

**January to March
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**“The Blessed
Promises of God”**

by
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About the Author



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“THE BLESSED PROMISES OF GOD”

Dwight L. Moody said, “Take the promises of God. Let a man feed for a month on the promises of God, and he will not talk about how poor he is. You hear people say, ‘Oh my leanness! How lean, I am!’ it is not their leanness, it is their *laziness*. If you would only read from Genesis to Revelation and see all the promises made by God to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to the Jews and to the Gentiles, and to all his people everywhere — if you would spend a month feeding on the precious promises of God — you wouldn’t be going about complaining how poor you are, you would lift up your head and proclaim the riches of his grace, because you couldn’t help doing it!”

It is important for us to understand who the promises of the Bible were given to, and what their circumstances were at the time, for it is not possible to personalise all of these promises which were given to others, although principles can be derived. The promises which were given to Israel, belong to Israel, they cannot be claimed and personalised by us today, as Israel is Israel and the Church is the Church. The Church has not replaced Israel, but Israel is set apart for a temporary period of time.

- All prophecies are promises, but not all promises are prophecies.
- All promises are that which are desirable, whilst some prophecies refer to judgements, etc. even to the appearance of the enemies of Jesus Christ, including the man of perdition (the little horn).
- Promises, often have more of a general scope than prophecies. In Eph 6:2, the Word of God calls the fifth commandment, “the first commandment with promise.”
- Many promises are conditional, dependent upon obedience to God’s Word, such as the Beatitudes, whilst others are unconditional, but most prophecies are unconditional and will ultimately be fulfilled.
- Promises can generally embrace many utterances from God, whereas prophecies are generally directed towards specific events or individuals (2 Pet 1:4).

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1

ISAIAH 7:10-16

MATTHEW 1:18-25

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child.”

A SUPERNATURAL BIRTH

The birth of Jesus is a supernatural event promised by God (Isa 7:14, 9:16; cf. Gen 3:15). It was planned by the Living and True God, the Sovereign and Almighty God from on High, who declared that no other (god) be worshipped (Ex 20:3). God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have always existed (eternally) and although they are three distinct persons, yet they are but still One God (not three Gods).

The first record of the seed of the woman (Virgin Birth), Jesus Christ, is recorded in Gen 3:15, known as the Adamic Covenant (given to Adam) and also the *protoevangelium* (first Gospel message). Gen 3:15 is a reference to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus (cf. Gal 3:16, 19; Rev 12:1–5), who came to destroy the works of the devil (Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

Over 2,700 years ago there was a prophecy of the supernatural birth of a remarkable gift to the world, who would be called *“Immanuel,”* meaning, *“God with us,”* (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23). Also in Isa 9:6, the Word of God says, Jesus Christ was wonderful in His birth, life, death and resurrection. He is the Counsellor who understands, who is caring, compassionate, who can handle every problem as no problem is too big for Him and all things are possible with Him. He is the mighty God and Father, who is everlasting and peace is in Him.

The supernatural conception of Jesus and His birth are a very important part of history. As sin entered into the world through one man (Adam), so death came upon all men for all men have sinned (Rom 5:12). The crucifixion and death of Jesus was to make atonement for man’s sin, and to reconcile man to God. As the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23a), so is the gift of eternal life for those who believe in Jesus (Rom. 6:23b).

THOUGHT: As a result of sin, each of us was lost (Matt 18:11).

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to reach out to lost souls that they may receive the supernatural second birth.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2

1 JOHN 1:1-7

2 CORINTHIANS 13:3-8

*“Examine yourselves,
whether ye be in the faith.”*

A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE

Due to the threat of Gnosticism and to strengthen his readers' faith, the Apostle John wrote with an emphasis on the assurance of salvation and that they have true fellowship. He contrasted light and darkness, love and hate, and the Spirit of God with the Spirit of the Antichrist.

Gnosticism, coming from the word 'gnostic' (knowledge), promoted a sort of secret society of the intellectual, considered as the truth for the spiritually elite. Today it includes Freemasonry, Mormons, New Age, etc. In Jesus Christ, there is access to all wisdom and all knowledge, as the Apostle Paul said in Col 2:1-4. John said, *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,”* (1 John 1:7). Therefore anyone who claims to have fellowship with God and walks according to the standards of darkness, is deceived (cf. 2 Peter, Jude).

We can have eternal life because of the atoning death of Jesus, whose blood was shed for the cleansing and remission of sin. We therefore can have true fellowship with others of like-minded faith (John 3:3,5,7). Let us examine ourselves even as Paul challenged the sanctified at Corinth (2 Cor 13:5), that they not just appear as approved by God or walk as if obedience to God is inconsequential. The challenge was to prove whether they be genuine believers or false (fake).

Do I allow the adversary to give me excuses not to attend fellowship and neglect the means of grace (cf. Heb 10:25)? Egs: the sanctuary is too cold, too hot; my child has a running nose, friends are dropping in, the service is too early, too late; the Preacher is too proud, too young, too old, too quiet, too bold, the message is too short, too long; the seats are uncomfortable, the Elders and Deacons are hypocrites, the Sunday School teachers make a mess, etc. So you stay home and watch TV. (re: 2 Cor 2:13.)

THOUGHT: How do I walk with God in worship and fellowship?

PRAYER: Lord, forgive me, for not being as zealous and faithful as I ought. I pray that I may walk closer with You.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3

GENESIS 3:1-13; 14-24

ROMANS 10:6-17

“... believe in thine heart
...thou shalt be saved.”

THE FIRST GOSPEL PROMISE

In the Old Testament, “salvation” sometimes refers to deliverance from danger (Jer 15:20), deliverance of the weak from an oppressor (Ps 35:9, 10), the healing of a sickness (Isa 38:20), and deliverance from blood guilt and its consequences (Ps 51:14). It may also refer to national deliverance from military threat (Ex 14:13) or release from captivity (Ps 14:7). However the deepest meaning of salvation is in the spiritual realm of life and the universal need for salvation is one of the clearest teachings of the Bible, but that does not equate to universal salvation.

Salvation can be described as redemption from sin and deliverance from the power of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law. The “Origin of Sin” occurred in Heaven because of the “Pride” of Lucifer who became Satan (Isa 14:12-14). The “Original Sin” occurred in Eden when Satan attacked the Word of God and Eve was tempted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Gen 3:1-6; cf. 1 John 2:16).

The first gospel message in God’s Word that the Messiah would be bruised (Gen.3:15) is the beginning of the “Covenant of Grace.” God revealed that Satan was the enemy, and that He would put the spiritual barrier between Satan’s people (“*thy seed*”), and His people (“*her seed*”). He promised that a death blow would be dealt to the adversary, crushing Satan and his kingdom, but in the process the Messiah Himself would be bruised on the cross (cf. Rom 16:20).

Although Eve sinned initially, Adam (as the Federal head of mankind) was responsible for the sin, which resulted in a broken relationship with God (Rom 5:12). As a result, all have sinned (Rom 3:10, 11, 23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). As God commended His love to us while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us (Rom 5:8).

THOUGHT: Soul winning is not about cheap tricks and gimmickry.

PRAYER: Lord, may those outside Your Kingdom be convicted of their sin (1John 1:9) and confess Jesus as both personal Lord and Saviour (Rom 10:9, 10).

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13, 14

JOHN 15:9-17

*“Ye have not chosen me,
but I have chosen you...”*

CHOSEN FROM THE BEGINNING

The doctrine of election is a deep mystery. The plan of salvation is of an Infinite, Eternal and Sovereign God. It was not devised by finite human beings with proud hearts, limited knowledge, and limited understanding who are but mortal and weak (Ps 3:8).

Spurgeon, the “Prince of Preachers,” speaking of “God’s Election of Sinners to Salvation,” said, “Lay aside your prejudices: listen calmly, listen dispassionately; hear what the Scripture says; and when you receive the truth, if God be pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it. To confess you were wrong yesterday is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser today...” and of Romans 9 “...the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be to exterminate the doctrine of election from the Scriptures.”

Most of the man-made religions of the world have a system of works unto salvation, but Christianity being established of God has no such doctrine (Eph 2:8-10). God did not say, “Because I saw you would walk in them I chose you.” The Word of God says “...*God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph 2:10).

Election is eternal. The Word of God says, “*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*” (Isa 46:10). Why did God choose some and not others? Why did God initially choose Israel? It was “...*according to the good pleasure of his will,*” (Eph 1:3-5). No man can boast of salvation as Jesus Christ said, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,*” (John 15:16) and each was chosen from the beginning.

THOUGHT: Let not the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) become the Great Omission (Rom 10:17).

PRAYER: Lord, help to accept that it is You who give faith and not man.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-9

*“Christ died for our sin...
was buried...rose again.”*

A NEW CREATION

In 2 Cor 5:16, Paul spoke of a time when he only knew of Jesus as just another man. His knowledge and understanding were limited to hearsay, until his conversion when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute more Christians. Since his salvation, Saul, who became known as Paul, having his mind enlightened, could no longer think of Jesus as just another man. Consequently, regeneration brings about vital union with the Risen, Living and True God, Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:3; 15:5; 8:1-9; Gal 6:14-15). Instead of being a great persecutor, and arch enemy of Jesus Christ, Paul became the greatest missionary ever.

The Gospel definition is described in 1 Cor 15:3, 4 *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* And His resurrection in bodily form was witnessed by hundreds of people (1 Cor 15:5-7). Paul defined the Christian life in 2 Cor 5:17.

When a person truly repents of sin before God, and confesses Jesus as both personal Lord and Saviour, he becomes a new person (2 Cor 5:17). Those who are regenerated (born again) (2 Cor 5:17; cf. John 3:3, 5, 7) are reconciled unto God (2 Cor 5:18).

Changes in a saved person are genuine, but compunction (temporary remorse) does not equate to salvation, neither does temporary humility, nor radical changes in a person, or a pretence to perfection. Shifting from one sin to another, is not an indication that a person is saved, neither is salvation achieved by baptism, some type of educational regeneration, nor by easy believism, nor by striving after a strange holiness. Nor is changing from blasphemy to a subtle mocking of God (or the things of God) evidence a person is saved.

THOUGHT: Praise God for the Spirit's conviction of sin in our lives.

PRAYER: Lord, I am saved. Make me a better person, not a bitter person.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 6

MARK 8:31-38

JOHN 12:20-36

"He that loveth his life shall lose it."

THE PROFIT OF A MAN

Jesus dismissed all hopes of establishing an earthly kingdom as He preached to the disciples of His rejection, His suffering, His cruel death, and the power of His resurrection (Mark 8:31). In response to Peter's impulsive attempt to sway Jesus from God's plan of salvation, Jesus took him aside and challenged Peter (Mark 8:32, 33).

The disciples had misunderstood Jesus' plan and so after performing the miracles, He sets forth some basic principles that explain the real meaning of life. The miracles of Jesus were to prove that He was the true Messiah (Anointed One), the only Begotten Son of God (John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18), and the only Saviour of the world (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:3-5). Jesus alone saves from the punishment due for each person's sin (Rom 5:9, 10). Jesus also saves us from the power of sin in our lives (Rom 8:9-11) and from Satan's power (1 John 4:4). His miracles authenticated His ministry.

The Messiah challenged them to deny themselves (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) and follow after Him. They were to give Jesus the pre-eminence that He deserved and to do away with self-righteousness and prideful reasoning of the intellect, believing His words and walking as He directed. They were not to be hindered by a person or possession from walking in God's glory or furthering His cause, as His glory must be sought at all times and continuing obedience was required.

Mark 8:36 clearly shows that what man attempts to save or gain, he ultimately will lose, but if a person loses all for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel, he is actually preserving his own life. When multimillionaire John D. Rockefeller was asked how much money it took to make a person happy, he answered, "Just a little more." Mark 8:35: *"whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."*

THOUGHT: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

PRAYER: May I exercise humility and repentance if Jesus is not pre-eminent in my lives.

MONDAY, JANUARY 7

ISAIAH 45:18-25

1 CORINTHIANS 1:17-25

*“...unto us which are saved
it is the power of God.”*

THE SOURCE OF SALVATION

In Isaiah 41, God promised there would be a final restoration of Israel and that apart from the Lord, there is no hope. In Isaiah 42, God promised His Servant, being Jesus Christ the “Messiah,” who had the traits of the Prophet, Priest (High) and King, who shall judge the Gentiles (Matt 12:18-21). His Kingdom is not constrained by boundaries, or cultures.

