among the people of God. When the Scripture forbids anything, logically it commands that which is acceptable. Thus the prohibition not to rebuke an elder means also that he is to be treated kindly and with gentle speech. The presence of such relationship is a showcase of Christian love. This should come automatically in the church when sinners have the experience of the second birth and are endued with the Holy Spirit. As much as all these come by the grace of God, those who hear the words of God have a human responsibility to ensure that the heavenly gift bears fruit in their lives.

The character of a Christian that results from this conformity becomes a testimony to unbelievers and encourages the faith of those who believe. It is in this active obedience that the fruits are manifested. This is God's design for all who are endued with grace to conform to His revealed will.

THOUGHT: (Read Proverbs 16:31.)

PRAYER: Lord, forgive my lack of respect for those who are my senior. May I honour You by obeying Your instruction.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 27

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-15

ACTS 16:12-15, 40

"... help those women which laboured with me in the gospel..."

RELATIONSHIP WITH HONOUR AND LOVE (II)

The young are primarily targeted in the command because they do not have the benefit of experience and at the same time they are more active than the older and are prone to disobedience. This means that they need a little more effort in order that they be of the same mind with the elders. In addition, the young have to appreciate the elder ones for their guidance and instruction, and honour them. However, the young have to realise also that when they honour the elder ones, they are actually honouring God.

In the same breath, the apostle said that elder women are to be treated as mothers, this is the same honour that is due to the fathers. These include women who are widows, the less privileged, as they do not have the support of their husbands. The double role which they play at home tends to magnify problems for them, and in one way or another the church is affected as there will always be such members.

Paul gave guidelines at length regarding the treatment of these mothers. They ought to be shown piety at home as this is good and acceptable before God. They at the same time must be worthy of that honour by a manifestation of a blameless character and fulfilling their home duties. Paul's guiding principles also showed that such widows must have a high standard of integrity and they can be included in the service of the church as officials. They are not to occupy themselves with self pity, but be equally responsible to God as anybody else. This also applies to women who are never married. They are also to live exemplary lives.

Elsewhere in Paul's writing he commended a number of women who served him in his missionary journeys and gave their lives to serve the Lord. There was at least one business woman and widows as well who rendered a commendable service to the apostle's ministry. This ought to be seen in the church even today.

THOUGHT: Mothers are to be honoured as much as fathers.

PRAYER: (Pray for the older women in your midst.)

MONDAY, APRIL 28

1 TIMOTHY 5:6, 14-15

PROVERBS 1:1-9

*“...a young man
void of understanding.”*

RELATIONSHIP WITH HONOUR AND LOVE (III)

The relationship between the youth both male and female ought to be that of brothers and sisters. There is a need of godly discipline and restrain from sinful attitudes. Paul's statement in verse 6 is equally applicable to the youth. Brother and sister relationship is both godly and honourable, but it must be understood that temptations to sin also come from people close to you.

The younger people are counselled on marriage and the need to guide the home. Though verse 14 is directed to young women, it is also logical that the husband is also in the marriage and the responsibilities fall on both sides. Paul was aware of the consequences of giving in to sin; one being that the community of believers will receive a bad reputation and this becomes a pathway to the fold of Satan.

These negative remarks are meant to be a warning that when there is no obedience to God's precepts, the end is disastrous. The text affirms that even then some have already turned away.

Today, there is a large scale moral breakdown in the world and among Christians. Modern ecumenical liberal church leaders shamelessly advocate sinful lifestyles, which is another term used for same sex marriages and other perversions. These same sins led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the ancient days. Thus while we witness this rebellion today we are to remember that the wages of sin is death. God will not spare such from facing His justice.

The guidelines given here are useful for Christian growth as they address many harmful practices that we see today. We need to commit our ways to Christ as we put on the new man.

THOUGHT: What does 1 Timothy 5:6 mean to me?

PRAYER: (Pray for the young people in your midst.)

TUESDAY, APRIL 29

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-25

1 PETER 5:1-4

“...not given to
filthy lucre...”

THE UNDERSTANDING OF PASTORAL DUTY (I)

The church is a community of Christians who come together to serve God and out of necessity there are officials who administer the programmes of the church. Those who minister in preaching and those who serve tables as well as ordinary Christians are treated equally. Even in heaven there will be no difference for even Christ said that there will be neither male nor female.

The order of church management began to take shape in the book of Acts. It continues from the appointment of the twelve apostles by the Lord Jesus Christ, and later the appointment of deacons to attend to certain tasks so that the elders can give themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer. This became a pattern for church order.

Timothy as a minister of the gospel was an elder and was one of those whom Paul said deserved a “*double honour*” (v 17). A simple word of thanks or any other act of courtesy to an elder is a way of showing honour and is the beginning of harmony in the church. Mutual understanding in Christian fellowship provides a comfortable environment for the discharge of duties.

Besides the honour that ministers of the Word deserve, their material needs should also be taken care of so that they may attend to their ministries without the cares of physical needs. Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4 to support his point (v 18). Paul himself set a good example in giving and receiving in that he strove to fulfil the duties of his calling of preaching the gospel and only accepted gifts when offered but did not ask for it. He did not allow the lack of support to stand in the way of his missionary service. Whenever he was able, he also gave to those who were in need.

THOUGHT: How well does my church take care of my pastor?

PRAYER: Help me and my church to love and care for my pastor as much he loves and cares for my church.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-25

PROVERBS 22:1

*“...a bishop must
be blameless...”*

THE UNDERSTANDING OF PASTORAL DUTY (II)

It is true that those who preach the gospel have need of material support and Christians are responsible to provide, but this need must not be allowed to override the need to fulfil the duties of pastoral calling. Proverbs 22:1 says that it is better to choose a good name than silver and gold. Thus the text places the reputation of a pastor above material possessions. In verse 19, the apostle counseled that no accusation should be received against an elder except in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Any charge must be supported by sufficient evidence. Their reputation must be guarded not only for their own sake but also for the sake of the testimony and sacredness of the ministry in which they are called. The apostle said this because it is not strange to find Christians making unbecoming remarks about their leaders. The exercise of Christian love and perpetual consciousness of the calling to salvation in Christ would overcome such an attitude.

Since the pastoral office is held in high regard, it is important that those who hold the position should discharge their duties accordingly. Paul used a very strong language in charging Timothy, and he appealed to God and elect angels as witnesses (v 21). One of the qualities (as listed in chapter 3) requires a pastor to be blameless. This will enable him to deal rightly with those in his congregation who sin. It is of utmost importance to exercise equal treatment in dealing with such cases because to do otherwise would have far reaching implications not only for the congregation but also for the pastor himself. It ought to be repeated in the same breath as it is extremely important that every holder of the sacred office adhere to the principles of the holy writ in the discharge of his duties.

THOUGHT: God's calling into the full-time ministry is a high calling and ought not to be taken lightly but gravely and seriously.

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor.)

THURSDAY, MAY 1

1 TIMOTHY 6:1-10

1 JOHN 2:16-17

*“Every one that is proud in heart
is an abomination to the Lord...”*

**RELATIONSHIP IN A
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
AND MONEY (I)**

Today's reading addresses the problem of pride and greed in the Christian community. And Paul saw it necessary to give Timothy guidelines as to how to respond to them. Both vices come out of a covetous heart. Paul repeated the same old warning against attitudes coming out of a depraved heart. The first part addresses the question of pride. Verses 1 and 2 must be read with an understanding of the background of the epistle to Philemon. Philemon's relationship with his servant Onesimus illustrates the point here.

Paul was addressing people like Onesimus who may have developed feuds. In a broader sense, Paul was recalling the requirements of the fifth commandment (to honour father and mother) which applies to the honour due to one's superiors. However, when pride is allowed to have its way, it leads to a transgression of God's Law and our relationship with others is no more in harmony.

Masters are to be counted worthy of all honour, that God's name be not blasphemed. Servants and masters in a Christian community are brethren. They must fulfil the duties required of them to the best of their ability. Yet, even the apostles were not free from the desire to be above others. James and John requested Jesus through their mother that they may occupy the highest position in His kingdom. On another occasion, they asked Jesus as to who was to be the greatest among them. These revealed their hearts. In both incidents, the answer given was not what they expected and though they asked innocently the proof of depravity is unmasked in their questioning. While it is easy to judge them, we must search our own heart to ensure that a preoccupation in seeking an exalted position for ourselves is overcome. The manifestation of pride has to be absent both in our thoughts and our actions.

THOUGHT: Once I say I am humble, I am being proud already.

PRAYER: Help me to see my own pride, O Lord, in my every day life. May I come daily to confess and repent of my sin of pride.

FRIDAY, MAY 2

1 TIMOTHY 6:1-10

LUKE 3:12-14

*“...whatsoever state I am
therewith to be content.”*

RELATIONSHIP IN A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND MONEY (II)

Godliness with contentment is great gain. Verse 6 is a key statement in this section. Pride leads to disputing between men of corrupt minds. When the truth is absent, people come to think that material gain is equal with godliness, but Paul disagreed with this and made his golden declaration that becomes the antidote for greed. He told Timothy to keep away from people who have such thoughts. He echoed the words of Job who manifested a spirit of contentment although he had lost everything. Paul said that he brought nothing into the world and that it was certain he would carry nothing out. These words are most practical and most obvious, yet the carnal mind is not able to comprehend them. And the unsubmitive Christian is unable to make them govern his character.

The apostle brought to mind the words of the Lord Jesus that the basic requirements are only food and clothing and when these are provided for then there should be contentment. It may be helpful to turn to the Sermon on the Mount where the Lord spoke at length on this subject and He showed that God truly cares for those who are faithful and obedient to His commands. He will not fail to provide for them.

The apostle also turned his attention to the rich and showed that they are an easy prey to temptation and that they actually yield to its snare of foolishness and hurtful lusts and are drawn to destruction and perdition. The poor stands a better chance of sustaining their faith than the rich. Later in the chapter, Paul specifically addressed them with proper counsel.

THOUGHT: Once I fulfil my dream of making my first million, I will dream of making my second million.

PRAYER: Forgive me, Lord, for my covetousness and unsatiated appetite for material acquisitions. Grant instead a hunger and thirst for things that have eternal value.

SATURDAY, MAY 3

1 TIMOTHY 6:1-10

1 KINGS 21:1-16

*“He that is greedy of gain
troubleth his own house...”*

**RELATIONSHIP IN A
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
AND MONEY (III)**

Verse 5 also applies to the rich for they think that the more they have the more godly they will become. This is why the “Prosperity Gospel” is so popular today. It teaches that poverty is a curse of sin and therefore a man of God cannot be poor. Verse 10 clearly states that the love of money is the root of all evil and covetousness leads to error in doctrine and stress. This verse must be quoted and used correctly. It is not money that is evil but the love of money. It is not only right to earn money by righteous means but it is also necessary in order that we may have our physical needs met. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul commanded that those who do not work should not eat. Our hard work will improve our financial status so that besides supplying our needs, we can also give towards the extension of the gospel.

Apart from the apostle’s counsel here, the rest of the Bible has much to say on this subject. Take for example the story of King Ahab in the Old Testament. As a king, he had much wealth and he could own anything that money can buy but he coveted poor Naboth’s vineyard (1Kgs 21:1-16). Through the scheming of his wicked wife Jezebel, he had Naboth murdered and took his vineyard, but God, to whom vengeance belongs, visited his evil act by death. Thus the place where the dogs leaked Naboth’s blood was the same place where his own blood was shed and likewise the dogs helped themselves. The story fits well with Paul’s description of covetousness and its destructive consequences.

When there is mutual respect for one another and when we have established a working order for handling our finances and wealth, there should be no problem in receiving satisfaction and blessings from God. Exercising self-control over both relationship and money, pride and greed will not have a place in our lives.

THOUGHT: Temperance is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Do I have it?

PRAYER: May Your Spirit help me to exercise self-control over my relationships with people and over my finances.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 4
1 TIMOTHY 6:11-13
GENESIS 39:5-21

*"Flee also
youthful lusts..."*

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL SECURITY (I)

God has called us out of the world and set us free from sin. He also showed us the way to go so that our faith may be sustained. We were captive to the enemy but He sets us at liberty and Paul says that we should not again be entangled with the yoke of bondage, otherwise it will be as the proverbial escape from the bear and running to the lion. It is not safety at all, only a change has taken place but it does not help.

In today's text, Paul gave three imperatives that Timothy ought to obey. These form a three-point message which in the English Bible can be represented by the letter F.

The first imperative is to flee from the world of sin. "*These things*" are the specific evils that he had earlier mentioned. When an alarm is given, there must be an instant response. A one-word command "*flee*" is enough to save one from an imminent peril. When God says flee, none should question His order if he wants to live. In the Scripture, Joseph took heed of God's call and fled from the advances of Potiphar's wife and he was saved from disaster. We are familiar with this story and how he risked imprisonment rather than sin and we also know the end of his story that God honoured his faithfulness (Gen 39:8-9).