God will not give His glory to another, neither His praises to images (Isa 42:8). In Isaiah 43, God declared, “*I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour,*” (Isa 43:11) and that He would blot out their transgressions (Isa 43:25). In Isaiah 44, it is recorded that the Spirit of God was on Israel and that idolatry was foolishness.

God used the foolishness of preaching to save Spurgeon, with the message “Look up and Live” (from Isa 45:22). “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God,*” (1 Cor 1:18; cf. 17-25).

Spurgeon said, “I was in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, but had yet, by divine grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage, and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest, and finding none, I stepped within the house of God, and sat there, afraid to look upward, lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest his fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text: ‘*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.*’ I looked that moment; the grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the selfsame instant, and now I think I can say with truth: ‘*E’er since by faith I saw the stream His flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die.*’”

THOUGHT: God is the only source of salvation, there is no other.

PRAYER: Lord, may those outside Your Kingdom be convicted of their sin and be saved by the preaching of the Cross, which is the power of God unto salvation.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8

JONAH 2:1-10

ACTS 2:14-28

“...whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

Whilst there are many who have a reverence for God and pray to Him continuously with understanding of who He is, there are others who have a lesser degree of respect and only pray when they are in trouble. God put Jonah, who was walking in disobedience, in a place where he would finally pray and submit to God's will. Despite his impossible circumstances, the prophet learnt a difficult lesson and his prayer, whilst he was inside the fish belly with sea weeds wrapped around his head, culminated in an expression of his faith.

Jonah was an Old Testament prophet who struggled with the universal love that God had for His Chosen People, the Israelites and for the Gentiles (Luke 2:32; Rom 3:9, 29; 9:24; 1 Cor 10:32). Jonah contrasted the lying vanities of those who worship idols and trust in their own devices, forsaking the mercies of the Great Jehovah. In repentance he offered thanksgiving unto the Lord, and as our help is from the Lord and not in ourselves, Jonah proclaimed, *“Salvation is of the LORD,”* (Jonah 2:9). Although Jonah preached grudgingly, God needed the people to hear, and He used the message, showing that it was not Jonah's eloquence or own doing, but the work of the Holy Spirit that convicted the souls unto repentance. Another lesson Jonah learnt, after the great fish was used as an instrument to preserve his life, was that the enemies of Israel can also come to believe in God.

Salvation saves us from our sins (Matt 1:21), from wrath to come (Rom 5:9), from our enemies, both Satanic and human (Luke 1:69-71), from our trouble (Ps 34:6), from all uncleanness (Ezek 36:29), from sinful dwelling places (Ezek 37:23), from distresses (Ps 107:13). Even as the power of the Holy Spirit was manifested, the day of salvation is for all who call upon His name (Acts 2:21) as *“Salvation is of the Lord.”*

THOUGHT: There are lessons learnt in the depths which could never be learnt in the heights.

PRAYER: May I be thankful for the salvation of souls, whatever cultural background or from wherever they come, as *Salvation is of the LORD.*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9

COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

ROMANS 8:12-17

*“through the Spirit...mortify...
deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

A NEW LIFE

In Col 3:1-11, Paul wrote to encourage Christians in deeper Christian living. After speaking about the pre-eminence of Jesus, and warning them of false teaching, he exhorted them to the new life in Jesus Christ.

After genuine repentance, the sinner becomes a new person, a new creature, with a new life (Rom 1:16, 17; 3:22-30; 4:3-8, 24; 10:8-13), and the heart changes. In Rom 7:13-25, Paul speaks of the Christian struggle and a victorious life in the Spirit, and the fact that believers are more than conquerors (Rom 8:1-27; 28-39). He challenges them to mortify their sins which are of the natural man (Col 3:1-11).

There are two general sins of men and two general sins of women. The two general sins of men are lust and pride, whilst the two general sins of women are anxiety and of the tongue. They need to be mortified if they exist within the Church (Rom 8:13; cf. Gal 5:16-21).

The sin of pride will bring a man low (Prov 11:2; 16:18; 29:23), producing contention (Prov 13:10) and causing him to swell up with conceit (1 Cor 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; Col 2:18), but humility is to esteem others better than self (Phil 2:3) and to give all glory to God (2 Cor 10:17). The sin of lust is a deadly sin of the mind and lusting after a woman is committing adultery in the heart (Matt 5:28; cf. Prov 6:25).

The sin of anxiety is that of worry, being overly concerned, and over anxious (Matt 6:24-33, 34; cf. Matt 6:27; Luke 12:25; Phil 4:11, 12). The sin of the tongue involves gossip, tale-bearing (Lev 19:16; Prov 11:13; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20-22), backbiting (Ps 15:3), slandering (Num 14:36,37; 2 Sam 19:27; Prov 10:18; Jer 9:4-6; Rom 3:8) and being a busybody (2 Thess 3:11; 1 Tim 5:13; 1 Pet 4:15).

THOUGHT: The Spirit gives victory over sin (Gal 5:22, 23).

PRAYER: Lord, let there be genuine confession and repentance of sin before You that any sins of my old nature may be mortified as the Spirit of God dwells within me.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10

MATTHEW 5:4

2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-11

*“For godly sorrow worketh
repentance to salvation.”*

A BLESSED MOURNING

“Beatitudes” mean “blessings” (Matt 5:1-16). And the blessed share in salvation and experience a foretaste of heaven.

Although there can be mourning over pain, sickness, bereavement, a loss of material possessions or even wounded pride, etc, the mourning spoken of here is to do with repentance of sin (cf. 2 Cor 7:9, 10). Not all tears lead to blessedness, as many who shed tears over the death of friends, do not mourn over the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the most famous sermons was by Jonathan Edwards, titled “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Edwards said, “Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable...It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances.”

There is repentance unto life (Acts 11:18), but Judas Iscariot’s mourning (not a godly sorrow) was despairing unto death. Saul’s mourning was hypocritical as he took honour to himself (1 Sam 15:30). Cain’s judgment for offering a wrong sacrifice with a wrong heart and killing his brother Abel, was more than he could bear (Gen 4:13), resulting from the fear of hell, forced by the fire of affliction.

The hypocrites sorrow externally (Matt 6:16). Ahab rent his clothes and put on sackcloth (1 Kgs 21:27), but his heart was hard. As sin is a transgression of God’s Law (1 John 3:4), it requires repentance.

Repentance is a supernatural working of God in us and we come trusting in Jesus for salvation (Luke 5:31, 32).

THOUGHT: Sin is the highest ingratitude.

PRAYER: Daily grant me, Lord, godly repentance of sin.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11

ACTS 17:22-32

1 JOHN 1:1-10

*“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son
cleanseth us from all sin.”*

ONE BLOOD

Whilst Paul was waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy, he was greatly disturbed at the idolatry within the city. The Epicureans believed in the existence of gods, but did not believe they interfered with the affairs of men. Their motto was, “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” On the other hand, the Stoics believed in the brotherhood of all men and practised a life of self-denial. These groups invited Paul on Mars Hill to explain his teaching.

Paul challenged the Athenians of being superstitious and revealed to them that the inscription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD (Acts 17:23), referred to the Creator of this world, who governs this world and who is the Saviour and Judge. He declared that God dwells not in temples made by hands (Acts 17:24). Paul knew this God, but He was unknown to them. Paul also challenged them of their pride and conceit, as they believed that they had sprung out of their own earth, and had nothing to do with any other nation. He told them that God made of one blood, all nations of men.

Looking at the issue of one blood, man was made on the sixth day of creation, spiritually, in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28). Evolution is a lie of the adversary. The term “racism” is a result of the ungodly evolution theory. There can be no such thing as racism, as there is only one race, the human race. Unfortunately there is prejudice.

Humanism has resulted from evolution, which says that man’s opinion decides and determines what is truth and society has suffered greatly resulting in family breakups, pornography, racism, abortion, euthanasia, homosexual behaviour, etc.

THOUGHT: Various cultures, one race.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for Your Word that teaches me that there is only one race, only one blood, only one Living and True God, with salvation only possible through the blood of Jesus Christ.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-7

COLOSSIANS 3:15-17

*“And let the peace of God
rule in your hearts.”*

A HEART CONDITION

Paul encouraged the brethren to persevere in their relationship with Jesus, and not allow their Christian walk to be disrupted by the Judaisers (Phil. 3:2-11), the perfectionists, who claimed to be sinless in this life (Phil. 3:12-16), and to mark the Hedonists (Phil. 4:17-21), the pleasure seekers. He encouraged harmony in the Church, and the restoration of two ladies who were having difficulties with one another. As the day would come when they would live in harmony in Heaven, it was good for them to do so now whilst living on Earth. Although anxiety is often experienced more by women, these verses of promise (Phil. 4:6, 7) are appropriate to all.

Although God has given us the skills of medical practitioners, as the Great Physician, He is still able to heal both physical (medical) heart conditions and spiritual heart conditions (Ps 147:3).

Some spiritual conditions of the heart from God's Word, which require repentance include: a hardened heart (Ex 8:15), obstinate (Deut 2:30), wicked (Deut 15:9), lustful (Prov 6:25), a stony heart (Ezek 11:19), or a divided heart (Hos 10:2). There is also a doubting heart (Mark 11:23), slow to believe (Luke 24:25), betraying (John 13:2), lying (Acts 5:3), impenitent (Rom 2:5), a heart of strife (Jas 3:14).

Remedies for healing the heart include repenting before God (1 John 1:8-10), trusting in the blood of Jesus and a cleansed heart (Jer 24:7; Ezek 36:26; Acts 15:9; Heb 10:22), hiding God's Word in the heart (Ps 119:11). The Word of God mentions of a discerning heart (Eccl 8:5), a singing heart (Job 29:13), an upright heart (Ps 97:11), an understanding heart (1 Kgs 3:9), a pure heart (Matt 5:8), and a lowly heart (Matt 11:29). These are but a few characteristics of proper heart conditions before God, to His glory.

THOUGHT: Our hearts must be better, not bitter.

PRAYER: Lord, may the peace of God, given by Jesus Christ (John 14:27) which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7) rule in my heart.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 13

JOHN 16:31-33

1 JOHN 5:1-5

*"this is the victory that overcometh
the world, even our faith."*

JOY IN TRIBULATION

In this transitory life, the Christian can live without fear, for there is a blessed promise of comfort, joy and hope for the present and a blessed promise of eternal comfort, joy and hope for the future. Truly born again Bible-believing Christians are to live courageously, being of good cheer, for Jesus came to earth and made peace by His blood (Col 1:20), and they can overcome the world through the blood of the Lamb. Consequently joy in tribulation can occur because faith is the victory which overcometh the world. Christians can experience joy in tribulation when they live victoriously and yield to the Lord. Victorious living is not striving to acquire wealth nor is it fearing men or being enslaved by fashions.

Although the world would place more confidence in Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonia), Darius and Cyrus (Medo-Persia), Alexander the Great (Greece), or even Napoleon or the superpowers overcoming the world, it was, and is, not possible for them to overcome the world.

In this transitory life, there will be "troubles" (1 Cor 7:28; 2 Cor 1:4, 8), "anguish" (John 16:21), "burdens" (2 Cor 8:13), "persecution" (Acts 11:19), and "tribulation" (Matt 13:21; 24:21; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 2 Cor 1:4; 7:4; 2 Thess 1:4; 1:6; Rev 1:9; 2:9, 22; 7:14). God's Word says, *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1 John 5:4, 5). Christian joy and rejoicing is not the emotional happiness sought after by the world, but they can be even *"as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"* (2 Cor 6:10). As Jesus has overcome the world, so the Christian can have joy in tribulation.

THOUGHT: Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22).

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to be courageous and victorious in times of tribulation knowing Your love, peace and security and may I be confident of Your protection, as You have overcome the world.

MONDAY, JANUARY 14

ISAIAH 53:4, 5

JAMES 5:13-18

“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick.”

SPIRITUAL HEALING

The context of Isa 53:4- 5 is spiritual healing. Although God can heal physically, it is not always His will to heal. There are many verses to substantiate the fact that the atonement does not guarantee physical healing. In Peter 2:24, Peter applied Isa 53:5 to salvation from sin.

Although the Christian lives in a body that is under the curse of death (Rom 8:10), the rapture will bring liberty from death and complete physical healing in a glorified body (1 Cor 15:51-58). Jesus' healing ministry was to authenticate His ministry and show proof that He was Messiah (John 5:36; cf. 10:25; 10:37-38; 14:11; 15:24; 20:30-31). The healing ministry of the Apostles was to authenticate their ministry (2 Cor 12:12; cf. Mark 3:14-15; Acts 2:43; 4:33; 5:12, 15; 19:12). In the first century, God did not heal all who had physical afflictions, Timothy was not healed (1Tim 5:23), Trophimus was not healed (2 Tim 4:20), neither was Paul healed (2 Cor 12:7-10, 2 Cor 12:9). When Jesus healed, it was immediate, miraculous, and lasting.

Many Charismatics hold that sickness is Satan's work. But Rom 3:23 and 6:23 say that all have sinned and the wages of sin is death. Today, God's people are healed by God in answer to people's prayers, not through specially gifted people. In his book, "The Healing Epidemic," Dr Masters said, "We must therefore be ready to expose the superficiality of charismatic reasoning if we are to save fellow believers from untold hurt and confusion."

Deception, confusion and false healings abound today, as young and impressionable minds are corrupted with a subtle mix of unbiblical practices and a sprinkling of biblical truths. Theological doctrines are replaced by emotions, feelings and experiences, due to a disbelief in the authority of Scripture.

THOUGHT: The adversary can deceptively heal (Matt 7:21-23; 24:24).

PRAYER: Lord, grant physical healing but especially grant spiritual healing of the soul.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15

JOB 14:1-12

PSALM 34:18-22

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.”

THE SUFFERING OF THE RIGHTEOUS

The book of Job reveals the suffering of a righteous man who lost almost everything. It was presumed that if Job lost everything he would turn from God. But Job did not (Job 1:21). After his afflictions, the loss of his children and possessions, his wife said, *“curse God and die,”* (Job 2:9). Job replied, *“thou speakest as a foolish woman,”* (Job 2:10).

Job had 3 friends who visited him. They were Eliphaz, the oldest and more prominent, Bildad, who dealt with authority and tradition, and Zophar who concentrated on worldly wisdom. Although they sat with him 7 days and 7 nights, instead of comforting Job, they judged him.

His friends accused him of being guilty of unconfessed sin, and that the innocent does not suffer; of mocking God; hypocrisy; hidden sin; being full of hot air; haughty and unprofitable. Also the abuse of power and wealth; refusal to share with the needy; exploiting the poor, and withholding help from the widows. His friends also told him that he would reap what he had sown, but he believed they were rubbing salt into his wounds and had an uncomprehending attitude.

What they said may have otherwise had some truth, but unfortunately they did not fit Job's case. It shows that sincere people can be sincerely wrong. To the contrary, Job gained his wealth honestly; he was a defender; deliverer; liberator; advocate of the poor; the fatherless; the widows; lame; blind and was a friend to the needy and defenseless elements in society. He opposed evil doings and evil people, and in his former greatness dwelt among the nobles.

THOUGHT: After the loss of his family and possessions, Job stood rejected by both his former colleagues and was abandoned by his wife.

PRAYER: As Job's faith was being tested, he maintained the highest standards of ethical behaviour. Lord, in my trials may I exhibit the same.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16

PSALM 55:16-23

1 PETER 5:5-9

*“Casting all your care upon him;
for he careth for you.”*

COMFORT FOR THE DISTRESSED

God continues to comfort distressed believers today as He always has. Out of great trials in life can come great triumphs as a result of God’s providence. King David was accustomed to treachery within the palace (Ps 41:9) when as a sick man in his bed of affliction, he was betrayed by a supposed good friend in Ahithophel, his counsellor (Bathsheba’s grandfather) who deserted him to conspire with David’s son Absalom (2 Sam 15:12, 31). Time proved that he was not a real friend, but a conspiring and subversive companion.

In Psalm 55, the psalmist (betrayed by a friend) confidently prayed. In his hour of distress, King David came boldly to the throne of grace and cast his burden upon the Lord. The deep pain and agony within his heart was caused by his friends, who became his enemies, resulting in him trembling (Ps 55:1-5). The situation was made much more painful because he thought these people were his friends. If it had been an enemy from outside, it would have been easier to comprehend.

In his book, “Meditations from Psalms,” Rev Dr Timothy Tow appropriately titled this psalm, “Anathema to the Traitor.” The vicious and malicious lies, spreading iniquity and trouble, scheming to overthrow King David, occurred around him in the dark alleys of Jerusalem, both day and night.

Speaking of Ahithophel’s dealings with David, Spurgeon said, “He lauded and larded the man he hoped to devour. He buttered him with flattery and then battered him with malice...” (re: Ps 55:21).

David was not vengeful returning evil for evil, but understood that vengeance belongs to the Lord, and that his prayers would be answered.

THOUGHT: In times of distress, let me cast my care upon the Lord.

PRAYER: May I exercise humility and trust in You, Lord, when people and friends deceive me, knowing that You will deal with them.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17

JOHN 16:25-33

2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

“My grace is sufficient for thee...”

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

Many, in their misconceptions about suffering, have blamed God for sin and death. But sin is due to Adam and Eve’s disobedience (cf. Gen 2:16, 17; Gen 3). Consequently, sin passed upon all (Rom 3:10, 11, 23; 5:8; 12; 6:23) and man is culpable for his actions, not God.

Some maintain that it is only personal sin that results in suffering, but this is not always the case (Job 5:7). Jesus explained to His disciples that the blind man in John 9:1-7 was not suffering because of his parents’ sin, nor because of his own personal sin, but so that God could demonstrate His power as Jesus healed him.

Neither is suffering always due to a lack of faith (2 Cor 12:8, 2 Cor 12:9). Although Paul was a man with an undeniable and unwavering faith, God kept him humble in his infirmity and God’s power rested upon him in his suffering.

Jesus endured the cruel Cross and suffered shame for our sake (Heb 12:2), and is preparing us for the glory to come (John 14:1-4). The Suffering Servant was the ultimate sin-bearer for us (Isa 53). In Matt. 17:12, Jesus announced His suffering, and after His resurrection He appeared to His disciples confirming His suffering and that He was to rise from the dead on the third day (Luke 24:46).

Paul rejoiced in his suffering, knowing that this life is temporal and that eternity is everlasting and that his glory was to be soon (Rom. 8:18). Trials will come in this world (Matt 13:21; Rom 8:35) and they are used by God for His glory and to refine His children (1 Pet 1:6-7; 5:10), who share in the suffering of Jesus.

THOUGHT: Christians do not suffer alone, as Jesus Christ is both with them and working in them even in their darkest hours.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to comfort others with Your Word, prayers, psalms and hymns as Jesus has overcome the world.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-11

*“Who comforteth us
in all our tribulation.”*

COMFORT FOR THE BEREAVED

God’s Word comforts Christians in times of the home-going of a loved one and encourages them. There is no need to mutilate ourselves (Deut 14:1) or to mourn continuously (1Thess 4:13). Home-going is a promotion to glory (1Cor 5:1).

Believers who are now with the Lord are resting from their labours and are removed from sufferings, the cares of life, temptations to sin and the evils of sin. As Jesus was resurrected from the dead, so are believers promised resurrection (1Cor 15:20-24; 1Thess 4:13-18).

Departed loved ones who are believers are in a better place. Death is not a dreadful thing, but a joyous matter (although naturally tears will be shed) because the loved one is promoted to glory. They are enjoying the blessed presence of the Lord Jesus and all the other saints who have gone to Heaven before them. They are not suffering, nor are they in an intermediate state of unconsciousness before the appearing of the Lord. They are certainly alive (2Cor 5:8). There is a peace that surpasses all understanding for the believer (Phil 4:7), who will dwell in God’s House forever. *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever,”* (Ps 23:6). The Apostle Paul said, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,”* (Phil 1:21), as he knew of the glory of God that exists beyond the grave and he also spoke of death as his departure (2Tim 4:6). He knew, for the truly born again Bible-believing Christian, Jesus Christ was not only to be magnified in life, but also magnified in death. The Apostle Paul understood the meaning of life, and did not fear death, for it is a graduation to fellowship with and in the presence of the Lord and the time will come when a glorified body will be reunited with the soul. This is a comfort for the bereaved.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 116:15 and Ecclesiastes 7:1.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I be able to comfort those who are going through a tribulation, with the comfort wherewith You have comforted me.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19

ROMANS 5:1-11

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-12

*“We are...cast down,
but not destroyed.”*

COMFORT FOR THE DEPRESSED

Out of great trials in life can come great triumphs as a result of the God's providence. He continues to comfort believers today. The true Christian can rejoice because he has been reconciled with God through Jesus Christ and have the peace of God (Rom 5:1). Although sinners are at enmity with God (Isa 48:22; Jas 4:4; Col 1:21), when they are reconciled with Him, there is a peace that is a combination of hope, trust, and quietness of the mind and soul (Matt 5:9).

Speaking of the causes of depression, Jay E. Adams said it could be due to “a recent illness in which one gets behind in work, hormonal changes, a reversal of fortunes, the consequences of simple negligence, guilt over a particular sin, self-pity arising from jealousy or disadvantageous turn of events, bad feeling resulting from resentment, worry, etc....comes from a cyclical process in which the initial problem is mishandled... Sinful habits are hard to break, but if they are not broken, they will bind the client ever more tightly.”

The Christian can rejoice in future prospects and can have peace even in uncertainty (John 16:33). God is accessible to the believer, as Jesus is the Mediator (1Tim 2:5-6) and he can rejoice in hope with full certainty and assurance (Rom 5:2). The assurance for the Christian is that one day they will be like Him (Rom 8:29; 1John 3:2, 3).

Cain's so-called depression was due to disobeying God and concealing his sin (Gen 4:6, 7). Until David repented, his bones waxed old (Ps 32:3, 4). On three occasions during his trials, when feeling downcast, David said was depressed (Ps 42, 5, 11, 43:5), But he never lost sight of the solution to his depression. Sufferings can be endured because of the grace of God in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. We are to count it all joy because of what God can accomplish, not because of the trial itself (Jas 1:2).

THOUGHT: God is able to forgive sin and remove guilt.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to live victoriously, above the trials of my life.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 20

MATTHEW 5:10-12

HEBREWS 11:33-40

*"through faith...wrought righteousness,
obtained promises."*

A DOUBLE BLESSING

Although there are nine beatitudes, they are only considered as eight. The reason is that the eighth and ninth (Matt 5:10, 11) are a double blessing for those who are unjustly persecuted for righteousness' sake. This is a great paradox peculiar to Christianity. Those who excel in Christian virtues, must expect more trials and difficulties than the unbeliever. And Jesus declared this a blessing. There is a twofold persecution mentioned for those who follow after Him. Firstly, there may be an unjust physical pursuing and persecution. Secondly, there may be slanderous and malicious personal attacks. If the recipient is being persecuted for doing his own work, it is self-inflicted, although it is not fully comprehended by the persecutor. If a person is persecuted for righteousness' sake, and for doing God's work, it is a blessing!

Jesus was persecuted, hated and despised of men, and He foresaw the persecution and hatred that would touch His followers, and He warned of such (John 15:18-26). The Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary says, "Wicked people, living under the power of Satan, will hate the Lord Jesus, His followers, and their righteous deeds (John 3:20; 8:44). It is the duty of Christians not to strike back but to do good to their enemies (Matt 5:43-44; Luke 6:27)."

Paul said, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived,"* (2 Tim. 3:12, 13). Jesus said of those being persecuted for righteousness' sake, *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"* (Matt 5:12). There is a double blessing, and the promise of Eternity in Heaven.

THOUGHT: The more a person is unjustly persecuted for righteousness' sake, the greater the blessing.

PRAYER: Lord, may those who persecute believers repent and not endure the wrath of God.

MONDAY, JANUARY 21

MATTHEW 11:28-30

ISAIAH 40:27-31

*“they that wait upon the LORD
shall renew their strength.”*

REST FOR YOUR SOUL

In this life there are many heavy burdens, the weight of human misery and cares, sleepless nights, or even being afraid to go to sleep, also financial, emotional, physical and spiritual trials, that beset us. Although the “*rest*” (Matt 11:28) covers all of these situations and more, there is an emphasis upon those wearied of being a servant to sin and those who have to work for their salvation as taught by the Pharisees.

It is blasphemous and a burdensome yoke to say that peace can be found in anything else other than the Messiah. Those labouring for their own self-righteousness are aiming at that which is futile, as no amount of perceived good works can save (Eph 2:8-10).

Blaming others is not the answer to our dilemmas in life, but is a natural tendency of the heart. Some who were weary as a result of being caught in sin and who recognized sin and repented of it, were Ephraim, the younger of Joseph’s two sons (Gen 41:50-52). Also the prodigal son (Luke 15:17, 18), and the publican (tax collector) (Luke 18:13). The Apostle Peter’s hearers, also recognized sin and repented of it (Acts 2:36, 37; cf. 38), as did Saul, who became Paul, when he fell to the earth hearing the voice of the resurrected Lord and Saviour Jesus (Acts 9:4, 6, 9) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:29-31).