Fleeing from danger brings assurance of safety and every child of God must always be alert to the dangers around. We could list many things we need to flee from. However, the main fact is that when we are regenerated, we come out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Then all the works of darkness must have no place in our Christian life. At the appearance of any of these works, a necessary move must be taken to keep away from it.

THOUGHT: Fleeing is the first step to safety.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to have nothing to do with all that are against You.

MONDAY, MAY 5

1 TIMOTHY 6:11-13

2 TIMOTHY 2:19-26

*“...many of his disciples went back,
and walk no more with him.”*

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL SECURITY (II)

The second imperative says we are to follow “*after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*” Righteousness and godliness describe an upright character. In all his dealings, the believer must manifest a clean conduct and this serves as a silent testimony of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in him. Faith and love are manifestations of a heavenly character. Love is also descriptive of God’s character in relation to man. The love for God is shown in the lives of people who have given their lives for Him and were willing to endure even persecution for the sake of the gospel of Christ and were wholly yielded to Him. Faith is also seen in trusting God for salvation and the ability to persevere all the way to the saving of the soul. These virtues are twins that cannot be separated.

Patience and meekness are the right responses expected of recipients of the grace of God. When believers follow these virtues, their witness will have an impact on the world. A patient and meek person always have no trouble relating to others. He will win their hearts.

The third imperative is fight. There is a time to be meek and patient but there is also a time to fight. Verse 12 explains the kind of aggression Paul was referring to. It is a battle for the faith, in both offensive and defensive ways. Evangelism and shepherding God’s flock is the former, while the latter refers to the resisting of false teachers and their doctrines. Any engagement in battle is done with the intention to win. The victory that follows a good fight for the faith is eternal life and this is the ultimate reward of every believer.

These three imperatives are steps to spiritual security for all who profess to be disciples of Christ.

THOUGHT: Is it possible that I may “*walk no more with*” (John 6:66) Jesus?

PRAYER: Keep me walking close to You, O Lord Jesus, and grant me the courage to fight when there is a need to fight a good fight of faith.

TUESDAY, MAY 6

1 TIMOTHY 6:14-16

1 PETER 2:9-12

“...be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE HOLINESS OF BELIEVERS (I)

There is a close link between the attributes of Christ and the holiness of believers. He is Lord and believers are His subjects. In His position, He rules over the affairs of men and has a code that He requires of them to observe. It is a relationship between the superior and the inferior. The latter has to yield to the former and obey without question. It is the holiness of believers that counts when it comes to relationship with God. The value of that connection lies in the grace of God above all things.

To “*keep this commandment without spot*” (v 14) means to strive to the best of one’s ability to sustain the faith and manifest a life worthy of the calling of Christ. It spells out what holiness is all about and the expectation God has of all those who hold to the truth of the Scripture as a guide to their lives. When anyone’s reputation is in question, the damage needs to be cleared with open testimony that none is able to speak against it. As much as these words were directed to a pastor, it carries the same requirements shown in chapter 3.

The phrase “*until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (v 14) tells of the time that the relationship has to continue. The implication here is that all who believe are to remain faithful as long as they live. In saying this also the apostle touched on another doctrine which is common to believers, that of Jesus’ Second Coming. Paul was dealing with the keeping of the commandment but he also laid emphasis on this other important expectation of God’s people: the Lord’s glorious appearing. Paul also added in verse 15 a superlative description: “*who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.*” The usage of these words is to magnify the greatness of the Lord and to prepare the congregation for a proper response.

THOUGHT: Holy living is a commandment of God.

PRAYER: I praise You, O Lord, for You are the most holy God! Help me to progress in my holiness till I see You face to face.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

1 TIMOTHY 6:14-16

1 PETER 1:14-21

*“Who is like thee,
lorious in holiness...?”*

THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE HOLINESS OF BELIEVERS (II)

“Potentate” (v 15) means that Jesus is a Ruler of all and the only One. If He is a ruler of kings and lords of the earth, then His power is immense as one can imagine the might of all the worldly rulers and how their subjects bow before them. Keeping the commandment without spot and unrebukeable is a responsibility of those who yield their lives to Christ.

Christ being immortal expresses His eternity and His ability to give life. He is the way, the truth and the life. He was going to heaven to prepare a place for those who believe in Him. The Lord does not share His attributes with any of His creatures. He stands alone, *“dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto”* (v 16). Nevertheless, He came to the world and lived among men and shared everything with them. Only those who had the light of the Holy Spirit could comprehend the purpose of all that He came to do in the world and even today it is the same, only the regenerate will recognize Him.

The position of Christ and what He has done qualifies Him to receive honour and power everlasting. Men give honour to the rulers of this world and to people with some higher position in the society. They are usually done out of fear or with expectation of some benefits. The reverence given to Christ is out of love for Him and because of what He has done for the world.

Though it is common to remark in response to greetings that we are well in Christ, it is with the work that Christ has done for us that we mention His Name and this is inseparable from holiness. Christ is holy and His disciples also must be holy (1 Pet 1:16).

THOUGHT: From the time of conversion, I am to grow in holiness. How is my growth?

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for saving my soul. May I dedicate my life to following after You.

THURSDAY, MAY 8

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

PROVERBS 22

*“He that trusteth in
his riches shall fall...”*

ALL GOOD THINGS COME FROM GOD (I)

Wealth is good and we all desire to gain as much as possible. Those who are blessed with plenty are responsible for careful handling of what the Lord has bestowed on them. In every society, there will be wealthy and poor people. Paul gave counsel to those who were blessed with much. He went directly to the point in verse 17. He identified the rich as a troublesome group in the community even among Christians. And he was conversant with potential problems that faced them.

It is true that material possessions can easily lead one to be boastful, thinking that one is above everybody else and can even have the right of veto in decision-making. When such people bring their secular status into the church they will always create disorder since their conduct will not be based on principles but on their financial status. Paul did not want Timothy to be ensnared by such people so he exhorted them to overcome their pride and humble themselves before the Lord. There should be no connection at all between their wealth and their faith in Christ. Christians should relate to one another as brethren of equal status before the Lord.

The rich are also exhorted not to trust in uncertain riches. People who possess large sums of money sometimes think that their security lies in their wealth. It is even more acute presently not only because of corruption but also because legal insurances are offered for different purposes. Those who are able to put their money into these securities are usually of the opinion that money is all important but the text rightly says that riches are uncertain. Those who are familiar with the money market will confirm this to be true. A person can buy a life insurance policy, but it cannot save his life when death knocks at the door. So it is also with medical insurance. It does not guarantee a cure for sickness.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 37:16.)

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for blessing me with many material blessings, but may I not trust in these material things. May I trust only in You.

FRIDAY, MAY 9

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

2 KINGS 5:9-27

*“And Abram was
very rich...”*

ALL GOOD THINGS COME FROM GOD (II)

If there is anyone who passed the test for good handling of riches, it is the old patriarch Job. He was the richest man in his generation and had a happy family. He had all that men desired to have in this world, but, alas, all were lost in one day and that was when his heart was revealed. He had never trusted in his riches knowing that they were uncertain (Job 1:20-22). There is a need for believers to evaluate the short-term value of riches as compared to the eternal destiny that obedience to God's precepts would bring to them. This leads to the next point which stresses the positive side of wealth.

When Paul spoke against trusting in uncertain riches, he was directing believers to trust in God only. This was what Jesus was stressing when He responded to the devil's demand that He changed stones into bread if He were the Son of God. Jesus cited Scripture (Matt 4:4). The Lord has provided for us good food to enjoy and to sustain us and He taught the disciples to pray to God for daily bread, but food is not the end in itself. It is God who gives us all good things and none of us should lay our hearts on things that perish. The servants of the Lord in the past had also learned this lesson well and those who did not faced regrettable consequences. Prophet Elisha was one person who was granted the grace to learn to trust God alone. At the time of his calling as a prophet, he gave up his job as a ploughman and even offered his oxen as sacrifice. His commitment was revealed clearly when Naaman the Syrian army officer who had been healed offered him a large sum of money and clothes. He would not receive even a cent. It was Gehazi his servant who had the opposite view. Gehazi coveted and then lied to receive those goods from the Syrian and he was struck with leprosy for that deceit.

THOUGHT: (Read Matthew 4:4.)

PRAYER: May I not be drawn away by Your blessing of riches. Instead, teach me, Father, to use it to honour You.

SATURDAY, MAY 10

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

JOB 1:20-22

“...Dorcas...full of good works and almsdeeds...”

ALL GOOD THINGS COME FROM GOD (III)

Paul was not discouraging people from acquiring wealth. People are encouraged to work to provide for their own needs (2 Thess 3:10). We would be lying if we say that we are not happy with our riches and that we like to be poor. It is right and just to gain wealth but it must not take the place of God in our lives. If we have to lose riches for the sake of Christ then let it be. If we have the right attitude towards these riches, we will be the happiest people. Verse 17 rightly says that God “*giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*”

There is also a spiritual responsibility when it comes to handling riches. We are to do good by giving liberally to those who are needy, showing our love for them. In so doing we must remember that these works have no merit for our salvation but they are evidence that we have been redeemed by Christ. In the early Church, the disciples were so overwhelmed by what they have already received in knowing Christ that they were willing to sell their possessions and share with those in need. Though their zeal was short-lived, it still spoke of the love in their hearts. They represented Christ before the world around them. Readiness to provide for those who are needy is part and parcel of the gospel. One disciple who demonstrated this love was Dorcas. Her testimony was magnified when she suddenly died. Many wept and they called Peter to their aid. By God’s grace, she was raised back to life (Act 9:39-41). That new lease of life was part of the rewards for her good works and more eternal rewards awaited her. Good works communicate the heart of the person and more so the Holy Spirit that indwells that person.

Whether rich or poor, we are responsible to God for all that we do. As much as God gives us all good things to enjoy, it is our duty to glorify Him.

THOUGHT: How mindful am I of the needs of those who are worse off than I am?

PRAYER: Grant me a loving and caring heart, O Lord.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 11

1 TIMOTHY 6:20-21

ACTS 16:1-3

“...his word... is
committed unto me...”

THE EPILOGUE OF 1st TIMOTHY (I)

In his final words to Timothy, Paul did not speak of anything outside the gospel of Christ. He sounded like he would not see Timothy again. “*O Timothy*” expresses the weight of his speech and the feelings of his heart. He gives a command and things to avoid.

The key word here is “*keep*” (v 20). It is the same Greek word used to mean “to guard a prisoner.” A soldier in the Roman government would understand that to mean that a prisoner cannot be let free under any circumstances. So Timothy must not let his commitment to God escape. These things that had been committed to him included his knowledge of God’s Word. As God’s trusted servant, he was to guard these with great care.

Timothy was first introduced to Paul in the cities of Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1-3) and he was “*well reported of by the brethren.*” Paul found in him something extraordinary and counted him as faithful so that he could be trained and invited to serve in the pastoral office. The apostle initiated that move and Timothy was very much willing to take up the challenge. Since he came from a Greek family he would not easily gain acceptance among the Jews. Even though Paul knew that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, he still went ahead and circumcised Timothy for the sake of the Jews so that he would gain easy communication with the majority of the Jews. It was from that first encounter that he became a co-worker with Paul, this step became a second commitment in the life of Timothy, and he was now called to be a minister of the gospel. He had all the qualities that Paul was looking for in those whom he trained to serve with him. He consented to the call to serve as a pastor which was a most important step that put his name in early Church history.

THOUGHT: How committed am I to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

PRAYER: Forgive, O Lord, my lack of commitment to You.

MONDAY, MAY 12

1 TIMOTHY 6:20-21

JEREMIAH 23:28-32

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay...”

THE EPILOGUE OF 1st TIMOTHY (II)

Not all Christians are called to be pastors, but all are called to salvation in Christ. In addition each is given talents to discharge the duties God has for everyone. In the end there will be eternal rewards for each. Thus the exhortation in the text applies to all who have made a pledge of any kind to the service of Christ.

The text mentions profane language and vain babbling as some of the things to be avoided. This shows that a believer's speech must be right. He must judge well what he hears and also choose rightly what to see. This requires that he keeps away from bad company. We cannot avoid mixing with unbelievers. But this is when we have to exercise our faith. The Christian child must not join his friends in using foul language. The Christian woman too must guard her speech and not say anything that is not worthy of a Christian. The Christian man too must not talk about useless matters, wasting his time and polluting his mind. More so, a pastor cannot be part of such careless conduct.

Besides one's manner of life, there are also false doctrines, *“science falsely so called.”* A pastor must preach pure biblical doctrines and at the same time every Christian must hold to the true doctrines. It was with prophetic foresight that Paul wrote these words because many years after, Charles Darwin came up with the theory of evolution challenging the Genesis story of creation. Today, some professing “evangelical Christians” have bought into his idea and are challenging those who believe in creation. But the Bible cannot be clearer.

Thus, Paul's charge to Timothy here was to build by keeping and avoiding.

THOUGHT: (Read James 5:12.)

PRAYER: May I guard my mouth, O Lord, that every word spoken may be pleasing to You.

TUESDAY, MAY 13

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-3

JEREMIAH 48:10

“...always abounding in
the work of the Lord...”

A PASTOR'S CONCERN (I)

In this second epistle, Paul showed his concern and the magnitude of his relationship with the younger pastor. This father-and-son connection is clearly expressed in this prologue. The apostle first stressed his position as a servant of Christ and the common faith. These served as a link between the two pastors. The elder's disposition towards the younger represents the example of Christ and the heart of a true shepherd. It has a message for all who are called to serve in the vineyard of Christ and also to those who hear the message that they proclaim.

In asserting his qualifications, the apostle was calling Timothy to attention and to give him a hearing in that capacity. This was not simply a personal letter but it represents important issues pertaining to faith and to the ministry of the apostle to God's flock at large. Timothy as a pastor was a channel through which his message could reach many believers. He needed to improve his understanding of the gospel and to ensure effective communication. The letter was not simply to encourage him, but also to give him instructions on handling situations and sustaining the gospel ministry in the midst of a hostile world. Paul wanted Timothy to listen with undivided attention, thus he introduced himself with the title of his calling. Another observer (in the Open Bible, pages 1375 to 1376) noted that Paul commissioned Timothy to faithfully endure and carry on the work that the condemned apostle must now relinquish and exhorted Timothy to use the Word of God constantly in order to overcome growing obstacles to the spread of the gospel. It was also preparing him for a time when the apostle would be no more on the scene. This was about to come for Paul was almost certain that he was not going to come out of prison. Nevertheless the gospel ministry had to continue in the hands of those who remained and Timothy was one of them and he needed encouragement.

THOUGHT: What “*work of the Lord*” am I doing?

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor.)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-3

1 SAMUEL 12:14

“...they shall serve
the Lord their God...”

A PASTOR’S CONCERN (II)

When Paul said that he was an apostle by the will of God, he was also indicating that all those who were called did not enter on their own volition but were assured and appointed from above. Timothy was to carry on in that calling with that understanding, so that no room would be allowed for boasting. It is also true to anyone who serves in the sacred ministry. The appointment to the office is not by their own will but of God; it is also an opportunity for them to exercise their gifts.

One gift that stood out in the ministry of Paul was that of writing. He contributed the largest number of books to the New Testament in the form of letters that he wrote to individuals and churches. He mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:22 that every means should be used to save the lost, and he set an example by entering every door open to him to give the message of salvation. It is true also that throughout church history, writing has become a valuable legacy of outstanding servants of the Lord. A slogan that has been coined to encourage this ministry even in the church today is, “Publish or Perish.” All ministers of the Word ought to include writing as part of their ministry.

The opening remarks also opened the heart of the apostle to the younger pastor. He called him “*dearly beloved son.*” What a great encouragement! He wished him well as a form of Christian greeting and did not forget to mention the source of their bond: “*God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” The repeated mention of the name of Christ was meant to highlight a doctrine that is unique to Christianity: only Jesus saves. It is because of that common interest that the two servants became so close in their association.

THOUGHT: (Read Daniel 3:28.)

PRAYER: May Your chosen and called servants be faithful in their ministry.

THURSDAY, MAY 15

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-3

DANIEL 9:2-19

*“...My house shall be called
the house of prayer...”*

A PASTOR'S CONCERN (III)

Paul needed successors when old age set in or when circumstances did not allow him to continue in his service. He nurtured Timothy to fulfill that purpose and the younger pastor became the bishop of the church at Ephesus. Paul planted this church and shepherded it for three years. When Timothy took over, there was no record to show they ever argued over the leadership. Paul gave him wholehearted support in that sacred service. This 2nd epistle to Timothy was part of his contribution to promote Timothy's effectiveness in his pastoral duties.

The apostle's attitude towards his spiritual son shows also his determination to ensure that no obstacle lay in his way of accomplishing what he was called to do. He was full of thanksgiving for what God had done for him. This was an expression of satisfaction with God's calling for him and also that he had seen the fruits of his labour. He also gave thanks for his ancestry in that God's revelation came to the world through his nation. He had a clear conscience in all he was doing, knowing that he had the stamp of heavenly authority. It is also expressive of holiness in his manner of life.

He continued to pray for Timothy at all times because he knew that only God could sustain him in the responsibility that was before him and this was the best way to support him. If believers cannot do anything for their pastors, they can pray for them.

Paul's relationship with Timothy in the Christian service is a testimony that is worthy of imitation by all. It is a demonstration of true Christian fellowship. Our regard for one another must always be heavenward. There has to be obedience to heavenly communication in order to bring this to pass. This ought to be every pastor's concern.

THOUGHT: What can I do to support my pastor's ministry?

PRAYER: Keep me daily coming to You in prayer, O Lord.

FRIDAY, MAY 16

2 TIMOTHY 1:4-8

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7

*“...love covereth
all sins.”*

FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN SERVICE (I)

In today's reading, the senior pastor's words were geared towards effectiveness. Christian virtues and the demonstration of such character are applicable to all Christians, both clergy and laity. The writing of this letter was a means of promoting Christian service. In showering praise on Timothy, Paul had the intention to make him commit himself to the service to the best of his ability.

Christian love is the lead in Paul's approach. He longed for personal contact so that he could admonish him and render answers to any questions the student may have. Even today with advance technology in communication, there is no medium that replaces person to person conversation. Paul was a master communicator and he had explored all avenues of putting across his messages both to Christians in churches and to his co-workers. In Christian ministry, love takes the lead and there has to be ways of expressing love. The apostle lived up to his words (in 1 Corinthians 13) in his affection towards his spiritual son.

His longing to see Timothy was meant for consolation and fellowship. The church was facing triple opposition: from the Jews, the unbelieving Greeks and the Roman government. Thus besides internal duties and church problems, the external threat was real. About the time of writing, Paul was facing a death sentence for being a Christian minister and Timothy also had to walk the tightrope under those circumstances. Fellowship with a person who understands the deep feelings of the heart in those situations is a great encouragement as it proves that patience works. It takes the grace of God to stand in such circumstances. Timothy was in such a situation. The Lord works in the hearts through people, and Paul wanted to be an instrument of consolation to his pupil.

THOUGHT: Do I love those around me? How do I express my love for them?

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for loving me. May I love others with the love of Christ.

SATURDAY, MAY 17

2 TIMOTHY 1:4-8

1 PETER 4:10

“...let them learn first
to show piety at home...”

FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN SERVICE (II)

Tears of joy flow from love. This is Paul's expression at meeting with Timothy. In Christian relation, we cannot underestimate the value of travelling to distant places to encourage those of like-minded faith.

After love, godly background is another factor to be treasured. Paul saw in Timothy his unfeigned faith and attributed it to the parents who fed him with the spiritual food of the Holy Writ. It was a heritage to be desired and all who are privileged to share Timothy's home education ought to pray for a double portion of their parents' spirit for effective performance of the duties before them. In recent church history, there is one who would stand on this platform: the 19th century English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon. His autobiography says that both his father and grandfather were pastors. Since he became a pastor at the age of sixteen, the three of them were in active service at the same time. The young Charles excelled in his ministry above all preachers and left a legacy that earned him the title “Prince of Preachers.” Even though little is said about his parents, their role in nurturing their son cannot be underestimated. It is hoped that such testimonies would encourage all godly parents and children to trust God to use their home effort to yield spiritual fruits. This will be a benefit not only to them but to the Church of Christ as a whole as it did in the case of Timothy.

The treasure of a godly home is followed by the discovery of God's gift. Thereafter as the apostle put it, “*stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.*” This leads to the effective application of that gift to render service in God's vineyard. It ought to be exploited to the maximum for the profit of those who have believed in Christ and those seeking the way to eternal life (Eph 4:7, 12).

THOUGHT: (Read Proverbs 17:6.)

PRAYER: (Pray for people you know who are parents of young children.)

LORD'S DAY, MAY 18

2TIMOTHY 1:4-8

PSALM 1:1-3

*"...the branch cannot
bear fruit of itself..."*

FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN SERVICE (III)

Paul as his mentor saw the gift in Timothy and had him to confirm his willingness to serve by laying hands on him. Acceptance of ordination is a pledge of faithfulness and one is responsible to God in that commitment. As indicated earlier it is the power of God that gives one the ability to function even in difficult conditions. So Paul said that *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (v 7). This is all that is needed to fulfil their God-given duty.

In making every effort to bring to pass the responsibilities of God's calling, there are always negative aspects to be put into consideration. There must be a readiness to overcome these and go on to victory. There must be a positive disposition in one's heart towards Christ and thus Paul said that we must not be ashamed of his testimony. (This is also stressed by the Lord Jesus in His discourses.) A Christian cannot be ashamed to acknowledge the Lord when necessary and more so to share the same faith with others with the aim of bringing them to salvation. If other Christians are persecuted for their faith, as Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter, believers ought to identify themselves with them. In addition, they should be willing to do everything possible to assist in their needs and if necessary, to suffer also with them. While doing so, they should remember whom they are serving: the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

Love is the first law for a child of God and a godly home is the greatest treasure a child can have. When matured, it is his duty to go out and bear fruits for the Lord to the best of his ability for much has been given to him. The spiritual gifts must be used to the utmost, even during times of opposition.

THOUGHT: (Read 1 Corinthians 14:12.)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to use my spiritual gifts to serve You and to glorify Your Name.

MONDAY, MAY 19

2 TIMOTHY 1:9-12

HEBREWS 5:8-9

“...the grace of God
that bringeth salvation...”

GOD’S PLAN FOR SALVATION REVISITED (I)

God’s plan of salvation for man is a theme that runs through the Bible. The purpose of revisiting this topic is because this is the heart of the gospel and no communication will be complete without reference to it. In the present text, Paul came back to it and outlined the doctrine and reaffirmed it by his own testimony.

Salvation is the work of God the Father. He saved us and called us with a holy calling (v 9). In His eternal plan for our salvation, He first chose us before the foundation of the world, as Paul made it clear in Ephesians 1:4. The realization of that election begins with calling and Bible teachers have identified this in two parts: external and internal calling. The external calling is through evangelism: the presentation and offering of salvation in Christ to sinners, together with earnest exhortation to accept Christ by faith in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The second is internal calling. Although this distinction is made, the calling of God is really one. Internal calling is really the external call made effective by the operation of the Holy Spirit coming from the Word of God. This calling cannot be subjected to change or withdrawn. It is evident from this that God is the source of salvation. He will definitely call those who are to be saved. It is a holy calling and it implies that the respondents are required to be endued with holiness. This sanctity is needful because God’s nature is incompatible with sin. Sins must be laid aside before one can approach God. In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian felt great relief and determined endurance when his burden fell off his back at Calvary. This ought to be the experience of all who accept God’s calling.

The motive behind God’s work is nothing but grace alone. This is a doctrine that is clear in Scripture and it tells us that man does not work to merit his salvation.

THOUGHT: “*Salvation is of the Lord*” (Jonah 2:9b).

PRAYER: Though there is no good thing in me, yet You have, out of Your own good pleasure, saved me. May my life be a life lived in gratitude to Your lovingkindness.

TUESDAY, MAY 20
2 TIMOTHY 1:9-12
1 CORINTHIANS 15

*“He will swallow
up death in victory...”*

GOD’S PLAN FOR SALVATION REVISITED (II)

God’s plan of salvation was fulfilled in the manifestation of the Saviour (v 10). This appearance is well documented in the four gospels. In this manifestation, He accomplished four things that stand out. He became man so that He could identify with them and also suffered and died to pay the penalty of their sin in becoming a sacrifice and at the same time a priest. This work is summarized in Hebrews 4:15. The atonement for sin was thus fulfilled.

Victory over death is an ever existing desire of all people, but man in no way has any authority over death. Christ has that power and He has abolished death. He did this by His resurrection and brought life and immortality through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 15 is a lengthy chapter wholly devoted to the merits of the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection proves that it is possible for those whom He came to save to have life again. This will be the completion of God’s plan for salvation.

The benefits received through Christ are a treasure of great value that must be announced to all. This was made possible by the appointment of the apostles. Paul was the last of these and he said he was also a preacher and a teacher. In his testimony, Paul placed much dignity in this office and demonstrated this in his actions. At the time of writing he was in prison under death sentence for the sake of that calling and he was not ashamed.

The message of deliverance from the misery of sin was needful then and now and is to be told to the world. This is why Jesus made specific appointments and charged them accordingly. He also promised to be with them at all times to ensure that they did not get discouraged or fail to carry out the duties of their office. They took Him at His Word and went about their duties with great zeal, and even risked their own lives.

THOUGHT: Christ has abolished death. Do I still fear death?