Jesus was accustomed to labouring and spoke to many hardworking men, including the farmers (sowers), the shepherds and the fishermen etc. He also chose hardworking men as His disciple (Isa 40:31; Luke 4:13). To receive rest, a person must cease from their own labours, and come to Jesus who has promised, “*I will give you rest.*”

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ will give a true rest and perfect peace, in a physical, emotional, and spiritual sense, which is both temporal and eternal.

PRAYER: Lord, may all who are heavy laden come to You, acknowledging their sins, for You have promised to give perfect peace and rest for their souls.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22

ROMANS 1:16-21

HEBREWS 11:1-9

“without faith it is impossible to please him.”

THE BLESSING OF FAITH

In Romans 1:17, Paul exhorted the readers to live by faith and not try to earn salvation by good works. Martin Luther read this very verse as he embarked upon a quest for the deeper meaning of life. He recognised that the man-made sacraments were not fulfilling his desire for God, but were binding his spirit. Luther learnt from God’s Word that the truth concerning the pardon of sins was contrary to the Roman Church teaching. He realized that salvation was through Jesus alone, and not by works (Eph 2:8-9). *“The just shall live by faith”* (Hab 2:4, Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11, Heb 10:37). This led to the Great Reformation in 1517.

God’s Word warns against seeking after signs instead of exercising faith (Matt 12:38-40). There is the promise of a blessing for those who believe in His Word by faith, as genuine faith rests in God’s Word, and not by sight. The Word of God says, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Heb 11:1). *“But without faith it is impossible to please him...”* (Heb 11:6).

The blessings of God are diminished when there is a craving for signs and ecstatic experiences, when His Divinity is attacked, when His character and Word are attacked by those who are deluded, by their so-called intellectual discoveries which undermine God’s very Word.

Let us be more concerned about the salvation and sanctification of souls, including the salvation of children, and give them the pure, unadulterated Word of God. Be warned that there is a woe unto them who prevent them from coming to the Lord (Luke 17:1, 2).

Sins cannot be forgiven by paying money to a church, neither through the deceit of a treasury of merit. Sins can only be forgiven through the shed blood of our risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Heb 9:22).

THOUGHT: By faith, Abraham rejoiced to see the promise of Jesus Christ from a distance (John 8:56; cf. Heb 11:13).

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to exercise faith to please You.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23

MARK 10:17-31

JOHN 14:1-6

“I am the way the truth and the life.”

THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE

The rich young ruler had a belief that he could attain eternal life (salvation) by his own merits. The Messiah was clearly showing the rich young ruler that he was not as good as he perceived himself to be, having an inflated opinion of himself, as can be observed in Romans 3:10-12, 23.

The Messiah answered in such a manner that the rich young ruler would have been challenged of his attitude since he considered himself as good, yet he was not. The Messiah challenged him concerning the keeping of some of the Ten Commandments (Mark 10:19).

Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo said, “The eye of a needle ought to be understood literally as the actual eye of a sewing needle where the thread goes through. Jesus was saying that it is truly easier to thread a huge camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. A man that is bloated with riches and pride will find it impossible to enter heaven. That is why the disciples were *‘astonished out of measure.’* They logically and correctly responded, *‘Who then can be saved?’* *‘None’* is the expected answer. Are all rich people therefore destined to eternal damnation? Jesus gave a hopeful reply, *‘With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.’* Salvation is impossible with men; it is only possible with God.”

Jesus said, *“I am the way the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). He states categorically that He is the only way, and only by genuine confession and repentance. The ruler, consumed in his riches, did not inherit eternal life.

THOUGHT: Salvation is impossible with men, but possible with God.

PRAYER: Lord, remember my loved ones and friends who are outside Your Kingdom. May You convict them of their sins by the Holy Spirit that they may spend eternity in Heaven.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24

JOHN 14:27-30

ROMANS 8:1-11

*“...to be spiritually minded
is life and peace.”*

A BLESSED PEACE

The peace of Jesus is an invaluable blessing. It transcends any peace of the world. This peace, which Jesus dispenses, is “*my peace.*” When God’s Word indwells a man’s heart, and there is a communing with Him daily with obedience to His Word, there is the blessedness of a spiritual peace. It is not temporary, but an everlasting peace.

The legacy of the “Blessed Promise” of a “Blessed Peace,” was made in the presence of the disciples. Jesus arose from the grave to make sure this legacy, being His “Last Will and Testament,” was carried out without any disputes. Consequently, after His death, the promise of “Blessed Peace” became reality. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is referring to peace with God, and peace with our own conscience.

The legacy of the shed blood at the crucifixion, the burial, resurrection and bodily ascension to Heaven of Jesus Christ was the promise of the “Blessed Peace,” to the faithful. Although the disciples had reason to be troubled, they were comforted by Jesus (John 14:1, 27).

Jesus came to earth and made peace by His blood on the Cruel Cross (Col 1:20). This was so that men could be reconciled to God and brought near to Him. Consequently, the message of peace is to be preached to every person throughout the whole world (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 10:36, Rom 10:15, Eph 2:17). It is not that man can make peace with God, but that God has made peace available through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. Those who truly believe in Jesus Christ, both receive and enjoy peace with God.

THOUGHT: The Word of God declares that to be carnally minded is spiritual death, but to be Christ-centred and spiritually-minded is life and peace.

PRAYER: Lord, make me to know Your peace that my heart will not be troubled, nor afraid, but may abide in Your promises.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-26

JAMES 5:7-18

*“the Lord is very pitiful
(compassionate),
and of tender mercy.”*

UNFAILING COMPASSION

The book of Lamentations expresses the deep grief and profound sorrow over the destruction of both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of God. The writer of Lamentations, under the inspiration of God’s Spirit, expressed his deep distress and sorrow regarding his nation’s sins and the subsequent dilemma of Jerusalem at the hands of the invading Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar, as God judged a sinful people. Jerusalem was of great importance in the purpose of God and His redemptive work in the world, and although God judges His sinful people, there is a great hope expressed during difficult times.

The first chapter/lament involved more agonizing weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem, whilst the second lament was because Israel had forgotten the moral and spiritual obligations of her covenant relationship to God. The third lament is considered as a high point of the book of Lamentations as hope is emphasized. The hope of man is often said to arise out of a sea of hard experiences, and the verses of hope (Lam 3:19-42) are surrounded by two stanzas about afflictions. This lament summarizes the basic message of the book of Lamentations and is also considered a foreshadowing of the sufferings of Jesus Christ (cf. Isa 53; Ps 22).

Jeremiah realized that the thoughts of his afflictions only served to keep his soul humble. Although he lamented in tears over Israel, he was thankful for they could have been worse. There was the hope that they would get better. The Living and True God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, and His streams of mercy are acknowledged. God’s love and compassion comes from His mercy, that causes Him to help those who feel they are in a miserable or wretched condition, whilst His grace moves Him to forgive the guilty.

THOUGHT: We encourage others to persevere in suffering knowing victory will be theirs, but when we suffer, let us take the same advice.

PRAYER: Lord, when trouble is prolonged and deliverance is deferred, may I wait patiently as You will fulfill all of Your promises.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

JAMES 1:12-18

*“Blessed is the man that
endureth temptation.”*

BLESSED ENDURANCE

Each one of us will go through trials and weariness. None is exempt. During trials, it is very easy to rely on one's own strength and not on God. But God warns us of such misplaced and inordinate pride (1Co. 10:12). This pertained to those believers in disobedience who proudly and boldly believe they could go anywhere or do anything.

Those who believe they are in a state of sinless perfection, deceive themselves (1John 1:8-10), as their profession cannot match their practice. As all are targets of the adversary, all are tempted by the lures of the world, and all at one time or another experience the appetites of the flesh. Paul warned and rebuked the boastings of those who thought they were confidently standing securely. To the contrary he also thought of the far larger number of people who never thought they could stand, but who lived with a constant burden lest they should fall. These people, he encouraged that they not faint, but gives the promise of victory when tempted.

The adversary is the source of temptation, originally created an exalted angel (Col 1:16, Ezek 28:12-14). He is the supreme enemy of both God and man (Gen 3; 2Cor 11:3). He fell from his former estate because of his pride (Ezek 28:15,16; Isa 14:13,13; 1Tim 3:6). He was originally known as Lucifer (*“Morning Star”*) or son of the morning (Isa. 14:12).

As a shepherd rescues his wandering sheep, so God rescues His wandering people and delivers them from their predicaments. It is not that God allows us to escape temptation, but He provides a way of escape to enable us to land safely and victoriously on the other side. Believers are encouraged to persist as God becomes personally involved in each trial and provides a means of escape and especially provides a blessed endurance in trials.

THOUGHT: The only way of escaping temptation is to endure it.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me patience and long-suffering during trials, for there is a crown of life as a blessing for those who endure.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 27

HEBREWS 13:1-6

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10

*“But godliness with contentment
is great gain.”*

A CONTENTED PEOPLE

In the book of Hebrews, the author is speaking about the supremacy of Jesus. He exhorted the Hebrew Christians to be cautious of their conduct, especially in relation to covetousness, which is to have inordinate (greedy) desires (Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21; Josh 7:21).

The Hebrew Christians, had been persecuted and had been plundered of their possessions (Heb 10:34). The author reminded them of their former victories. Initially after their conversion, they endured sufferings with joy. They lost their possessions but sympathised with those who endured greater trials. They knew that what they possessed in the Lord Jesus was far greater than the possessions they had lost.

As time progressed, they found the position they were in more difficult. So, the author encouraged them from God's Word to Joshua (Deut 31:6; cf. 31:8). King David offered the same encouragement to Solomon (1Chron 28:20).

The Word of God says, *“The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”* (Ps 118:6). If believers focus on God, they have no need to fear, for God's presence, provision and promises will be their contentment.

May each one *“set his affections on things above”* (Col 3:1) that we not err from the faith. A planned procedure to get rich will cause a person to fall into temptations. It is a snare. It will lead to foolish and hurtful lusts, harmful ruin and destruction because the love of money is the root of all evil (1Tim 6:9, 10).

THOUGHT: Although the Hebrew Christians were persecuted and lost their possessions, they sympathised with those who endured greater sufferings.

PRAYER: Lord, keep me free from the love of money. Keep me content in the circumstances that You put me.

MONDAY, JANUARY 28

ISAIAH 1:16-23

PSALM 51:1-19

*“wash me, and I shall be
whiter than snow.”*

THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

Isaiah issued a severe warning of the coming destruction of Judah. If they would truly repent of their sin of idolatry and immorality and put away all evil, there was a promised blessing (Isa.1:19). But if they rebel, they would bring judgment on themselves (Isa. 1:20).

God’s Word in Isaiah speaks of the salvation message with perfect redemption from God who forgives, heals, redeems, crowns and satisfies, revealing both Gethsemane and Calvary. A change in character is observed as God has redeemed man throughout all ages. He pardons the penitent sinner through His divine mercy (Luke 1:50).

Sins are acts of rebellion contrary to the law of God (1John 3:4). Sinful acts are not something spontaneous but the result of a process: a conception, a period of gestation, and eventually giving birth, even as Eve had the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Eve saw the fruit, desired and lusted after it, and partook of it (cf. Gen 3:6; 1John 2:15). As Adam was responsible for the sin of his wife, in the first Adam came death and death passed upon all men, but in the second Adam, being Jesus Christ, came life (Rom 5:12-19).

God forgives our sin when we confess them before Him (1John 1:9). God miraculously and completely removes our transgressions from us through His love and the atonement of Jesus Christ, involving His “Blood” and His “Death” (Matt 20:28; 2Cor 5:21; 1Cor 6:20; Isa 53:4-6; Heb 9:12, 28). The sins of those who are truly repentant are removed: *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”* (Ps 103:12).

THOUGHT: Being reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus cleanses a sinner from his guilt as he is washed white as snow.

PRAYER: Lord, may I fully understand that rebellion brings its consequences, but repentance and obedience brings blessings, and the forgiveness of sin.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29

1 PETER 5:1-11

HEBREWS 13:7-17

*“Obey them that have
the rule over you...”*

THE BLESSING OF HUMILITY

The Elder is to be a “willing shepherd” under the guidance of the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:11, 14) and must not be involved in filthy lucre, dishonest gain (1Pet 5:2; cf. 1Tim 3:1-7) and must live as a godly example to others. Self-seeking leaders are condemned.

Having explained the duty of the Pastors or the church spiritual leaders, Peter instructed the flock as to how they should show submission and respect to their leaders and how they ought to relate one to another.