PRAYER: May I be faithful to share Your Word with others.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

2 TIMOTHY 1:9-12

PROVERBS 29:23-25

*“...I will not fear what
man shall do unto me.”*

GOD’S PLAN FOR SALVATION REVISITED (III)

The fact that the Church has survived till today and continues to prosper is a testimony to the faithfulness of Christ in keeping His promises. There will be no books in the world to tell completely of what has been accomplished all these years. The record of persecution and endurance beginning from the apostles to recent martyrs is a moving story. It bears a clear testimony of the work of the Lord in His Church.

All those who were greatly used of the Lord had overcome pride and they identified themselves with their Lord through thick and thin. Paul’s testimony in verse 12 speaks for all when he said, *“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for 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.”* They looked up for strength knowing that He who has called them does not turn back on His Word.

The guarantee of salvation for those whom the Lord has chosen also goes with assurance that they will heed His call through His servants. A random check on the background of many believers today will attest to the work of God alone in bringing people to salvation. There is no way in which many of us would have yielded our hearts to the Saviour except by the grace of God.

The Father’s plan of salvation reveals His loving concern which He confirmed by sending His only begotten Son into the world who accomplished His redemptive purpose. He also made it possible for all to hear the news of His love. He calls everyone today to receive the benefits of His offer including you and me. What is your response today?

THOUGHT: How do I show in my life that I am not ashamed of Christ?

PRAYER: Forgive me, O Lord, for the times when I have chosen to follow the world because I was ashamed to “stick out like a sore thumb” by following You. Grant me the courage to follow You, even if no one else is following You.

THURSDAY, MAY 22
2 TIMOTHY 1:13-18
PSALM 33:4-6

*“In God will I
praise his word...”*

A RESPONSE TO SOUND WORDS (I)

The language which the apostle used in his exhortation to Timothy reflects his deep concern and the importance of taking a stand for the Lord even when others are falling away. The young preacher was in such an important position that required him to exercise extra care in handling the Word of God and also the duties that went with it. Thus the elder pastor kept reminding him of that need. Here he instructed him by commands and example. This also becomes a lesson to all who read these words.

Timothy's response to sound words must be to hold on to them strongly (v 13). The apostle here was recalling the many lessons he had imparted to his spiritual son. These words will not only help Timothy in building a personal faith in Christ but also assist him greatly in ministering to the church. In addition, they would help him in times of danger and he would overcome trials and temptations by holding on to those words. Words of wisdom are like instructions on life-saving precautions in travel especially in sailing or flying. Many lives would be saved in times of danger if everyone will adhere to the safety guidelines.

Concerning the words of God, faith is the mainstay in holding on to them, for without faith it is impossible to please God. This was to be Timothy's strength in hanging on to the words that would grant him spiritual security. Religious exercises cannot be separated from the element of faith as it has to do with a person's responsibility to God. We have not seen God, neither have we witnessed the fulfilment of all His promises, but we accept them as we have believed in Him.

This pastor had been well instructed in the words of the Holy Scriptures and his faith was to carry him through to live by the affirmation of these inspired lines.

THOUGHT: Are there times when my life shows that I do not believe that *“the word of the Lord is right”* (Ps 33:4)?

PRAYER: Forgive me, O Lord, for those times when I have relied on my own wisdom instead of trusting Your Word.

FRIDAY, MAY 23

2 TIMOTHY 1:13-18

PSALM 119:97-104

*“Sanctify them through thy truth:
thy word is truth.”*

A RESPONSE TO SOUND WORDS (II)

Paul added love as strength in holding on to sound words. In our relationship with God, love is a necessary component. Christ calls it the first and the second greatest commandment, and it must always be in the picture. The love for the words of God is also an expression of love towards Him and this was what Timothy was told to hold on to. The love that Paul was seeking in Timothy is as that expressed by David in Psalm 119:97 to 104.

The second imperative given here is “*keep*,” that is to retain. He is asked to keep the good thing which was committed to him by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was a believer in Christ and the words that had been entrusted to him could not stay except by the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in him.

This was the promise of Christ prior to His ascension to heaven that He would send the Spirit to remind them of all the things He had taught them. It was expected of every believer that this promise would be fulfilled. Paul reminded Timothy that it was not by his own power that he was able to obey the instructions, but to trust in the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is of interest to us today to note the great emphasis, mainly in Charismatic churches, on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Their interpretation of Scripture views the gift of the Holy Spirit as a post-conversion experience. However, it is clear from the experience of the apostles and the teachings of Christ that conversion and indwelling of the Holy Spirit is one event. None can confess Christ except by the power from the same Spirit. What is needful is to hear the true words of God and to retain them and as Christ said, they will guide a believer to all truth.

THOUGHT: (Read John 16:13.)

PRAYER: Lord, increase my love for Your Word. May Your Spirit grant me understanding of Your Word as I seek to be guided in my life by it.

SATURDAY, MAY 24

2 TIMOTHY 1:13-18

1 PETER 3:8-12

*“Depart from evil,
and do good...”*

A RESPONSE TO SOUND WORDS (III)

The directives given to Timothy required that he should demonstrate their value in his manner of life and in the ministry that he had been called into. Example (both positive and negative) is always the best teacher. The young pastor was not to follow the example of Phygellus and Hermogenes of Asia who had forsaken Paul. However, Onesiphorus had set a good example by attending to the physical needs of the apostle. In saying this, Paul was making a contrast as a warning and advising him to remain faithful to his calling.

It is clear from the tone of Paul's words that he had confidence in Timothy and had no doubt that he would respond well to what he was told to do. Though he was not physically with the elder pastor in his imprisonment, he was carrying on an equally important duty in the place the Lord had appointed him. The apostle was also satisfied with that service, but he was constrained to mention the stated examples to remind him of his commitment to the call of God.

Note the blessings that the apostle wished for his good friend in verse 18. A servant of the Lord ought not to shy away from any given opportunity to do good. It is not just a wish but an obligation. As the apostle told the Corinthians that their labour was not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58), it is also clear from the text that abundant blessings awaited those who faithfully take heed to sound words.

Many suggestions could be made regarding the response to scriptural exhortations. It is the weakness of the flesh that requires a consistent reminder of the need to hold fast. All are inclined to ignore the heavenly declarations but dependence on the Holy Spirit ensures success. A testimony of that response ought to be manifested in our lives and the blessings of the Lord will be upon us.

THOUGHT: Do I remember to do good?

PRAYER: Forgive me, Father, for *“the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do”* (Rom 7:19).

LORD'S DAY, MAY 25

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13

LUKE 9:61-62

"...would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners have been fled."

PILLARS FOR BEST PERFORMANCE (I)

The carrying out of the great commission requires a total commitment on the part of those who are charged with the responsibility. Timothy had taken upon himself to fulfil that course and he needed strong pillars for best performance in the arena of the gospel. The apostle used similar words that the Lord used to charge Joshua when he took over the leadership of Israel from Moses (Josh 1:9). He needed to be strong and attend the duties before him with all determination. He needed personal preparation plus trusting in Christ and also holding onto His revealed truth as shown in the Scriptures.

The task before the young pastor was not only in the local church that he had been called to minister, but it was for the whole Church of Christ in that generation and succeeding ones as well. It is like a relay of the gospel which needs to be passed on continuously (v 2). The participants in the race for the gospel must be faithful men who are able to deliver it in its original purity. The qualities of these people, including Timothy, are given in three illustrations.

The first quality is like that of a soldier. This represents a high standard of discipline. There are indications in the Bible of the discipline expected of them. The Philippian jailer in Acts 16:27 wanted to commit suicide because he thought the prisoners had escaped. After the shipwreck during the voyage to Rome, the soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners to ensure that none of them escaped (Acts 27:42). The law was that if a prisoner escaped, the soldier responsible would be put to death.

Diligence and responsibility is expected of every soldier. No less is expected of a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: A good soldier must always be combat-ready.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to be committed to building up my spiritual life.

MONDAY, MAY 26
2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13
HEBREWS 12:1-2

*“...So run that
ye may obtain.”*

PILLARS FOR BEST PERFORMANCE (II)

The second illustration is that of an athlete. Greeks were well known for athletics and they were the pioneers of the now popular Olympic Games. It was on the basis of that familiarity of the games that Paul wrote these words. A participant in a running race, for example, qualifies to be the winner only by coming in first in the race, and fulfilling all the rules of the race. It is understood that victory comes after rigorous training and observance of every necessary discipline related to the race. That is what is meant to strive lawfully.

In relation to the preaching of the good news of Christ, it is important that the doctrine is kept pure and free from pollution. In addition, it needs to be carried out to wherever it is needed, which in the commission of Christ is to the whole world. Logically this requires well prepared messengers who have been trained well for the task. They are also to attend to their duties with all their might and ensure that they win the race. The crown offered to them however is not reserved for one winner only but to as many as fulfil the assignment before them.

There was a need to use very strong terms in charging Timothy because many Christians have a weakness of negligence when it comes to spiritual things. It is encouraging that Paul did not only speak of this need but he also set a good example himself. He has given up everything for the course of Christ. In many of his epistles, we are told of the many discouraging experiences that he had to undergo but none of these made him surrender. This epistle appears to be his last communication before his death and he had the confidence to speak of his contribution to the advancement of God's kingdom and was sure of the reward that the Lord had promised. He made use of his own testimony to encourage others to follow in his footsteps.

THOUGHT: Is my Christian life as disciplined and sacrificing as that of an athlete?

PRAYER: Lord, may I be willing to submit myself to Your vigorous training so that my spiritual life will be fit and healthy.

TUESDAY, MAY 27

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13

1 CORINTHIANS 15

*“The sower
soweth the word.”*

PILLARS FOR BEST PERFORMANCE (III)

The third example that he gave is that of a farmer. In farming one makes an input of energy and seeds, and in return the expectation is an abundant harvest that yields much more than the original. And the farmer expects to eat the first fruits of his field. Those who labour in the Lord's vineyard and are engaged in the advancement of the heavenly kingdom will not be left out in the blessings offered to all who come to Christ. At the same time those who respond to their message will equally receive the blessings from the Heavenly Father.

Then Paul reminded Timothy of the main message of the gospel and the need to preach Christ as the central character. And he rehearsed the doctrine of the person of Christ. Verse 8 is rich with meaning. Jesus' name means Saviour and His completed work of redemption was in Paul's mind. His name Christ is the Hebrew Messiah which literally means the “anointed one.” He completed the work of redemption by His suffering and death. The mention of the seed of David was to confirm that the Lord had promised that the Saviour would be born to the house of David.

The third and the last pillar mentioned here is no different from the others, which is the truth of the gospel. In every effort that is made, the question arises as to what is the end of all this toil. The gospel is given for the redemption and also for the condemnation of the world. Paul said that if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him, this is to say that we will be heirs of the kingdom with Him. On the other hand, our rejection of Him means also His rejection of us as well. However, regardless of what our response, He does not change and His truth stands for ever.

THOUGHT: (Read Galatians 8:8.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I be willing to work hard in the sharing of Your Word to those around me.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19

PSALM 119:81-88

“...I trust in
thy word.”

CONTRAST BETWEEN GOD’S WORD AND MAN’S WORD (I)

The words of Scripture are heavenly utterances and are far removed from the words of men. It is God, the Creator of speech, who is speaking or is directing His holy prophets to write. Though the ability to speak is the greatest gift to man, his expressions are defective because of the influence of sin. On the other hand, every word that comes out of the mouth of God gives life to man. The creation story tells us that God made the world, the universe and everything in them by simply speaking and they came into existence. This is a demonstration of the power of His speech. The text before us exalts the words of God as truth and defines the words of men as vain.

Verse 15 is an instruction in handling God’s Word. Timothy was given that responsibility and Paul knew that any small error in communicating the gospel can produce greater errors.

Timothy was to demonstrate that his calling and service was acceptable and met the standards required of a “*workman*.” It will be needful to be faithful in duty and apply all possible methods to ensure the worth of the person called to be a “*workman*.” A number of times the apostle would refer to his co-workers as fellow soldiers, implying that a minister of the gospel has to have the discipline of a soldier.

Every soldier worthy of the name will not think of yielding to defeat in any battle. Even if in the end he will not win and may get killed, the wound must not be on his back. He will have to die as a hero for the sake of others. In this way, any disgrace is avoided. This is the message of this text: a minister of the gospel must not end up in disgrace. Whether dead or alive, he must be “*approved unto God*.”

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 119:16.)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to be a diligent “*workman*” of Your Word, using Your Word as my tool.

THURSDAY, MAY 29

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19

HEBREWS 11:3

*“...he that heareth reproof
getteth understanding.”*

CONTRAST BETWEEN GOD’S WORD AND MAN’S WORD

(II)

Some commentators associated the expression “*rightly dividing the word of truth*” with the way the priests cut the sacrificial meat. It means giving the right interpretation and also application as God intended it, not how man wants to.

When the flock of God is not rightly fed, there will be a manifestation of weaknesses in the church. This would include stagnation in her growth, backsliding and institutionalization of nominal Christianity. A great responsibility lies in the hands of the pastor. His main tool of shepherding is the Word of Truth. When the leaders and the congregation are well instructed in the Holy Scriptures, their knowledge and preoccupation with His Word at all times become an antidote against vain words. All through the Bible, every leader and every group of God’s people have been instructed and revived when they turned back to the same instrument, the written Word of God. Those entrusted with leadership positions must always make sure that the people are well instructed in the Scriptures so that they may know their responsibility to God and make its principles the guide to their lives. When they rightly apply God’s Word and cause the people to understand, there would always be positive results. Timothy was to follow this in building up the congregation entrusted to his care.

In contrast to the words of God, the words of men are seen as vain words. The Greek culture of Timothy’s time was best known in the ancient world for its humanistic approach to knowledge. It was a highly intelligent discipline and its influence could not be resisted. This is evidenced by the fact that the teachings of their leading philosophers are still studied today. Paul may not have been referring to the educated class when he mentioned this, but the fact is that there is a big contrast between the heavenly revelation and earthly wisdom.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 119:104.)

PRAYER: Give me a teachable heart, O Lord, that I may receive the teachings from Your Word with gladness.

FRIDAY, MAY 30

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19

ACTS 19

*“The ear that heareth the reproof
of life abideth among the wise.”*

CONTRAST BETWEEN GOD’S WORD AND MAN’S WORD

(III)

Paul counseled Timothy against striving over unprofitable words which subverted the hearers. A person instructed in the scriptures will pay no attention to them. These may include idle talk which in many cases is simply a waste of time. This kind of communication is damaging as it is contagious. Once a person associates with those who are of this sort of behaviour, negative results will be sure.

These useless words are also expressed in modern worldly music, books and other non-print media plus the internet. Common sense and scriptural guidelines should tell a Christian when to switch off any offensive show. They are not only useless but they will pollute our minds and we need to keep away from them. The exhortation in verse 16 pinpoints this need. It also tells of its consequences with examples. Worthless words lead to a denial of important biblical doctrines and produce apostates in the church.

The best prevention is the establishment of orderliness in the service of the church. This will allow for proper instruction of believers from the Scriptures. Christian education programmes for all ages should be put in place with qualified teachers and close supervision to ensure that the students are well instructed. This will produce a disciplined assembly of believers. When this is done, vain words will have no place in the lives of believers.

The Berean church never took anything at face value simply because a knowledgeable apostle has said it, but they searched the Scriptures daily to prove if the things they had been taught were true.

THOUGHT: (Read 2 Thessalonians 3:14 and 15.)

PRAYER: Forgive me, O Lord, for the many times when I allowed the world to guide me in my decision-making.

SATURDAY, MAY 31
2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19
ACTS 20

*“...to depart from evil
is understanding.”*

CONTRAST BETWEEN GOD’S WORD AND MAN’S WORD (IV)

Christians need to take the initiative to overcome setbacks brought on by ignorance of God’s Word. When effort is made, believers will know God better and will walk more closely with Him. At the same time, they will attract those who are outside the fold of Christ. Their lives will be far removed from sin as they will have a stronger desire to seek the Kingdom of God, having tasted the goodness of the Lord. They will thus look for greater blessings from above.

While Paul wrote the words of our text to Timothy, the younger pastor was shepherding the church at Ephesus. This is the same church that the apostle strove to bring to maturity for three years. His testimony to the elders of this church recorded in Acts 20 shed much light on the nature of his ministry there. Also Acts 19 tells more of his ministry in this town of Asia Minor. His preaching brought down Diana the goddess of Ephesus and in panic her devotees rose to violence against the messengers of the gospel. The battle here was fought on all fronts as Paul was also imparting knowledge in the school of Tyrannus in that city. All these were object lessons for Timothy and the present writing was meant to make him firm in applying all the principles he has learned.

The apostle was not writing theories to Timothy but was motivating him by real life activities backed by his own examples and the fruit of that labour. On our part, if our life ministry has to carry any meaning today, there is a need to spend time in communion with God rather than with all the vain noises and sights that bombard our ears and eyes. Which do you prefer?

“The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (v 19b).

THOUGHT: (Read Proverbs 3:7 and 8.)

PRAYER: May my study of Your Word be followed by my obedience of Your Word, Lord.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 1

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-26

PSALM 37:23-27

“... avoiding profane
and vain babblings ...”

THE MAKING OF A MAN OF GOD (I)

The term “*man of God*” is used in the Bible to refer to a person who has distinguished himself in the service of the Lord. Such a person will be someone with particular qualities that meet God’s standards. In the Old Testament, Elisha the prophet was specifically given this title. Paul’s desire for Timothy was that he should remain a man of God. This desire can also be applied to all who wish to be used of God in the advancement of His Kingdom. Paul outlined the required qualities, how such a person is made, and the course of action he ought to take.

The comparison with the vessels of honour in a house is to say one must be honourable in order to be in the service of the Lord. Honour is something that a person should not ask to be given, but his manner of life will make others accord him that respect. When one lives a clean life free from habitual sin, he will gain respect from his acquaintances who will give an ear to his speech. He will be a vessel unto honour. In the case of an evangelist, he will be more effectively used in bringing souls to the saving knowledge of Christ. A good reputation is the first quality of a man of God.

A man of God is a person of clean lips (v 21). Paul warned Timothy to be careful of his utterances and also in listening to wayward speeches. A person’s reputation is also determined by what comes out of his mouth. His words can be used to build up the faith of believers or they can be used to drive them away from God. A sanctified person will be found speaking in a manner that is worthy of hearing. A person’s language reveals the state of his heart. Thus it is for every one who wishes to be used of God to ensure that he is a person of clean lips.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 37:30 to 31.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 19:14.)

MONDAY, JUNE 2
2 TIMOTHY 2:20-26
PSALM 24:3-6

*“Ye are the salt
of the earth...”*

THE MAKING OF A MAN OF GOD (II)

The apostle's effort in writing to Timothy was a means of ensuring that no opportunity was lost in building him up to be an effective minister of the gospel. He has to have all those qualities needed of a man of God. Paul's background as a persecutor of the church and his previous activities due to ignorance of the truth made him the best counsellor after his conversion. Timothy may not have needed his admonitions since he was already mature but Paul never took chances or assumed that Timothy would know what to do. He put everything in black and white.

Practical steps are needful in the preparation of a man of God. This means that there should be no conformity to the world. Instead, a man of God should always seek to transform his environment. Timothy was still a young man when he entered the ministry. He was vulnerable to the temptations that come to all young people (see v 22). Note that the apostle did not say avoid youthful lusts, but he used the word that expresses the danger that comes with yielding. Lust is an enemy of faith and everyone must run away from it. This command applies to everyone as it is based on God's moral precept. When you flee from danger, you must follow the path to safety. A righteous conduct is appealing to everyone and in its demonstration a man of God gains the confidence of people around him. He will also be drawn to fellowship with those of like mind and in so doing help to build up one another. This includes a manifestation of godly character and a heart of serving others. Purity of heart is the bond that brings God's people together and their fellowship will be meaningful. But few will live up to the expectations of the Scriptures. The majority does not listen to the alarm to flee and are caught in the devil's snare. This is one reason why the Lord has preserved these words of warning for the instruction of every generation.

THOUGHT: *“...be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*
(Rom 12:2)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to walk in Your strait and narrow path.

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-26

2 KINGS 4

*“...avoid foolish
questions...”*

THE MAKING OF A MAN OF GOD (III)

A servant of the Lord must also avoid foolish and unreasonable questions because this will not contribute to the edification of believers but they simply create tension and uncertainty. There may be questions from people who genuinely wish to learn. These will be satisfied with biblical answers. On the other hand, those who have different motives will not be satisfied with any answers. The man of God must manifest a godly character and give direction to the sincere ones while at the same time ignoring the wayward ones.

The man of God has always to be engaged in the duties of his calling and the text gives direction to this continuing occupation. He must be given to active service at all times (v 24). The activity is the ability to teach. This is no doubt the most important work of a man of God. Also, verse 25 shows the need of a fruitful ministry. The qualities of a man of God are authenticated by the impact and response to his service. As the Shunammite woman responded to Elisha (2 Kgs 4), so must also a similar reaction be seen in the lives of those under the ministry of every worthy servant. Repentance from sin and acknowledgment of the truth is expected of the recipients of the proclamation of the divine message. Watchfulness against the devices of the devil also is not to be left out as it can be a prelude to greater danger and defeat. This warning is given in Ephesians 6:10 to 18 in greater detail as the wiles of the devil are many. However, in seeking to fulfil God's desire in life, one must have a resolve to overcome at any cost.

A man of God looks for and has interest in heavenly things. He gains knowledge of what is expected of him by learning from others who have been so blessed. He ought to follow the directions given in Scripture and live thus, gaining victory on all fronts. None can engage in any service for the Lord without going through the basics. Are you born again?

THOUGHT: Born again first, then serve.

PRAYER: Make me a fit vessel, always yielded to You for Your use.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-5

*“Let no man deceive
you by any means...”*

DANGERS OF THE LAST DAYS (I)

Having said much about the building up of personal faith in Christ, Paul now focused his attention on prophecy. He looked at the last days and its dangers, concerning which the Lord Jesus had also spoken as recorded in the synoptic gospels. He showed how the people will turn away from the faith and manifest a carnal behaviour to their own destruction. He warned believers that these things will come but they should not be carried away by this deluge of apostasy. They should respond in line with scriptural directive knowing that in the end each will receive a reward according to his deeds. There are a number of logical factors that will come with this departure.

The first factor is the prophetic prediction that there will be a manifestation of a negative character. Paul listed these one by one. The sum of the character described here is a self-centered spirit. This selfishness will lead them to believe that their concerns are all there is in the world and not care about others. Barnes has to say:

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves - It shall be one of the characteristics of those times that men shall be eminently selfish - evidently under the garb of religion. The word here used - *philautos* - does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means a lover of oneself, “selfish.” Such a love of self as to lead us to secure our salvation, is proper. But this interferes with the rights and happiness of no other persons. The selfishness which is condemned, is that regard to our own interests which interferes with the rights and comforts of others; which makes self the central and leading object of living; and which tramples on all that would interfere with that. As such, it is a base, and hateful, and narrow passion; but it has been so common in the world that no one can doubt the correctness of the prophecy of the apostle that it would exist ‘in the last times.’”

THOUGHT: Am I a lover of my own self?

PRAYER: Forgive me, Lord, for my selfishness. Help me to be willing to give of myself, even as You have given of Yourself for me.

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

2TIMOTHY 3:1-9

ROMANS 1:28-31

“...they did not like to retain
God in their knowledge...”

DANGERS OF THE LAST DAYS (II)

A worldly, selfish spirit is directly in contrast with the sum of God's commandment on human relations which requires love for one's neighbour as oneself. The demonstration of this selfish character is not new though, because ever since sin entered the world, this expression has been seen wherever men live. However, Paul's prophecy here tells of a large scale manifestation which will rule the everyday life of the people. A Christian living in such a community needs the fullness of grace to be able to withstand a very strong persuasion to conform to the prevailing condition. He has always to be conscious that he is living in perilous times. This is when Jesus said believers must be the light of the world. They are to let their light so shine that those dwelling in the darkness of the world may be able to find a way out.

The second factor is that they do not have a natural affection. This is descriptive of absence of normal love and one observer commented that today we see more and more the debasement of love. The natural love between parents and children, husbands and wives is often missing. Instead, gross sin in the area of human relations is encouraged. This happens when men refuse to keep the scriptural teachings of God in their minds. At the same time they have no regard for others at all. Their focus is on earthly things and on pleasure seeking, sin being the root of their whole disposition.

Living in such a society, it is needless to say what course of action believers should take. Nevertheless Paul is emphatic in his command, “*from such turn away*” (v 5). When the apostates are going from bad to worse, the testimony of God's children must ever improve. They must have their attention focused on heavenly things. There is a need to have a thorough knowledge of God's Word and let it be the Guide to all their activities.

THOUGHT: “The world behind me,
the cross before me.”

PRAYER: Father, help me to live each passing day conscious that I am a day nearer the eternal home that You have prepared for me.

FRIDAY, JUNE 6

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9

2 PETER 2:1-3

“Who is on the Lord’s side?”

DANGERS OF THE LAST DAYS (III)

Paul indicates in verse 5 that these apostates will be found in the visible church. They profess to be Christians but do not know what their profession means. They have a form of godliness but they deny its power. They are hypocrites who never practise what they pledge to be. Instead they indulge in gross sins to satisfy their lusts. They are even people who participate in Bible studies, but much of what they do is for show and not a genuine desire to seek the truth. Thus they are always engaged in learning but never manifest knowledge of the truth. Today, many churches emphasize numerical growth rather than quality. To attain this outward growth, they compromise and receive into their fellowships people who have been trouble-makers in other churches. They are people without self control and are completely governed by their own sinful desires.

Paul gives concrete examples to this effect from the days of Moses. Their names are nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, but some commentators think they refer to the Egyptian magicians who withstood Moses before Pharaoh. Though their opposition was against messengers of God, they were actually opposed to God Himself.