Submission and humility are characteristics contrary to pride and self-interests of man (1Pet 5:5). Hebrews 13: 7 and 17 also teach us that we are to show submission and respect to our leaders.

Often it is spiritual pride, an unteachable spirit and a lack of humility that hinder a person’s relationship with God and cause him not to respect his leaders and others.

A genuine conversion is evidenced by humility (Matt 18:3, 4). The Lord guides the humble (Ps 25:9), He sustains the humble (Ps 147:6), He adorns the humble who submit to His chastisements (Ps 149:4). The humble are lifted up by God in ways they could never expect (Matt 23:12; Jas 4:10). Humility allows a person to acknowledge his faults and mistakes, receiving admonition as from the Lord as humility is before honour (Prov 15:33; 18:12; 22:4). Humility is a characteristic of the Christian (Col 3:12; 1Pet 5:5) and a product of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:23). Humility is required for us to hear God’s Word (Jas 1:21).

When there is genuine repentance and humility is exercised, we will then be able to cast all our cares upon Him (1Pet 5:7).

THOUGHT: How do I show respect and submission to my leaders?

PRAYER: Lord, may I not be an ungracious person, with spiritual pride, an unteachable spirit, lacking humility. But help me to be repentant, as there is a promised blessing in humility.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

EXODUS 33:12-23

“And he said, My presence shall go with thee.”

GLORY IN THE CHURCH

The church is God’s ordained institution through which He is to be glorified (Eph 3:21). Worshipping on the Lord’s Day (Heb 10:25; Acts 20:7), it is to have a God-ordained Gospel (Titus 1:1-3; Gal 1:6-9), to practise the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8) and administer the ordinances of baptism (Matt 28:19) and the Lord’s Supper (1Cor 11:23-26; c.f. Acts 2:42). The church is to have a God-ordained leadership (Titus 1:5-9), presbyterian in government (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13), elected by the people and having a God-ordained doctrine (Titus 2:1), teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; Matt 28:20). It is to practise God-ordained living (Titus 2:2-12), and God-ordained discipline (Titus 3:10-11) pertaining to morals (1Cor 5) and doctrines (Jude 3).

Speaking of the “Mother of Harlots” and abominations of the earth (Rev 17:5) in his book *“Coming World Events Unveiled”* (1995), Rev Dr Timothy Tow said, “All commentators from the Reformers agree it is the Roman Church inasmuch as it is located on the City of Seven Hills. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, a picture of politics entering the Church and the Church making use of politics...What chills the spine of the true Church of Jesus Christ is the vision of this Church (RCC) being drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” The Glory of God is in no such church.

The Word of God does not sanction para-church organizations and as Matthew Henry says, “The seat of God’s praises is in the church...And God should and will be praised thus *throughout all ages, world without end*; for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church.”

THOUGHT: As Jesus Christ is the head of the local church of true Bible-believing Christians, let us expend our energies to pray and support God-honouring churches which are sanctioned by God.

PRAYER: (Pray for faithful churches and church-based missions and Bible colleges as the glory of God is in the Church.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

JOHN 10:22-31

*“I give unto them eternal life;
and they shall never perish.”*

THE COMPLETION OF A GOOD WORK

The Word of God teaches the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. It speaks about a work of “Divine Grace” that God has commenced but at that point in time was unfinished. It promises that in time, it would be completed.

The Philippian Church, the first Christian church founded by Paul on European soil, was established during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). The Epistle to the Philippians is the most amicable (friendly) of Paul’s letters, full of resounding joy. He encouraged them to persevere and continue to live a Christ-centered life, being of one mind (Phil 2:2) and esteeming others better than self (Phil 2:3). There are many dangers which surround the spiritual life of the true believer and by God’s grace the Epistle of Philippians was written from prison about deeper Christian living, with warnings of impending dangers. Although they were out of sight, Paul was still concerned for the Philippian Christians’ welfare and gave thanks for every remembrance of them with joy and prayed to God for them. He encouraged them to be confident *“that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:6).

The work that God commences, He will also complete to His glory. Examples: God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh to His glory (Gen 1-2; Mark 10:6; Rom 1:20); He delivered the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt and chastisement of Pharaoh, involving the ten plagues, to His glory (Exo 7-12); He promised the “Virgin Birth” and completed it to His glory (Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; Matt 1:21-25).

The work that God commences, He will complete. As He has saved, He will also preserve (John 10:28, 29). Once saved, always saved!

THOUGHT: As God never started a work that He did not complete, the work He has commenced in believers, is a work that He will complete.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to persevere in my faith even in the midst of difficulties and sufferings.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1

PSALM 122:1-9

GENESIS 12:1-3

“I will bless them that bless thee.”

PRAY FOR JERUSALEM

David recalled his pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Ps 122:1-2) and gave praise (Ps 122:3-5) and requested a prayer for Jerusalem as God’s House and God’s throne were in Jerusalem. Real peace will not come to Jerusalem by human diplomacy. But God can achieve what man is unable to achieve. Since God has commanded we pray for Jerusalem, we ought to be sensitive to this exhortation and pray in accordance to His will.

The peace that every true Israelite was required to pray for was the tranquility and prosperity of Jerusalem. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem was to pray that the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, would soon return to establish His Kingdom upon this earth with Jerusalem as its Capital (Isa 62; Zech 2).

David gave an injunction for believers to pray (cf. Ps 66:18; Prov. 15:8; 21:27; 28:9; John 9:31). Pray for peace in Jerusalem, not pray for a “piece” of Jerusalem! The Hebrew word for “*peace*” is “shalom” which is a wholeness, a well-being in the sense of everything working together, being at one with God. “Shalom” includes such English ideas as peace, well-being, wholeness or health, welfare, prosperity and safety.

“Shalom” involves positive relationships between peoples and persons. Positive relationships within the community mean that the needs of all persons are met and there is material well-being, economic security, and prosperity for all (Isa 54:13; 66:12, Jer 29:5-7, Ezek 34:27-29, Ps 37:11, 72:3, Hagai 2:9). “Shalom” involves absence of war (Deut 2:26; Josh 9:15; 10:1, 4; Judges 4:17; 2Sam 10:19; 1Kgs 5:12; 2Kgs 9:17-19; 1 Chro 22:9). In Lev 26:6, Ps 122:6-8, 2Kgs 20:19, and Esther 9:30, “shalom” goes beyond absence of war to include security and lack of fear.

THOUGHT: Those who pray for peace in Jerusalem shall prosper, but those that seek her demise shall lack prosperity.

PRAYER: Lord, may there be peace in Jerusalem soon. How I await the return of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the “*Prince of Peace*”!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2

1 CHRONICLES 4:9-10

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

*“the riches of the glory of
his inheritance in the saints.”*

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

The prayer of Jabez for a spiritual blessing and extending of the boundaries (1 Chron 4:10) is a prime example of answered prayer. Jabez, a man of prayer, was not content to remain in a spiritual rut or go through the motions of religion. He was burdened to reach out.

Jabez was from the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes that finally led to David and Jesus (1 Chron 2:1-2). His devotion to his God was the key to his success, honour and promotion.

Whilst most people will only pray the prayer of Jabez in times of joy, Spurgeon recommends it to Christians in all seasons: “A prayer to begin Christian life with, a prayer to end it with, a prayer which would never be unseasonable in your joys or in your sorrows.”

Many believe that wealth is a blessing and that people should therefore claim wealth from God. They believe that those who suffer or are not as well endowed with temporal things are not blessed. This is theologically a wrong concept of a blessing and is espoused by those promoting the “name it and claim it” theory of the “health and wealth gospel.”

There may be those who cleverly disguise their love of money, which is the root of all evil (1Tim 6:10), as a blessing from God. Jesus Christ spoke of both the “*treasures on earth*” and the “*treasures in heaven*” in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:19-21, 24) and called upon His followers to be cautious as to which treasure they chose. The rich fool in Luke 12:13-21 and the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, are examples of people who made the wrong choice. They chose temporal and earthly wealth instead of true and lasting heavenly wealth which is the spiritual riches of God’s grace (Matt 13:44-46).

THOUGHT: “You may expect a blessing in serving God if you are enabled to persevere under many discouragements.” (Spurgeon)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, not to be intoxicated with earthly things for they are not the real blessing. May I seek after Your spiritual blessings.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 3

EXODUS 19:1-9

JAMES 1:16, 17

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”

THE SOURCE OF GOOD GIFTS

The Lord says, “...all the earth is mine” (Exo 19:5). The Word of God declares that every good gift is from the Lord and everything belongs to the Lord (Ps 24:1, Haggai 2:8).

The children of Israel leaving Egypt in haste, in the manner prescribed by the LORD, taking their unleavened dough, kneading-troughs and clothes asked the Egyptians for jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and the Egyptians, gave whatever they asked for willingly (Exo 12:34-36).

After firstly communicating the Sabbath injunction and the penalty of death for violation, Moses was to speak of the giving of offerings unto God for the Tabernacle with a willing heart. The abundance of offerings and the willingness of workers are recorded in 35:4-36:7. A willing heart was required by all who made an offering of the LORD, otherwise it should not be given at all, but there was not a blessing for those who do not give unto the LORD.

They were encouraged to bring precious metals of gold, silver, and brass (Ex. 35:5), cloth, animal skins, timber (Ex. 35:6-7), olive oil, spices (Ex. 35:8), and precious stones (Ex. 35:9). The hearts of the people were stirred to give unto God and both men and women gave in service and in gifts (Exo 35:22-29). The people brought “*free offerings every morning,*” (Exo 36:3). Their offerings for the construction of the Tabernacle were in excess, so Moses called for a restraint in giving (Exo 36:6, 7). God is the source of every good gift.

THOUGHT: The estimated value of the gold given for the construction of the Temple was \$20,470,000, and the silver \$7,000,000.

PRAYER: Lord, may I give willingly and freely for the extension of Your work, knowing that You are the source of every good gift.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4

JOHN 15:1-8

GALATIANS 5:16-26

*“they that are Christ’s
have crucified the flesh...”*

PRAYERFUL OBEDIENCE

Reference to the vine in the Old Testament was a reference to Israel, but in John 15 the Real Vine or the True Vine is Jesus Christ Himself. Likewise the one who owns the vineyard and takes care of it is called the husbandman and on this occasion the husbandman is God the Father (John 15:1).

As the husbandman (vinedresser) takes away the branches that do not bear fruit and disposes of them, so does the Father judge those who bear no spiritual fruit (cf. Gal 5:22-23). Jesus said, *“...by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt 7:20-21). Jesus’ words suggest the need for thorough self-examination: Am I really obedient to my Lord? Am I really submitting to and doing the will of my Lord?

The fruit-bearing branches, although bearing fruit, are not perfect, otherwise they would not need pruning, proving that there are still elements of the old sin within which gives a tendency to evil. How often we see spiritual pride creep into a believer’s life when his focus is taken off God and is turned to the wonderful experiences he encountered! When the Vinedresser does His job of pruning, may the believer be quick to confess his sin and quickly turn back to obeying God. Only prayerful obedience and submission to the will of the Vinedresser will lead to much fruitbearing.

*“He that abideth in me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit;
for without me ye can do nothing”*
(John 15:5).

THOUGHT: God’s promise is not for all who say they are in Jesus Christ, but for those who abide in Him (John 8:31).

PRAYER: Lord, help me to abide in You.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

JEREMIAH 33:1-3

COLOSSIANS 1:21-29

*“Even the mystery...
hid from...generations.”*

ANSWERED PRAYER

God called Jeremiah into the prophetic ministry in the 13th year of the reign of Josiah, around 627 BC and he ministered for 40 years. God entrusted Jeremiah with a promise, even though he had been cast into a prison. Jeremiah prophesied during the decline and fall of the Southern Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah.

Although there was a revival after finding the Book of the Law during the repair of the temple in 622 B.C. (cf. 2Kgs 22:8-23:24; 2Chron 34:8-35:19), during Josiah's reign, it was short lived. Josiah's sons, who were installed after him, were apostate and persecuted Jeremiah. As Jeremiah delivered the prophecies of God, regarding the approaching judgment of Judah (Jer 1-25), his ministry of warning was not appreciated. Even though Jeremiah was in prison (as was the Apostle Paul), neither the confinement of secure walls nor locked doors or gates could deprive him from having communion with God in prayer. Jeremiah was praying to the Living and True God, the Creator of all things and the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the God who sustains. As God created, so He can destroy and rebuild. Although the country was desolate and the people had dispersed, God was confirming the promise of the restoration of the Jewish people. It was promised that the city would be rebuilt and re-established (Jer 33:1-6), that the captives would have their sins pardoned and be restored (Jer 33:7-9). Great and mighty things were revealed as Jerusalem was rebuilt and will be ruled by a Righteous King.

Prayer is commanded of every believer and God is favourably disposed to answer prayers, in accordance to His will.

THOUGHT: The seeker of truth should be a person who reads God's Word and a person of prayer.

PRAYER: Lord, may You grant me the ability to understand profound and divine truths as revealed in Your Word.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

1 JOHN 5:9-17

MATTHEW 6:5-15

*“Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.”*

ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL

The Biblical teaching on prayer is to pray according to God’s will. Even Jesus Himself submitted to His Father’s will (Matt 26:39).

Prayer is to be to God the Father (Matt 6:9), through the Spirit’s power (Eph 2:18; cf. Rom 8:26, 27), in the name of the Son Jesus (John 14:13, 14) who is the mediator between God and man (1Tim 2:5, 6).

Assurance of answered prayer results from salvation and obedience. As incipient Gnosticism was spreading, the Apostle warned the believers not to be involved in any deviancy or heretical teaching which value knowledge as a means of salvation rather than the Cross. Some may have already been caught up in it, and thought it did not affect their worship and prayer life. The Apostle exhorted, that if any saw others involved in such sin, to pray for them (1John 5:16).

Prayers are hindered if iniquity indwells a heart (Isa 59:1, 2; Ps 139:23, 24; 66:18). If there is disobedience to God’s Word, “... *even his prayer shall be abomination*” (Prov 28:9; cf. 15:8). If a person does not forgive others, prayers are also hindered (Matt 6:15; Mark 11:25, 26).

On the contrary those who go to God in obedience and in truth will have their prayers answered (1John 3:22; Ps 145:18, 19).

The confidence in 1John 5:14 that the Apostle John is speaking about is a joyous “*confidence*” toward God because sinners (who truly believe in Jesus Christ) have passed from death unto life (1John 3:14). It is a joyous “*confidence*” that is in direct opposition to the shame of those who will be ashamed at His Coming (1John 2:28).

THOUGHT: God hears the prayer of the person who prays according to His will.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to want to know Your will and to obey Your will.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1

EPHESIANS 5:1-21

“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”

BEING RECEIVED BY GOD

The Word of God speaks clearly about obedience, that God requires separation from sin, apostasy and evil associations. Although there are many who say they love God, their associations and lack of obedience, to their own peril, would not reflect their expressed love.

The biblical concept of separation, holiness and sanctification cannot be divided (Lev. 20:7; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). God does not say, stay in the midst of apostate churches, and He will receive you. But He says to come out and He will receive you.

The commands of God to His people to be separate from all forms of unbelief and corruption are very clear, and pertain to being unequally yoked in marriage, in business, yet primarily ecclesiastically, that is Church and worship (2 Cor 6:14; cf. Matt 6:24; Rom 16:17; Gal 1:6-10; Eph 5:11, 2Thess 3:6, 14; 2Tim 3:1-7; Titus 3:10; 2Pet 2:1-3; 1John 4:1-3; 2John 7-11; Jude 3, 20-23; Rev 18:4).

Loyalty to Jesus Christ is of the utmost importance, as He said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments,”* (John 14:15). Dr. J. Gresham Machen said, “The enemy has done his deadliest work when he has come with words of love and compromise and peace.” After five ungodly situations were mentioned and three commands to separate, the Word of God says, *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2Cor 7:1).

THOUGHT: After being reconciled to God, a true Bible-believing Christian will come out of the ecumenical movement in obedience to be received by God.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be obedience to Your precepts and not be persuaded by peer pressure or zealous friends to participate with associations not pleasing in Your sight.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

EXODUS 14:1-20

ROMANS 8:31-39

*“If God be for us,
who can be against us?”*

STANDING STILL IN THE LORD

Moses warned Pharaoh of the consequences of his refusal to let the people go, but Pharaoh did not listen. The ten plagues then came upon the land of Egypt as a result of Pharaoh's stubborn and hardened heart (Exo 7:14-12:30). The slaying of the firstborn male of all Egypt, on the night of the Passover feast of Israel (Exo 11:1-12:30), was the night that Moses began to lead the Israelites to freedom. The firstborn males of Egypt, were not spared, but God spared the firstborn males of Israel through the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb.

God led Israel to the Red Sea (Exo 14:9), a seemingly defenseless position which enticed Pharaoh to recapture them. God turned the heart of Pharaoh against Israel, and he gathered his 600 elite chariots and specially trained officers along with other chariots and officers from around Egypt. Even though the Israelites had seen the Hand of God leading them out of Egypt, they were consumed with fear at the size of the Egyptian army. They were prepared to give up (Exo 14:1-11). How quickly they forgot their burden of slavery and the Hand of God, and wanted to return to serve the Egyptians (Exo 14:12). The faith of Moses in YHWH allowed him to stand firm with courage and faith in the promises of God. The time had come to cease praying and act by going forward in faith (Exo 14:15). YHWH told Moses what to do to divide the deep water (Exo 14:16). YHWH also told Moses that He would harden the heart of Pharaoh and the Egyptians and they would follow Israel through the divided waters. As Pharaoh and the army are destroyed so will the Egyptians know that YHWH is the LORD and not their pantheon of gods (Exo 14:17-18). YHWH placed His Shekinah glory (pillar of cloud) between Pharaoh and the Egyptian army as protection for the Israelites (Exo 14:19-20).

THOUGHT: A hardened heart is on a collision course with God and will suffer His punitive will.

PRAYER: Lord, during seemingly insurmountable trials, may I remember Your promises and Your protection, knowing that faith can be exercised by standing still and completely trusting in You.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

JEREMIAH 3:20-25

PROVERBS 3:12

*“... whom the LORD loveth
he correcteth.”*

I WILL HEAL THY BACKSLIDING

Backsliding is a falling from a standard of faith, morals and ethics required by the Lord in His Word and living in a condition of being embarrassed at the Gospel of salvation and thinking as an unbeliever, adopting an inferior way of living (Gal 5:4; Col 1:23; 2Pet 3:17). God does not desire the “backslidden” to be miserable and sorrowful, but desires that they should be sorrowful for their sin (i.e. godly sorrow).

In his book, “There’s A Way Back to God,” William McDonald points out the consequences of backsliding. Firstly some consequences of sin in this earthly life: (1) Dishonor brought on the Name of God; (2) Ruined testimony; (3) Misery and unhappiness brought on others; (4) Enormous waste of time and money; (5) Physical and emotional disturbances; (6) Deep shame and remorse; (7) Personal misery and wretchedness; (8) Wasted opportunities for serving Christ; (9) Others stumbled by the backslider. Secondly, the consequences in heaven include: Loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor 3:15), a reduced capacity for enjoying the Lord and the glories of heaven.

God wants His people to recover from their wandering and return to Him by submitting to Him (Jas 4:7). He wants them to walk in victory and not be defeated (Rom 6:14; 1John 5:4, 5), to walk in the Spirit and not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:16), to be conquerors in Jesus Christ, to seek things above (Rom 8:37; 2Cor 2:14; Col 3:1-3), to have compassion for souls in sin (Jude 22, 23), to be faithful (1Cor 4:2; 1Tim 1:12), and to give thanks to Him (Phil 4:7). Due to His love, God corrects and heals the backslidden.

THOUGHT: God extends a gracious invitation to His people who have wandered, that He will heal their backsliding (Luke 15:17, 18).

PRAYER: Lord, I pray for those who have wandered from You (2Thess 2:11) that they be granted discernment and return to You, for they know the way back.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 10

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-11

PROVERBS 11:24-31

*"There is that scattereth,
and yet increaseth."*

THE TRANSITION TO ABUNDANCE

Paul extracted principles from the Old Testament to encourage the believers at Corinth to give unto the Lord which is not spurious charity. Proper fellowship with God involves worship, praise and bringing gifts to Him (Exo 34:20, 23:15; Deut 16:16). A relationship with God is not just petitioning for the things we need. No Christian should appear before God empty-handed, regardless of whether they are a leader or not. This is not by impulse or pressure.

The tithe is ten percent of an income, money or goods received. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20). Jacob practiced tithing (Gen. 28:20-22). Moses also mentioned tithing (Lev 27:30).

The person who is benevolent with his substance will be blessed with increase, but those who withhold will at some point have a great need. The person who sells his corn at a fair price will be blessed, whilst the person who withholds his corn to force up the price will be cursed by the people. Those who place their security in accumulated riches will fail, and greed will only bring trouble to man's household, whilst the righteous have an unfailing source of sustenance.

John Wesley was appalled by the suffering of the poor and was very troubled by the misuse of money and accumulation of wealth. In his 1760 sermon on "The Use of Money," he exhorted believers to "gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Those who sow sparingly, reap sparingly, whilst those who sow bountifully will have abundance (2Cor 9:6; Prov 11:24).

THOUGHT: Tithes and offerings are given willingly with thanksgiving because of a love for the Lord and for what He has done for us.

PRAYER: Lord, may I tithe and give my offerings cheerfully because You have provided and You have blessed.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11

PROVERBS 31:10-31

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

*“And the wife see that
she reverence her husband.”*

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

The virtuous woman has excellent qualities, can be trusted and is completely honest. A virtuous woman is industrious and knows her place before God, she is self-controlled and is not loose with her tongue. Today's verses are not a mandate for mothers to be engaged in the workforce, but there are some very good principles that can be applied, as this woman works from home and does not neglect her family. The virtuous woman's worth is exceedingly rare (Prov 31:10; cf. Ruth 3:11), her husband can confidently trust her (31:11), she does her husband good and respects him (31:12), and is an enterprising woman (31:13), is economical in the house and business (31:14), is very energetic, rising early to feed her family and maids (31:15), and is very enterprising (31:16). The virtuous woman is not afraid to do hard work (31:17), and work long hours (31:18), doing tedious work (31:19), has compassion and is benevolent (31:20), plans well for the future (31:21), is good at what she does (31:22), and supports her husband in his leadership, that he be able to conduct proper work (31:23).

The virtuous woman manages finances well (31:24), her flexibility allows her to endure all circumstances (31:25), she exercises wisdom and kindness (31:26), is conscious of her duties to husband and family (31:27), and is blessed and praised by her family (31:28). The virtuous woman is an achiever (31:29). Although beauty is no guarantee of character, she has a beautiful countenance, and fears and loves God (31:30), and is exemplary in her conduct (31:31). She is submissive and faithful to her God and her husband and by her example teaches her children and servants to be faithful. Not only is she a credit and honour to him, but she is as *a crown* or an ornament to him. In a godly manner, she supports and maintains her husband's authority in the family.

THOUGHT: The virtuous woman is a rare and ideal wife, being a Christian woman who understands her duties of motherhood.

PRAYER: Lord, may all Christian women have a beautiful countenance, and exercise the qualities of the virtuous woman.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

PROVERBS 18:22

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

*“Wives, submit yourselves
unto your own husbands...”*

A GODLY WIFE

God’s Word promises that he who finds a good wife, finds a good thing, as she is a high expression of the Lord’s favour. God ordained marriage for companionship (Gen 2:18), mutual helpfulness (Gen 2:19), and enjoyment in the marital relationship (Gen 2:24). A good wife is a blessing from God (Prov 8:35; 18:22; 31:10-31), as is a fruitful wife (Ps 128:1-3). She is an asset from God (Prov 18:22), and is priceless (Prov 31:10-12). God ordained marriage for mutual help. It is the witnessed union and covenant of God between a man and a woman as husband and wife (Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17; Eze 16:8; cf. Rom 1:26-28). It is not lawful for a man to have more than one wife (Gen 2:24), neither is it lawful for a wife to be married to more than one husband at one period of time.

It is a necessity for Christians only to marry Christians (2 Cor 6:14-7:1), for unity and to avoid compromise. It is important for both partners to be baptized before being married. Baptism displays obedience and is a public confession of faith in Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour (Acts 8:34-38; 16:30-34), and of repentance (Acts 2:37-38).

Wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22; cf. 23, 24; Eph 5:33; Col 3:18; 1Pet 3:1). They are also to have a meek (gentle) and quiet spirit (1Pet 3:4). The emphasis for the godly wives is submission and respect. They are to *“love their husbands, to love their children”* (Titus 2:4).

The duty of the husband is to love his wife (Eph 5:25, 28; 3:19), to nourish and cherish his wife (Eph 5:29). He is to give honour unto his wife as unto the weaker vessel (1Pet 3:7).