Timothy has to be on the lookout to identify and shun such characters who are pretenders. Their profession is counterfeit and deceptive. Their efforts will come to nothing but destruction (v 9). When their true colours are manifest, they will be rejected.

These are signs of the last days prior to Jesus’ return. They are words of warning to God’s people that they should not follow the multitude to do evil. It will come as a flood and many will be swept by it unknowingly. God requires His people to stand and be counted. Those who have believed in Christ and hold to His promises will not hesitate to be identified as God’s children. What is your position in these last days?

THOUGHT: Am I on the Lord’s side?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the courage to live for You in these last days.

SATURDAY, JUNE 7
2 TIMOTHY 3:10-14
PSALM 37:7-20

*“Having your
conversation honest...”*

STANDING FIRM IN THE MIDST OF APOSTASY (I)

Everyone who professes faith in Christ cannot always have a positive reception from those around him, yet he needs to stand firm regardless of what others say or do to him. He has been called to bear the cross of Christ and all that goes with it. The testimony for Christ is the primary concern for everyone who calls on Jesus' Name. The best way to overcome all the problems that will come is to anticipate them before they come. One needs to have an idea of what would be the best course of action when problems come. Paul is one person who had that idea, thus in the text he prescribed a formula to Timothy for such situations. In this, the apostle served as a teacher worthy of imitation.

The leading track for a student is to learn from his teacher. Besides other things, Paul taught Timothy verbally from the Scriptures. Paul was endued with the grace of God and he was a living commentary as well as expositor of biblical teachings. Here he reminded Timothy of the things he had taught him.

Every teacher must live what he teaches, so Paul pointed Timothy to his manner of life. Each lesson goes hand in hand with how it is to be put into practice. The pupil is to imitate the teacher. As such it follows that the teacher must be a truly good example. Paul had confidence in his conduct that he would not hesitate to commend others to follow him. He was a person who called himself the chief of sinners saved by the grace of God. There was no turning back for him but to live and serve the Lord to the best of his ability. He was an object lesson for his disciples. One's manner of life is doubtless the best teacher. It is evident as one observes children at play. They will do what they have seen their parents do. They will “cook,” build “a house,” make “a car,” etc. Let us be reminded of our testimony whenever we witness their innocent activities.

THOUGHT: Am I living out God's truth?

PRAYER: Father, forgive me for I have dishonoured You out of fear of the world. May I have the courage to honour You by the way I live.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 8

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-14

1 PETER 2:18-25

*"...ye have heard of
the patience of Job..."*

STANDING FIRM IN THE MIDST OF APOSTASY (II)

Paul also mentioned the purpose of his life. The Lord appointed him to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This became his vision, his life purpose. His approach to the advancement of the Kingdom of heaven was evident to all who worked with him. In addition to having a purpose, Paul also manifested faith, longsuffering, love and patience, virtues that sustained him and he appealed to the younger pastor to exercise the same.

We are to be reminded at all times to remain faithful through thick and thin. There are many things around us that go against the gospel and the lesson is that we are to remain faithful to the Lord and fulfil the duties of our calling as much as He would enable us to.

A readiness to endure persecution is the next factor in Paul's address. The calling of the gospel also has always come with harassments in different forms. It can be a simple ridicule or a death sentence. The Greeks may have called Paul names to belittle his work and the Jews stoned him and had him kept in prison but Nero sentenced him to death. When Paul wrote this letter, he was in prison and did not have any hope of ever coming out. His antidote is endurance, that is to say you do not give in to your enemies regardless of your suffering. It is for the sake of a higher purpose that one has to endure to the last. The Lord has promised protection as well as great rewards at the end. The apostle in bringing this to Timothy's attention was telling him to anticipate what he might have to face in the days to come (v 12).

Paul was once a persecutor of believers. After his conversion, he had to endure much opposition. He understood well the implications of resisting or yielding to persecution.

THOUGHT: Am I a "fair-weather" Christian?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to cling to You even more when the going gets tough so that the power of Christ may be seen.

MONDAY, JUNE 9

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-14

PSALM 119:97-104

“O how love I thy law!”

STANDING FIRM IN THE MIDST OF APOSTASY (III)

We may have had little or no experience at all of the great price some have to pay for their faith. However, Christians in many lands are suffering for their faith. One example was Richard Wumbrand of Romania who spent fourteen years in jail for running an underground church. His story is told in his book *Tortured for Christ*. Today, the same situation still exists in China (with nearly a quarter of the world's population) as well as a few other countries. There are many cases everywhere that do not come to light and the believers suffer in silence. It is in such situations that Paul is saying that we must take a stand for the Lord come what may. He indicated in verse 13 that things will not be getting better, but evil men and seducers will get worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

In the midst of deception, persecution and apostasy, there is a need for the right course of action. Evil men will always be there but a believer's resolve is to keep them at bay and in the end defeat them. There is no expectation of improvement in a given situation but each time is a time of struggle to overcome. The teachings and the promises of God in the Holy Scriptures become an anchor in times like these. Paul reminded Timothy of this. The message to believers in such times is that they are to recall the time they first trusted in Christ and to know that God's Word has not changed and is not going to change.

Apostasy and any kind of opposition to the Christian faith are to be found everywhere. The best answer to them is a deep knowledge of biblical teachings and a readiness to withstand any external pressure to give up the faith. The situation will always be the same but we must have God's infallible Word as our Guide.

THOUGHT: What does Psalm 19:7 mean to me?

PRAYER: O Lord, grant me understanding of Your Word, faith to believe Your Word, and courage to proclaim Your Word.

TUESDAY, JUNE 10
2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17
PSALM 119:105-112

“...a lamp unto my feet...”

THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (I)

The passage before us is the key text used to prove the divine origin of the written Word, the Holy Scriptures. The writings of the Old Testament and the completion of the New Testament came from the Hand of God. The reasons for accepting the books of the Bible as the inspired text is that they were written by genuine prophets and were recognized by the Lord Jesus, while the apostolic writings were either written by the apostles or by people closely associated with them. The writings also were completed within the lifetime of these original messengers. Thus the Scriptures referred to here are the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament, which is Genesis to Revelation.

The first quality is that they impart knowledge. For example, Genesis answers many questions. It leads to an understanding of man's relationship with God. The main part of the Bible is a narrative or an historical record of God's dealings with man from creation to first advent of Christ and its aftermath. This record is rich in facts that no other historical book has provided. The knowledge of some things may not appear to be of any value, but in this entire witness one can see God's Hand, such that a particular historical setting can be interpreted to bear a meaning for the present.

The text also says that the Scripture makes one wise. This has to do with biblical precepts and exhortations given as guides in developing one's ethical principles. God gave moral laws that a man must keep. When these are used as a standard guide for everyday conduct, one qualifies as a wise person. All the wisdom literature in the Bible have specific instructions and more exposition to make them applicable, but all of them are based on the ten precepts.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 119:11.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 119:11.)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11

2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

PSALM 119:89-96

*“...thy word is
settled in heaven.”*

THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (II)

Timothy had been brought up in a home where the Scriptures were read and taught. He was familiar with them and was able to distinguish them from Greek philosophy. Humanistic learning was highly esteemed at that time, though much of it was useful on the human plane, there were things that were lacking. There was no divine message.

The difference that the Scripture has is that it leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ. There is no other religion or any human learning that can give hope to man. Among other passages in the Bible, John 14:6 is explicit regarding salvation which is in Christ alone. This is what Timothy came to learn when he heard the gospel from Paul, so that beyond his own salvation he gave his life to tell others about his Saviour.

Paul's assertion in verse 16 is a declaration of the truth concerning the origin of Scriptures. They were given by inspiration of God, the word as it is used here means by the breath of God. Easton's Bible Dictionary defines inspiration in these words, "That extraordinary or supernatural divine influence vouchsafed to those who wrote the Holy Scriptures, rendering their writings infallible. ...As to the nature of inspiration we have no information. This only we know, it rendered the writers infallible. They were all equally inspired, and are all equally infallible. The inspiration of the sacred writers did not change their characters. They retained all their individual peculiarities as thinkers or writers." (See also 2 Peter 1:20-21.)

The logic follows that when God had given the inspired writings, He is able to ensure that there are no mistakes in it and also able to preserve the inspired writings for generations to come.

THOUGHT: What does Psalm 119:89 mean to me?

PRAYER: Forgive my unbelief, O Lord. Increase my faith to believe Your Word!

THURSDAY, JUNE 12

2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

MATTHEW 5:18

“...your father which is
in heaven is perfect.”

THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (III)

The official statements of faith of many churches affirm that the Scripture by virtue of inspiration is without error. However, recent controversy arose when some claimed there are mistakes in the Bible. But we have Christ's promise that His words will not pass away (Matt 5:18). There are so many instances in the Bible that show God had taken steps to restore the writings that had been destroyed by man. One was when Moses destroyed the tables of stone on which God wrote with His finger, but God restored the same words on a new set of tables (Deut 10:1-4). Also in the days of Jeremiah, King Jehoiakim was not pleased with the words that the prophet had said concerning Judah and written by Baruch. The king burned the scroll but the Lord commanded Jeremiah to write the same words plus more to reaffirm His words. No human hand is able to destroy the words of God.

Paul then listed four values of the Scripture. “*For doctrine*” means for our learning of the Christian fundamentals. “*For reproof*” and “*for correction*” mean to bring us to the truth so that we will abstain from false teachings and practices. “*For instruction in righteousness*” is a positive move forward for those who have been touched and convinced of the truthfulness of God's Word. It thus becomes a source of their growth in the faith (Rom 10:17). One who has come to the saving knowledge in Jesus Christ will cherish the privilege of growing up in knowing God's will for his life.

The value of knowing the Scriptures and its divine origin comes with good results: perfection and good works. The Word provides a standard measure so that every believer can aim for that goal. It is for our good that we yield to the truth. Believing in Christ must make a difference in our life.

THOUGHT: My perfect God is capable of giving me His perfect Word.

PRAYER: Thank You, Father, for giving me Your perfect Word.

FRIDAY, JUNE 13

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-2

*“...the word of the
Lord is right...”*

PREACHING THE WORD IN AND OUT OF SEASON (I)

Paul wanted to ensure that the work of the gospel would continue despite his imminent demise. He used a very strong language to uplift the younger pastor's spirit in carrying out the ministry amidst potential danger.

First, it was necessary for Timothy to persist in the ministry regardless of the situation. Paul was aware that there will be discouraging circumstances or even downright prohibition of the preaching of God's Word, but the messenger of Christ cannot surrender under such conditions. The responsibility had been placed on Timothy's shoulders and it was his duty to be faithful in discharging it till he was able to hand over to others.

Preaching the Word also goes with correcting those who deviate along the way. They need to be reprovved and rebuked, i.e. the fault of their actions needs to be pointed out with a warning so that they must not be repeated. A pastor should not stop at that, he should also exhort with longsuffering, i.e. he will bear with their weaknesses. The primary aim is to win them to obedience.

This brief passage defines in full the duties of God's messenger as a shepherd. He is to communicate the Word and ensure that it is obeyed. This does not come without a concerted effort and trusting God for success. Patient waiting is the hallmark of a positive expectation that will yield spiritual fruits in those who receive the preaching of the Word. The way to accomplish this is to have substance in preaching and not mere empty words. The apostle was greatly concerned with a possible negligence of doctrine in preaching. A church without instruction in this regard will stagnate in growth and her members will be vulnerable to deceptive heresies.

THOUGHT: (Read Hebrews 4:12.)

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor's preaching ministry that it may be based faithfully on the whole counsel of God.)

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

2 TIMOTHY 1:12-14

*“Speak just a
word for Jesus.”*

PREACHING THE WORD IN AND OUT OF SEASON (II)

Many preachers shy away from declaring the truth of God’s Word and instead preach a social gospel, laying emphasis on love and peace at truth’s expense. They are shepherds who do not feed the flock. This is the spirit of the ecumenical movement. All well meaning ministers of the gospel must shun this at all cost. It is always easier said than done, so we must ask the Lord to give us wisdom and grace to know the best approach to such situations. We will come out victorious when we take a stand for Him by preaching the Word in season and out of season.

Today, the general attitude towards the gospel is that of rejection of sound words. Pressure groups openly advocate rebellion against God’s Moral Law in the name of human rights. The multiplication of such perversion is carried far and wide by the media which has been greatly advanced by modern technology.

In recent years, the print and broadcast media have been overtaken by the internet. Even the civil authorities have been alarmed by the magnitude of the effect of this new device of communication. People do not follow God’s revealed truth but they follow their own lusts and teachers care for none of the old time morals. Itching ears means a desire to hear something new to gratify their carnal appetites. The professing church has not been spared in the denial of the truth. Liberalism has overtaken the church in the last one hundred years. Today, the leading clergymen in main line churches openly reject the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, explaining them away to suit their own line of thought. At the same time, nominal Christians who occupy the pews also long to hear only good things from the pulpit, and thus justify their own perverted ways. The church has become nothing more than a social club.

THOUGHT: “One with the Lord is the majority.”

PRAYER: Grant me, O Lord, faith to go on following after You even if no one joins me.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 15

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

ROMANS 10:13-15

*“his word was... as a
burning fire... in my bones ...”*

PREACHING THE WORD IN AND OUT OF SEASON (III)

Clark has this comment on verse 4, **“And they shall turn away their ears from the truth** - The truth strips them of their vices, sacrifices their idols, darts its lightnings against their easily besetting sins, and absolutely requires a conformity to a crucified Christ; therefore they turn their ears away from it.

And shall be turned unto fables - Believe any kind of stuff and nonsense; for, as one has justly observed, ‘Those who reject the truth are abandoned by the just judgment of God to credit the most degrading nonsense.’ This is remarkably the case with most deists; their creed often exhibits what is grossly absurd.”

This is the picture of the world in which Timothy was called to preach, and it is the same in this generation. All who have been called to preach the gospel will face the same reception. Steadfastness of the preacher is imperative. He must stand his ground and faithfully fulfil the duties of his calling. There will be setbacks and sufferings but there must be a determined effort to overcome. The obstacles that Paul was referring to come in different forms: from self, close family members and also those in the same fellowship. Others will be external, but, on the whole, the resolve to fulfil a God-given duty will not allow any of these to get in its way.

The preacher is called to be an evangelist, i.e. to bring the good news of salvation to those who have not heard or have not believed. This is the first step in church planting and this was the main work of Paul after his calling. Every pastor must never shun being an evangelist. Again it must be mentioned here that though there are poor people everywhere who may need assistance to meet their basic needs in life, a minister of the gospel can do what he can to assist but he must always remember that his primary calling is to preach the Word of God.

THOUGHT: (Read Romans 10:15.)

PRAYER: (Pray for your pastor's faithfulness in preaching the Word of God.)

MONDAY, JUNE 16

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-13

1 PETER 3:8-17

*“Consider the lilies of the fields,
how they grow...”*

THE ASSURANCE OF A DEPARTING SAINT (I)

Our Christian life is a journey fraught with many dangers. We may speak confidently at the beginning of our ability to complete but the end of our pilgrimage will confirm our pledge. Paul was now coming to the end of his life and he left a testimony worthy of a true saint.

According to extra-biblical history, the apostle was at the time of writing this epistle waiting for execution, under the persecution of the Roman emperor Nero. Paul knew for sure that he was going to die soon and did not want to leave his co-workers and the church in the dark. He wanted to give them hope and assurance of the promises of God, so that even in his absence the ministry of the gospel would continue. It was his primary concern that the foundation of the outreach to the nations that he had laid would be built upon by those whom he had entrusted.

Paul was always assured of God's higher purpose in bringing all things to come to pass, including his own demise (Rom 8:28). Thus when the time came, he did not play the hypocrite but he verified his words by his own testimony. A sure death that was before him is what comes to all people, but one under a legal sentence is painful as it is meant to punish the victim. In the case of the apostle, he was not guilty for he had only contravened the Roman law that had outlawed Christianity in Caesar's domain. The apostle's principle in such circumstances was that the higher law will override the lower law, thus it was necessary to obey God rather than the Roman emperor (1 Pet 3:13-14, 17). As much as Paul was also falsely condemned, he knew that he was suffering for Christ. He endeavoured to turn evil into good by making it a means of encouraging the remnant of the saints to ensure that his efforts would not be in vain. He counted his life an offering. The Roman persecutors were oblivious to the fact that their activities were within the permissive will of God, but Paul knew what to expect.

THOUGHT: When things go wrong in my life, do I really believe that *“all things work together for good”* (Rom 8:28)?

PRAYER: Father, may I submit to Your will for my life, be it joy or sorrow.

TUESDAY, JUNE 17

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-13

DEUTERONOMY 34

*“The days of our years are
three scores and ten...”*

THE ASSURANCE OF A DEPARTING SAINT (II)

As the end was coming, Paul had a testimony to look back to and he spoke of it. He reflected on the spiritual warfare that he had been engaged in and used it to encourage the younger soldier. Though he gave himself credit for what he had done, it was not his words that spoke but what he had done. His performance spoke for itself. He had done his part and the younger generations had their course to run. His analogy of running a race was familiar to his Greek audiences. A relay race is won by a team, Paul wanted his team to win. He had done well and hoped for his crowning. Others as well were required to display their best performance.

The apostle said that he had stood for the faith of his calling, he upheld all the true doctrines, even under trying circumstances he did not deny them. The apostle prior to his conversion was a devout Jew of the strictest sect of the Pharisees. This led him to have the greatest zeal in the persecution of Christians, but when the Lord revealed Himself to him, he embraced the truth of the person and work of Christ. He held to His incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection. All these fitted into God's plan of salvation. Thus the apostle gave his life to preach this good news to the whole world, and he was faithful to the very end.

In the text, he took us back to the labour of his life. Some of the churches he had helped to nurture did not live up to his expectations, notably the church of Corinth. He wrote two letters to them and possibly two more in an effort to restore them to the original faith. Also, the church of Ephesus is addressed in the seven letters in the book of Revelation many years after Paul's death. Falsehood had entered the church and received a rebuke from Christ. These were some of the things that Paul feared would happen, so whenever he wrote he had strong words to say with the intention of sustaining the faith of the flock.

THOUGHT: What will I be remembered for after I leave this earth?

PRAYER: One life to live on this earth. May I live it for You, Lord.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-13

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

“...always abounding
in the work of the Lord ...”

THE ASSURANCE OF A DEPARTING SAINT (III)

As every effort comes with its reward, Paul also saw a reward for his labours. He was sure of it because he believed in the promises of God. He thus looked forward to a crown of righteousness. When he wrote to the Corinthian church, he had told them to be always steadfast (1 Cor 15:58) and that their labour was not in vain. The same was true also of his labours. He was looking for that time of sweet eternal fellowship with his Lord. The Lord is a righteous Judge, Paul would receive a just treatment from Him. This is the justice that the world has never known. Paul had already passed the judgment without any blame as he had done his best to conform to the Lord's wishes. In saying this, he was also asserting that those who stood with him will have the same benefit from the heavenly Master.

On his imminent departure, Paul set the house in order. He did this by giving a last word to Timothy as a representative of the succeeding generation. He also appraised the other co-labourers and mentioned them by name. Luke took the lead as he acted as his private secretary and was the one who recorded his extensive ministry in the book of Acts, and was also a contributor of one of the four gospels. Paul took the opportunity to extend a hand of reconciliation to John Mark whom he had earlier disputed with Barnabas but now he describes him as profitable. His communication also had a personal touch. He asked for a cloak he had left behind, possibly because he needed it for the cold season. The mention of books and parchments also shows that Paul never ceased to study and write to very end.

As a servant of the Lord, Paul laboured more abundantly than all in publicizing the gospel. His work is self-evident everywhere. He fully trusted in the promises of God and knew what awaited him. He also ensured that what he had started would not cease. What can we do for Christ today? And what assurance do we have of our eternal destiny?

THOUGHT: Am I “*always abounding in the work of the Lord*”?

PRAYER: Lord, may I yield my life, my all, to You.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

2 TIMOTHY 4:14-22

ACTS 19:23-39

“...endure hardness
as a good soldier ...”

STANDING FOR THE LORD TO THE END (I)

Paul was a soldier of Jesus from the word Go. He fought on and died a hero's death. In this epilogue to the second letter to Timothy, he showed that he withstood all opposition for the sake of the gospel and came out victorious. The grace of the Lord was there to uphold him and his pen did not show any fear on his part, he did everything with confidence. He also took the opportunity to demonstrate his confidence and trust in the Lord to preserve him. In the same breath, he also encouraged his co-workers. He had a heartfelt affection for them and identified them by name in this last communication to Timothy. It is said that this epistle was written from Rome where Paul was brought before Nero the second time, and thereafter he was martyred. But Paul was faithful to the very end.

Since Timothy was a pastor of the church at Ephesus, Paul reminded him of the opposition he had faced in that city as recorded in Acts 19:23ff. He singled out Alexander, a coppersmith, who did all he could to forbid the preaching of the gospel. His motive was that if Paul preached against idolatry, their trade would suffer as they specialized in making idols for sale. Financial gain was their chief interest. This was just a sample of the many reasons that the unregenerate will give for refusing to respond to the gospel. At the same time, they will use every means to put a stumbling block to its advance.

The apostle prayed that the Lord would render Alexander “*according to his works*” (v 14). Alexander's heart was hardened and there was almost no hope of salvation in him. Today, the desire to earn as much money as possible is a very emotive issue and anyone who craves for silver and gold can be misled. When a person is overtaken by such, he will demonstrate a very negative attitude towards the salvation of his own soul and also towards those who preach the gospel.

THOUGHT: Standing for the Lord may mean hardship for me.

PRAYER: May my confidence be in You and You only, Father, even as difficulties come my way.

FRIDAY, JUNE 20
2 TIMOTHY 4:14-22
ACTS 21

*Jesus suffered and
died alone.*

STANDING FOR THE LORD TO THE END (II)

Timothy was called to serve in a place where public opinion concerning the faith has been swayed by the activities of Alexander. But the apostle used that incident to encourage Timothy that all would be well regardless of the opposition. Though the apostle was at a crucial moment in his life, he still took time to cheer the young pastor so that he may approach the ministry without fear regardless of how others responded. In other words, he was saying that he had striven to get the church established in that city and had not given in to any external pressure; so, similarly, the younger pastor has to do the same.

Now Paul turned to his own dilemma in the Roman prison. He said that nobody stood with him at his first trial (v 16), but like the Lord Jesus Christ who also had to face trial by a Roman governor, everyone forsook him. Like Stephen, Paul prayed to God that the cowardice of his co-workers would not be laid to their charge. In those circumstances, Paul affirmed that the Lord stood with him, and he was acquitted.

As for his present imprisonment, it was caused by the uproar of the Jews at Jerusalem (Acts 21:27). He was then rescued by the Roman authorities and later taken to Caesarea where he was remanded for two years. And since he appealed to Caesar, he was then taken to Rome. He arrived in Rome after a very risky voyage and he had to spend another two years in Rome before he was tried. The book of Acts ends with that record, but never mentioned the outcome of the trial.

Paul was ready to face the next hearing (v 18). But by then the opposition against Christianity had taken a different course. The emperor himself had decreed that Christianity was an illegal religion and all adherents of the faith were to be exterminated. Paul as a leader of Christians was thus seen as the first culprit. But Paul was confident that the Lord was with him and that the Lord's work would ever prosper.

THOUGHT: What will I do if “*no man stood with me, all men forsook me*” (2 Tim 4:16)?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me a resolute desire to always want to obey You.

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

2 TIMOTHY 4:14-22

DANIEL 6:1-24

*“My God...hath
shut the lions’ mouths ...”*

STANDING FOR THE LORD TO THE END (III)

When Paul had been spared from death at first, he said he was *“delivered out of the mouth of the lion”* (v 17). By this, Paul may either be comparing the brutality of Nero the Roman emperor with the cruelty of a lion or he was literally referring to the lions that were used by Rome to kill Christians for amusement in the theatre. This was one of the many ways of torturing criminals and Christians were seen as transgressors of the law since they belonged to an illegal religion.

Since Paul was in for another trial, he would face any of those brutal methods that had been invented by the Roman merchants of terror. Nevertheless he did not demonstrate any fear, he was confident of a future preservation. He was sure of deliverance. Although he did not escape death in the hands of his persecutors, he knew the words of our Lord Jesus that believers should not fear those who can kill the body only but should fear Him who is able to determine our eternal destiny (Matt 10:28). The apostle thus looked beyond physical deliverance, which is why he said God would preserve him for His heavenly kingdom. In this world, people look at success and answer to prayers in terms of physical gain. We must learn this lesson since we are not free from the preoccupation with earthly things at the expense of heavenly gain. Paul’s praise for the Lord in verse 18 is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God and thus he committed his destiny to Him.

Paul knew that the gospel work had to continue and that was why he wrote not only to Timothy but also to other churches. All those names mentioned were indeed people who had made significant contribution in the apostle’s ministry and he did not forget to give them credit. He showed his love and appreciation for them. To Timothy, Paul used the testimonies of these common friends to urge him to soldier on. The promises that sustained Paul are the same promises we have today. Let us go with Him all the way.

THOUGHT: Standing for my Lord may land me in a den of lions.

PRAYER: Lord, may I always stand on Your side and not fear what man, or beasts, can do to me.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 22

GALATIANS 5:1

ROMANS 6

*Freedom to do
the will of God.*

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

The word “liberty” can have different meanings to different people. To the unregenerate, it can mean freedom to do as he pleases. To a Christian, it means freedom from sin and freedom to live in conformity with the will of God.