THOUGHT: A godly wife is one of the highest expressions of the Lord’s favour.

PRAYER: That husbands love their wives, cherish and nourish them, treating them honourably as godly wives and lead the house in a godly manner.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

EPHESIANS 4:25-32

MATTHEW 19:26

“but with God all things are possible.”

RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

The mystery of marriage between man and woman as ordained by God, is often shattered by unresolved relationship difficulties. Pre-marital counselling must point out that godly wives are to “*submit*” (Eph 5:22; cf. 23, 24; Col. 3:18), “*reverence*” (Eph 5:33b), “*be in subjection*” (1Pet 3:1) to their husband with a gentle and quiet spirit (1Pet 3:4) and “*to love their husbands, to love their children,*” (Titus 2:4). The main emphasis on the husband is to LOVE his wife (Eph 5:25, 28, 33a; 3:19), to nourish and cherish her (Eph 5:29). He is to give honour unto his wife as unto the weaker vessel (1Pet 3:7). These constitute the wedding vows, and to break a vow made before God has consequences.

Jesus said, “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Matt 19:6). “*For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away (divorce)*” (Mal 2:16). It is the adversary’s desire that your marriage be destroyed, but Jesus wants it restored (cf. John 10:10). God can restore your relationship even when it appears to be completely hopeless (Rom 8:28). As you get through your trial, you will be purified (1Pet 1:7). Too many marriages are destroyed because a counselor says the situation is hopeless. Restoration must be pursued to the utmost, as re-marriage is not an option (Luke 16:18; Rom 7:2). The husband (the head of the family) must take the lead in reconciliation.

Tips for restoring relationships: Avoid talking to others about your situation. Pray diligently. Cease arguing. Speak kindly. Don’t listen to gossip. Avoid confronting others. Don’t act hastily. Go to God with all your fears. If children see your pain it will cause bad feelings towards your spouse, you must be careful where you turn your children’s hearts. Don’t allow children to become unruly. Don’t be sidetracked with the business of life, or be weary in waiting on the Lord (Isa 40:31).

THOUGHT: No marriage is too far gone. “*With God all things are possible*” (Matt 19:26).

PRAYER: (Pray for those you know who are experiencing difficulties that they may look to the Lord and be reconciled, as He is able.)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

PSALM 68:5, 6

ACTS 6:1-7

*“seven men of honest report...
appoint over this business.”*

CARING FOR THE WIDOWS

God is concerned about the welfare of the widows as they are under His special care and protection (Exo 22:23; Deut 10:18; Ps 146:9; Prov 15:25). The widow often suffered at the hands of the more powerful in society (Job 24:21), but Job provided food for the widows (Job 31:16). God provided for the widow through the Mosaic Law, with the opportunity to glean the fields and vineyards after the labourers had harvested the main crop (Deut 24:19-22; cf. Lev 19:9-10).

God blesses those who have compassion for and help the widow (Isa 1:17, 18; Jer 7:6; 22:3, 4). God rebukes those who afflict a widow in any way (Exo 22:32; Deut 24:17; 27:19; Job 24:3, 5; 20:47; 21:2, 3). The compassion of Jesus Christ upon the widows is recorded in Mark 12:42-43; Luke 7:11-17; 18:3, 5; 20:47; 21:2, 3.

In Deut 10:18, 19, the Lord cared and provided for the widows, orphans and strangers. The purpose of the giving a tenth of an income (Deut 26:12-13) was to meet the material needs of the Levites, the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows. In Acts 6:1-7, God established seven trustworthy men within the church to distribute and care for the necessities of the widows (cf. 1 Tim. 5:3-16). *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1Tim 5:8).

Jesus denounced the scribes for they were taking delight, amongst other things, in devouring the widow's houses. Jesus, in Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4, was watching the people place their money in the receptacles for God, and observed and commended the faith of the widow who gave willingly from her poverty, whilst the rich gave from their wealth. He used this as an example to teach the disciples.

THOUGHT: God provides for the widows. As the family has a responsibility to care for them, so does the church.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to give willingly and be faithful in caring for the widows.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15

PSALM 112:1-10

JAMES 1:5-11

*“If any of you lack wisdom...
ask of God, that giveth...liberally.”*

COMPASSIONATE RIGHTEOUSNESS

In times of adversity and darkest hours, a righteous man gives and his generous and compassionate righteousness will never be forgotten. Throughout the Bible, God provided for the poor and needy, and gave the righteous man wisdom to manage all his affairs and concerns. His increase is by the providence of God, and his prudence and discretion is also from the Lord (Isa 28:26).

Matthew Henry said, “He shows favour and lends; but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced, that he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him who thus uses discretion that God will give him more.” To those who need this wisdom, read James 1:5.

In the Old Testament when money was loaned to the needy, interest (usury) was not to be charged on the loan (Exo 22:25; Deut 23:19), except in the case of the stranger. Galatians 6:10: “...let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

In the laws of domestic relationships, fairness and dignity always needed to be maintained, as belittling people was prohibited. Collateral taken from a borrower must be done with respect and human dignity (Deut 24:10-13). Jesus challenged the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, for they were pedantic, fastidious and most careful in their giving but overlooked important issues (Matt 23:23) like extorting wrongfully from others (Matt 23:25). Jesus condemned the Pharisee in Luke 19:12 for his wrong heart. The Pharisee said, “I thank,” “I am,” “I fast,” “I give,” “I possess” (Luke 18:11-12) believing that in his pride, piousness and giving he was better than the publican (sinner). His pride reveals the true condition of his heart and his legalism. To the contrary, a righteous man has compassion.

THOUGHT: The compassion of a righteous man will never be forgotten.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me wisdom to exercise prudent giving when others are in times of adversity or need.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16

PROVERBS 6:1-5

PROVERBS 22:26-29

*“a man diligent in his business...
shall stand before kings.”*

GODLY WARNINGS

Although the Word of God mentions the compassion of the righteous, lending during times of adversity if they deem it prudent, there are also warnings not to be a stranger's guarantor because of dangers attached.

Surety is a pledge or object in the possession of the debtor handed over to the creditor as a guarantee for his debt. God's Word teaches us both divine wisdom and human prudence that our affairs may be conducted with discretion and order. The failing of an agreement is dangerous even amongst well acquainted friends, of whose sufficiency you are sure, but it is more dangerous to shake on an agreement with someone you know little about (Prov 11:15).

God has given us our possessions and we are not at liberty to use them the way we think but the way God commands. To covenant with someone in the matter of finance is to become bound. Referring to the stranger, the Word of God says, owe him nothing neither make any rash vows with him, as to do so is rash and snares the guarantor by his rash words (Prov 6:1, 2).

Solomon says don't try to be generous to your friends when your own family will suffer (Prov 17:18). To be security for someone else's loan is a foolish act that can only be remedied by immediate pleading for release (Prov 6:3). This is not time for harsh words, as you are in the hands of your friend. It is a time to humble, a time to plead for release. Solomon says rest not until the creditor has released you, or counter security be shown. Pray to be discharged, go on your knees, and leave no stone unturned until you are released.

THOUGHT: Being a guarantor can be dangerous, and may cause financial and relationship ruin (Prov 22:26, 27). Ruin can also come to a family by the husband being bound to a strange woman, as it can impoverish him.

PRAYER: Lord, may I heed Your warnings and avoid words and pledges that may cause ruin to my families and finances.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 17

PROVERBS 3:9, 10

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-11

*“he which soweth bountifully
shall reap ...bountifully.”*

GIVING OF THE FIRSTFRUITS

The Feast of Firstfruits was a joyous event celebrated at the beginning of harvest time. In the New Testament it is called the Feast of Pentecost. The *“feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours”* was at the beginning of summer when the wheat crop had been harvested, also called the *“Feast of Weeks.”* At this feast, the firstfruits of the harvest were to be waved (or heaved) before the Lord, and prescribed sacrifices were to be offered (Exo 23:16-19; Lev 23:9-14).

The eldest son in each family was originally the family priest, but this system was replaced by the Levitical system. Aaron and his sons (who were Levites) and their descendants were charged with the responsibility of the priesthood, being known as the firstfruit.

When the *“Promised Land”* was distributed among the twelve tribes, the tribe of Levi was not apportioned land but were given the cities, including the forty-eight cities of refuge. The priests and Levites who were chosen by God to minister in His name, lived on the tithes, offerings, and firstfruits brought by the people to the Lord. As God owns the land, so the firstfruits belongs to Him (Deut 18:4; 26:2).

The principle of the firstfruits required the first part or first fruit of a crop harvested to be dedicated to God. Honouring the Lord with your first fruits (Prov 3:9-10) is to first set aside the tithe before any other expenses are paid, and not leave the tithe until last, otherwise a lack of appreciation for God is exhibited and He ends up getting the left-overs or is missed out entirely. Paul declared the same principle that those who minister the Word of God will be provided for in the same manner (1 Cor 9:14; Gal 6:6). Giving of the firstfruits is to be conducted on the Lord's Day, as it is the Lord who prospered (1Cor 16:2).

THOUGHT: The feast of firstfruits depicted Jesus Christ as the firstfruit from the dead (1Cor 15:20, 23).

PRAYER: Lord, may I not give You my left-overs, but my firstfruit.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18

PSALM 121:1-8

1 JOHN 5:13-21

*“he that is begotten of God
keepeth himself.”*

JOURNEYING MERCIES

Psalm 121 was an assurance and encouragement to David and a restful confidence to others that they could put their full confidence and faith in God’s protection. Consequently, it is most commonly known as the “Traveller’s Psalm.” Its application can be for wherever we are, knowing of God’s power (omnipotence) and His presence (omnipresence), and His all-knowing sufficiency (omniscience) for us. This is a great comfort to the child of God during the uncertainties in life’s journey. Although we must look to the Lord in prayer in all of our travelling pursuits (“Divine sovereignty”), we must also exercise “human responsibility” by taking proper care and caution. Our prayers to God for protection must be accompanied by our travelling in a responsible manner, yet our confidence must not be in men, or instruments of secondary cause, but in God.

God’s people are not to look to the “high places,” the “hills” or “mountains” for help. These were the places of Canaanite worship, as hilltop sites were dedicated to the worship of pagan gods. This form of pagan worship was forbidden to the Israelites, who were only to trust in God.

God’s people do not require good luck charms but a total reliance in Him for their safety in travels. Lucky charms, Gypsy mirrors, horseshoes, a rabbit’s foot, St Christopher icons, crucifixes or other so-called good luck charms are forbidden by God (Exo 20:4, 5). Equally forbidden is the Chinese brass “ba gua” travel charm (with red satin cord and Chinese knot) used by some for good fortune and protection.

THOUGHT: Our trust must be in the Lord and not in some good luck charm that is nothing but an idol.

PRAYER: Lord, may I exercise Divine Sovereignty (Prayer) and Human Responsibility when travelling, trusting in Your protection for journeying mercies.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

GENESIS 15:18-21

DEUTERONOMY 11:8-25

*“LORD swear unto your fathers
to give unto them.”*

THE PROMISED LAND

The title deeds to the “Promised Land” were given to Abraham and his descendants (Ps 105:6-11) and this is reiterated in Gen 12:6, 7; 24:7; 26:3; 26:4; 28:4; Exo 33:1; and Deut 34:4. The promise and borders of the “Promised Land” were given in Gen 13:15; 15:7; 15:18-21; Exo 23:31; Num 34:1-12; Deut 11:24; and Joshua 1:2-5. It was given as an everlasting inheritance. Being a suzerainty covenant made between God and an unequal party, it could never be broken.

Abraham was the man that God chose to become the father of the nation Israel and of the promised Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Gen 12:1-3; Matt 1:1). The first calling of Abraham is recorded whilst he was in the Ur of Chaldees (Acts 7:2), where his family served false gods (Josh 24:2), the second calling was from Haran (Gen 12:1) and He promised to send him to a land he would inherit (Gen 12:1; 15:7; Josh 24:3, 13; Neh 9:8).

God promised to send an Angel (Messenger) before them into the “Promised Land” saying, *“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared”* (Exo 23:20). Even Rahab knew that God had given the children of Israel the “Promised Land,” and the people had heard of the mighty acts of God and fainted (Josh 2:8-10).

THOUGHT: Israel has never occupied the boundaries of the “Promised Land” as decreed by God, but the time will come when she will, in the Millennial Kingdom. **PRAYER:** Help me, Lord, to understand the decrees You have established, that they will come to fruition in Your timing, that the children of Israel will one day occupy the “Promised Land.”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

PSALM 37:1-6

PSALM 73:1-28

“Nevertheless I am continually with thee.”