However, Christians are not free from the lawless attitude called antinomianism, that is “no law.” Antinomianism comes from the Greek word *anomia* and is translated “*iniquity*” in the King James Bible. Some take Christian liberty to mean that they can exempt themselves from the moral laws of God. This wrong concept can be corrected by a return to the Scriptures to get a clear understanding of what it says.

When Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians, he warned them to exercise extra care lest they should go back to their old ways. He acknowledged that **lawlessness among Christians** is a possibility. He was always conscious of this danger and in his epistles he did not fail to sound an alarm. In Romans 6, he spoke at length on the subject and gave guidelines to the obedience of God's law. It is interesting to note that when the apostle wrote the epistle to the Romans, he had not visited the church in Rome but he had an understanding of human nature and knew that each person was subject to transgression (Jer 17:9, Rom 3:23). Lawlessness was prevalent in the early church and it still is today. Man is not naturally good. The notion of human goodness, according to Paul Lee-Tan, came not from the Bible but from philosophers and psychologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who taught a false doctrine that man is a helpless victim of the environment. However, the Bible says that man is not naturally good. As such it will not be out of place for us today to sound the same warning that Paul did.

THOUGHT: Freedom = Lawlessness?

PRAYER: Lord, I acknowledge that I am a sinner, born in sin with a sinful nature.

MONDAY, JUNE 23

2 PETER 2:10-19

JUDE 1:4

*“they promise them liberty...
they...are the servants of corruption ...”*

ENTANGLEMENT WITH THE YOKE OF BONDAGE

Besides the natural reaction of human nature, there are also agents of lawlessness, eg: false teachers. Peter described their character thus: *“But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. . . . While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage”* (2 Pet 2:10, 19). The people described here are not easily identified in our lives. They may be our friends, professing Christians, associates in other employments or even family members. Their instruction is usually informal but very effective in terms of results. We need to have a discerning mind that is well instructed in the Scriptures to overcome their deception. Influence of public opinion through the media is also very strong and overtakes the idle mind very quickly.

Jude also saw the same and echoed the words of Peter in Jude 1:4. A prerequisite of contending for the faith is a need to have an awareness of the presence of false teachers among the children of God. Jude described them thus: *“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* It is informative for any reader today to note that all these apostles were up to date in their understanding of the possibility of a return by Christians to the world through the deception of false teachers. They misuse the liberty offered through Christ to put forward a negative agenda and deceive many. Their success is evident in the church today as seen in the prevalence of nominal Christianity and the difficulty to institute church discipline among errant members. However, this entanglement with the yoke of bondage must not be allowed to take root.

THOUGHT: Beware of agents of lawlessness in the church.

PRAYER: (Pray for your church and your church leaders.)

TUESDAY, JUNE 24

ROMANS 6:1-2

JUDGES 21:16-25

*“Shall we
continue in sin?”*

GRACE ALLOWS SIN?

To deal with the yoke of bondage, it is important to identify **the source of error in believers**.

First, the source is the false belief that grace allows sin. It is a deliberate misunderstanding because every believer knows that the holiness of God is incompatible with sin and that sin is not allowed under any circumstances. Paul rightly affirms this in Romans 6:1-2: *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* The deception of the human heart is a weakness that leads to sin and the fact that the grace of God reaches to all sinners is not a license to lawlessness. It is a misinterpretation of Scripture out of self-interest.

The book of Judges is a fitting illustration on the consequences of such a notion. At that time there were no kings in Israel and everyone did that which was right in his own eyes. A dark period in the history of Israel, it suffered greatly. The excuse that grace allows sin will only lead to destructive consequences.

There is also the false belief that the moral law has been abolished. A shallow understanding resorts to the general assertion that Christ has fulfilled the requirements of the Law. However, only the ceremonial laws which governed the order of worship in the Mosaic code were fulfilled in Christ and need not be applied anymore. There is sufficient Scriptural support for their abrogation but this does not apply to the moral law as its principles do not change. Christ also confirmed the validity of these laws. Thus to say that under grace the Law is ineffective is not accurate but is a misunderstanding of the Bible.

THOUGHT: The Ten Commandments are still applicable to my life today.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for writing the Ten Commandments in stone.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25

ROMANS 2:12-16

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-33

“...their conscience
also beareth witness...”

THE LAW APPLIES

Paul made a fitting comment on the application of the Law in Romans 2:12 to 16: *“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 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: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”*

Even our conscience is a witness to the usefulness of the Law. Paul was referring primarily to the moral code which spells out the relationship between God and man and also between man and man. And when there is a transgression of the moral code today, man’s conscience continues to bear witness of that transgression. The moral law has not been abrogated but is still applicable today.

Another false belief is that man’s **liberty has no boundaries** and that man can do what he wants. But Paul explained this matter well in 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. His argument on the subject at hand was logical. Food offered to idols is nothing to a person who is not superstitious but to an immature Christian it can be offensive. The statement in verse 31, *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,”* is the boundary to the Christian’s liberty, and that settles the whole argument. It is a misuse of Christian liberty to apply such passages as a get-away reason to go against the law of God and to do whatsoever one wishes.

THOUGHT: Liberty without boundaries is no liberty.

PRAYER: May I use my liberty to glorify You, O Lord.

THURSDAY, JUNE 26

ROMANS 8

ROMANS 14:11-23

*“...follow after the things
which make for peace...”*

**LIBERTY WITH
BOUNDARIES**

The correction of errors is by the right interpretation of the Scriptures. It has been observed that liberty is not freedom for anyone to do as he pleases. It is God alone who rules the conscience of man. God also establishes the boundaries for man's liberty and it is God's Moral Law that limits that independence.

Since these words are commonly used in defining political freedom, it is fitting to use it to illustrate the point here. Each year, many countries celebrate a national day on which they attained independence from some foreign rule. However, that freedom does not free its citizens from observing the laws of the country. This has to be so because one man's freedom can be another's bondage, thus the law has to be there to establish the boundaries of freedom. Christian liberty is controlled by the Spirit because each is called to that liberation by the Holy Spirit and He leads one in ways that are acceptable to the established law. The apostle Paul again dealt with this matter at length in Romans 8, and a detailed study of this section will reveal a conclusive truth.

When all is said and done, liberty is not to be seen as a stumbling block. It must be exercised with the understanding that an individual does not live in a vacuum but has responsibilities both to God and to man that come with his very existence. This thus defines the boundary of his freedom and any action beyond the boundary is sin.

Paul summed this up well: *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Rom 14:17).

THOUGHT: Freedom is accompanied by responsibilities.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be considerate and restrain my freedom to act so as not to stumble others.

FRIDAY, JUNE 27

ROMANS 14:17

TITUS 2:11-12

“...denying ungodliness
and worldly lust...”

FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE OF SIN

Barnes' comment on Romans 14:17:

“**But righteousness** - This word here means ‘virtue, integrity,’ a faithful discharge of all the duties which we owe to God or to our fellow-men. It means that the Christian must so live as to be appropriately denominated a righteous man and not a man whose whole attention is absorbed by the mere ceremonies and outward forms of religion. To produce this, we are told, was the main design, and the principal teaching of the gospel.”

The work of the grace of God and the gift a man receives is true Christian liberty. Paul writing to Titus stated thus: “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:11-12). As Jesus stated that the greatest law in the commandment is love for God, it is equally true that liberty is motivated by the same love and cannot be detached from that eternal foundation.

It is conclusive therefore that Christian liberty does not mean to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage and become captive to sin which in turn leads to lawlessness. Christian liberty is righteousness governed by God's moral standards and exercised by those who have given their hearts to Him and lived in obedience to His revealed will.

As children of God, we have been freed from the bondage of sin. We are therefore to use our liberty to live a life of righteousness in obedience to God and that will be a life of “*peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*”

THOUGHT: True Christian liberty will not want to get entangled with sin.

PRAYER: Lord, I choose to want to obey Your commandments.

SATURDAY, JUNE 28

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-20

JOHN 11:17-26

*“I am the resurrection
and the life...”*

LIBERTY BOUGHT AT A PRICE (I)

The Christian’s freedom from the bondage of sin is bought at a price: the life and death of Jesus, the very Son of God. And after His death, He rose from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is such an important landmark in Christian faith. It gives the greatest hope to every believer: the expectation of everlasting life, life beyond death. The Lord Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead with a glorified body. He now lives in heaven for ever. He declared, *“I am the resurrection and life...”* (John 11:25). In the text, the apostle chronicled the work of Christ for us in His death and resurrection, and showed the implication of denial of this great event.

Jesus had to die first before He can be raised. The authentication of His death will determine the fact of His coming back to life. He was pronounced dead by the soldiers. As they were satisfied that there was no more life in Him, they did not break His leg bones and they notified the governor accordingly. When the governor was satisfied, he granted permission to Joseph of Arimathea to have Jesus’ body for burial. The strict observance of Roman law by these secular rulers proves His death. Another witness was Nicodemus who assisted Joseph with the burial. It was approaching the Jewish Sabbath and the body had to be buried quickly and it remained in the grave the following day.

Another aspect of the death of Christ is its fulfilment of prophecy. It was foretold as a definite event that also had a purpose. In Luke 24, when Jesus met two disciples on Emmaus Road after His resurrection, He told them that all the law and the prophets told of His death and resurrection. This confirms that the Old Testament speaks of this supernatural event. The book of Isaiah in particular has many prophecies about Christ, so much so that it has been called the Gospel of the Old Testament.

THOUGHT: I believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to earth, to be born, to live, to die and to be resurrected.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 29

ISAIAH 53

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-58

*"...the Lord hath laid on him
the iniquities of us all..."*

LIBERTY BOUGHT AT A PRICE (II)

Isaiah 53 is one reference that is clear regarding the sufferings and death of Christ and the purpose of that sacrifice. It is such a specific prediction that it does not need any comment. It sums up the whole purpose of the passion of Christ and this was fulfilled to the last letter. Skeptics may be convinced by the prophecy as they are not able to deny its authenticity, but the purpose of Christ's suffering may not have any impact on them. But the prophet's words are very clear. We have to believe in man's sinful condition and the fact that he cannot save himself. This is where the saving grace of Christ comes in and this is a cause for joy. It was necessary for Him to go through that painful Roman penalty as an innocent person so as to pay for our sins.

The gospels' narrative tells us that He was buried and even this also was foretold by the prophets and the psalmist (Ps 22:15). Yes, He died and He was buried. He underwent the whole process. It had to be definite and undisputed. This prepares us for the next phase in God's plan of salvation.

Jesus arose from death on the third day. Paul devoted the whole of 1 Corinthians 15 to the defence of this milestone in the life of Christ. Paul told of the triple witnessing of the appearances of Christ after He arose from death. He did not mention other instances that are recorded in the gospels, but three witnesses are more than enough to bear the truth according to the Law of Moses. He told of the witness of the twelve apostles, the appearance to about 500 at one time and also to Paul himself. In the gospels, Thomas (one of the apostles who had initially denied His resurrection) came to believe after he saw the scars in His body. This is yet another confirmation of the resurrection. The fact that He could also eat is another proof to show that He was of real human flesh after His resurrection.

THOUGHT: No resurrection, no salvation.

PRAYER: O Lord, I praise You for Your power over death as revealed by Your bodily resurrection from the dead.

MONDAY, JUNE 30

1 CORINTHIANS 15:10-20

LUKE 24:13-35

*“The Lord is
risen indeed...”*

LIBERTY AND ETERNAL LIFE

The benefits of the resurrection of Christ are applied by the grace of God. This begins with acceptance of God's salvation plan through Christ. All who believe in Him are saved from sin. In addition, they also have hope of eternal life because Christ has become the firstborn of all who have died to come back to life. Paul had this understanding and hope (1 Cor 15:10-11). We are saved by the grace of God and we have hope of eternal life because He rose from the dead.

There is peril in the denial of the resurrection. Paul said that if there were no resurrection, all preaching will be vain and every hope of a Christian was also vain. At the time of this writing, there is a newspaper article that cites an ancient manuscript purported to be Judas' gospel that goes against the Bible's gospel narratives. Whether this is ancient or modern fabrication, the fact is that it is a false record and an attempt to water down the revealed truth and ultimately to make void Christ's work, resulting in no solution to sin and eternal death will linger on. This ought not to be as our hope is not in the things we see in the physical world but in the eternal promises of God. If we have confidence in the things of this life only, then we are of all man most miserable. This will be a very sad picture. However, we have the assurance that there is victory in Christ alone because He overcame death. At the sound of the trumpet, we shall put on an incorruptible body and for ever live with Him. It will be a time when all hospitals will close and all medical staff will be laid off because believers will have perfect bodies.

Christ's resurrection is a fundamental doctrine of Christian faith and anyone who believes has the greatest comfort and hope. We must not be deceived into denying this truth. As much as we are living in an environment of unbelief, the standard of Christ must be raised high. He died and rose for you. Believe in Him and you will live for ever.

THOUGHT: No resurrection, no victory over death.

PRAYER: O Lord, Your resurrection gives me assurance of life for me after my death.