GRANTED DESIRES

In Psalm 37, David contemplated in his advancing years the age old question (and the seeming irony) of the prosperity of the wicked with the affliction of the righteous. “Why do the wicked prosper, when the righteous are afflicted?” Psalm 37:4 is a priceless promise of God for the person who delights in the Lord.

In his book titled “Meditation from Psalms,” Rev Dr Timothy Tow titled Psalm 37 as “Not Might is Right, But Right is Might.” In today’s society, as at the time of David, the wicked and lawless seem to prosper, whilst those who are law-abiding seem to suffer.

The first lesson here is to “*fret not*” (Ps 37:1), i.e. not to be overly concerned, worried or irritated. The child of God (the righteous) is to delight in the Lord (Ps 37:4), making Him the object of their meditation and to continue to rejoice in Him. It is then that they will be granted the desires of their heart and will not envy the position of evildoers, no matter how appealing it may appear. The true believer is also to delight in the Word of God (Ps 1:1; 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174).

The wicked, on the other hand, delight in lies (Ps 62:4) and in scorning, which is to ridicule, despise, mock, reject (Prov 1:22). They delight in frowardness which is perversity (Prov 2:14, cf. Prov 19:1) and are devious or crooked (Prov 2:15).

In Psalm 73, Asaph observed that the wicked seem to prosper. He could not understand until he went to the Sanctuary (73:17) and then he saw their destiny (73:17-20). Then he found his happiness in God.

THOUGHT: How do I “*delight*” (Ps 37:4) myself in the Lord?

PRAYER: Lord, may I not envy the wicked who prosper, for their end is destruction. May I rejoice in that You will grant me my desires.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21

PROVERBS 3:1-12

1 JOHN 2:7-17

*“For we walk by faith,
not by sight.”*

TRUSTING IN THE LORD

Prov 3:5 and 6 are a formula for unfailing success in the Lord. People in society often yearn for success in education, with hopes for successful children and aspirations for their youth to also become successful. Society considers financial security as success, but God’s Word says it is not (Mark 8:36). Society considers fame and popularity as success, but God’s Word says it is not, as these things are fleeting (1John 2:17). It is obvious to the discerning that opinions of society, whether they be in the majority or minority, are not necessarily the benchmark for truth. True success is genuinely knowing and fearing God, believing and trusting in Him and living according to His will (1John 2:17).

In Prov 3:5-6, there are three commands (to trust in, lean on and acknowledge God) followed by one promise of a blessing for compliance (He will make straight each crooked path). As Prov 3:6 mentions God’s divine direction, so does Prov 3:26 mention God’s divine protection.

Success in the Lord comes by trusting in Him and in Him alone (Prov 3:7-10). Do you really trust in the Lord? Lean on Him? Acknowledge Him? Fear Him? And honour Him with your substance? As soon as things go wrong do you revert to your own understanding and to the vanity of self-conceit, and walk by sight and not by faith? If so, you are walking contrary to the Word of God (2 Cor. 5:7).

To all who believe in Jesus with a genuine godly repentance, there is a peace that passeth all understanding (Phil 4:7, Rom 5:1). When you walk with God, He will straighten your paths, and remove the obstacles, but this does not mean there will not be any trials (Heb 13:5).

THOUGHT: How do I walk by faith and not by sight?

PRAYER: May I fear You, Lord, and trust in You, lean on You, and acknowledge You in all my ways. Thank You for the promise that You will make my paths straight.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

ESTHER 4:14

PROVERBS 29:18-27

*“A man’s pride shall
bring him low.”*

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

God’s providence is observed in Esther 4:14. This resulted from the hatred of a proud man, whose power had been challenged. Haman was the evil and scheming prime minister of King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes I), King of Persia (485-464 B.C.). Haman’s hatred was manifest against Mordecai who did not bow to him (Esther 3:2). Mordecai was determined not to give respect to those who were morally degenerate. Haman’s wife and friends foolishly counselled him to hang Mordecai publicly. So Haman built the gallows, 75 feet high.

Mordecai refused to bow to Haman because he was a Jew (Esther 3:4). In his hatred, Haman planned to kill all Jews. The King, unaware of Haman’s wicked motive, gave Haman his ring as a seal of full authority to kill the Jews on the eve of the Passover.

Mordecai was greatly disturbed at the decree to destroy his people and rent his clothes, putting on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of sorrow and grief. When he revealed Haman’s plan to Esther (Esther 4:14), a three-day fast was called. By the providence of God, when Esther had a reception with the King, he extended the golden sceptre, and she touched it, meaning that whatever her request, the King would grant it. Queen Esther revealed Haman’s plans and the King nullified the decree to destroy the Jews.

As pride will bring a man low, Haman was humiliated and was hung on the gallows that he had built for Mordecai. His ten sons were also hung. By God’s providence, He protected His people and Mordecai was promoted to the highest office in the kingdom.

THOUGHT: Pride produces contention and causes a man to be deceived. Pride and hatred will bring a man low (Prov 29:23).

PRAYER: Lord, may I seek to accomplish Your will in all things and to have the courage to speak up when it is required, to Your glory and honour.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23

JOHN 3:1-16

1 JOHN 2:2

*“and not for ours only,
but also for the sins of the whole
world.”*

LOVE IN A HURTING WORLD

The source of the “*love*” in John 3:16 is the Father (1John 4:8, 16). God is the only source of true and everlasting love (1Cor 13:13), and His love is pure and holy.

The “*world*” (Greek: *kosmos*), is not the material world, neither the world of fallen angels, nor the world of creatures, but the world of humanity which lieth in wickedness. The world of mankind involves men of all cultures and classes. God transcends all classes of people, all cultures of people and all cultural and ethnic barriers.

The character of God’s love is displayed in the Unspeakable Gift, in His sending His Only Begotten Son, who always was His Son and always will be His Son, to die as the penalty of our sin.

As sin came into the world through Adam and was judicially upon all men (Rom 5:12), so a sacrifice was needed to be paid as a ransom for the sins of mankind (Rom 6:23). God sent His Only Begotten Son Jesus in a humbling incarnation (Phil 2:6-8), for a labourious servitude (Mark 10:45), to suffer a shameful death for the remission of sins (Matt 26:28; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Rom 3:25; Heb 9:22; 10:18).

God sacrificed His Son in our place showing His self-sacrificing love (John 3:16), His pardoning love (Isa 55:7), His sympathizing love (Isa 63:9), His longsuffering love (2Pet 3:9), His chastening love (Heb 12:6).

The sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient for all, in that Jesus was the Lamb sacrificed for all (John 1:19). His blood was shed which cleansed for all (1John 1:7-9), all our sins were laid on Him (Isa 53:5-6), and believers have been washed from all their sins by His blood (Rev 1:5).

THOUGHT: Repentance is a supernatural conviction by the Holy Spirit, even confession unto salvation (John 16:8; Acts 11:18; 26:20; 2Tim 2:25).

PRAYER: Lord, may the hurting world know the love of Jesus Christ.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 24

LUKE 6:38-40

MALACHI 3:6-12

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me."

THE BLESSING OF GIVING

Jesus addressed the issue of money because of its misuse, and taught that when a person gives unto God, He is generous to return it again. To give to the Lord is an expression of gratitude and a blessing. To rob from God is an expression of ingratitude and is a sin.

Nehemiah observed the limited offering which caused the Levites to have to go into the fields to work (Neh 13:10-14). He immediately contended with the leaders and rulers and appointed four reliable treasurers over the storehouse as he reformed the people, for they were guilty of robbing God by withholding their offerings.

As the land belongs to God, so it was required that the one-tenth of produce be brought to the priests at the Tabernacle (Lev 27:30-32), and later in Malachi 3:10, to the Temple. Malachi charged Israel for having robbed God by withholding tithes and offerings, and of being shamefully negligent by defrauding God in this matter (Mal 3:6-15), which made their offerings offensive to God. They were disobedient, and in their pharisaical spirit, considered themselves righteous and not needing repentance and had developed a self-justifying spirit.

Due to tithes and offerings being withheld, Malachi 3:9 says, *"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."* Malachi also charged them with apostasy, dishonesty and insensibility. Consequently the Israelites were exhorted to bring their tithes into the storehouse in order to enjoy the Lord's blessing (Mal 3:10-12). The Word of God commands the people to bring their tithe (Mal 3:10), because the tithe rightfully belongs to God.

It is not possible to out-give the Lord, and as all our substance belongs to God, Christians are encouraged to give even more than one-tenth.

THOUGHT: *"It is more blessed to give than receive."* (Acts 20:35).

PRAYER: Lord, may I repent if my giving has reflected ingratitude and I have robbed You. Help me to express gratitude by giving cheerfully.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25

MATTHEW 6:24-34

LUKE 12:2-40

*“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.”*

SEEKING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus warned His disciples of two main sins: hypocrisy and worldly mindedness. The first sin of hypocrisy includes giving to the Lord to gain human recognition (Matt 6:1-4), praying whilst drawing recognition to self (Matt 6:5-8). The Lord’s Prayer is then given as an example of prayer (Matt 6:9-13). Forgiveness in prayer (Matt 6:14,15) and fasting in private (Matt 6:16-18) are then commended.

The second sin, worldly mindedness, includes the error that material wealth is a blessing from God even though one has a false spirituality. Such spiritual “double vision” allows one to believe he can serve two masters (Matt 6:19-24).

Jesus then dealt with those who had few possessions which is an equally dangerous position (Matt 6:25-34). When a person has few possessions, there is a tendency to be over-anxious. Being disturbed over temporal material needs can distract a person from faithfully serving God, and doing His will. The peace of man does not come from external physical provisions but from the Holy Spirit that dwells within the believer. The spiritual blessings are deprived when a person’s full concern is about monetary matters and possessions.

Jesus referred to objects of nature (including the birds of the air and flowers in the fields) and God’s provision for them as illustrations (Matt 6:25-27). As God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, so He will provide. Worry can add nothing. Faith is having complete confidence in God’s provision. When we seek after the Kingdom of God as the main priority, provisions will be given to us and we don’t have to be anxious.

THOUGHT: Seeking the Kingdom of God requires a continued hungering and thirsting after righteousness as *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Rom 14:23).

PRAYER: Lord, may I seek You in all things for this is seeking after righteousness.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

MATTHEW 18:15-20

JAMES 5:7-20

*“Confess your faults one to another,
and pray one for another.”*

TWO OR THREE WITNESSES

There is no denying that every effort has to be exhausted in trying to reconcile one with another before church discipline is exercised. Church discipline is to correct erring members (1Cor 5:5; 2Cor 2:6-8), to restrain sin (Deut 13:11; 17:12-13; 19:18-20; Acts 5:1-11; 1Tim 5:20), to prevent the permeation of sin and false doctrine (1Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:7-9), that believers not be ashamed at His coming (1John 2:28), to maintain good testimony in an unbelieving society (Phil 2:14-15; 1Pet 2:9-12).

As prevention is better than cure, members must be baptised believers (Acts 2:41-42), with leaders meeting the scriptural criteria (1Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; cf. Jas 3:1). The preaching ministry must involve instruction and correction (2Tim 3:16; Heb 12:62) and the pastoral ministry must also involve warning and nurturing (Col 1:28; 1Thess 2:7-12). Likewise, members can maintain church discipline by admonishing one another (Col 3:16), exhorting (Rom 15:14; Heb 3:12-14; 10:24-25), comforting and edifying (1Thess 4:18; 5:11), being kind-hearted and forgiving (Rom 12:10; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; 1Pet 3:8), and the brethren visiting/helping the sick and the widows (Jas 1:27), and if you have offended others, apologise to them (Jas 5:16).

Correction must be done with grieving (2Cor 2:4), concern (2Cor 7:12), and humility (Gal 6:1). Dismissal is to be conducted with purpose (1Cor 5:3-5, 13). The first responsibility if a person has sinned against you is to go and tell the person “alone,” (Matt 18:15) and pray the matter go no further (Jas 5:16) and there be reconciliation and not be involved in gossip prayers. Secondly, if the person does not listen and if there be two or three who “witnessed the incident,” take them along (Matt 18:16 cf. 18:20), and pray that the matter be resolved. Thirdly, if every effort has been genuinely and prayerfully exhausted, take it to the Church (Matt 18:17-20) but this is the last resort.

THOUGHT: A teachable spirit is a blessing. An unteachable spirit is a burden. Although unforgiveness is natural, forgiveness is supernatural.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to avoid gossip prayers, and false accusations.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

PROVERBS 22:6

PROVERBS 1:1-19

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father...”

TRAINING A CHILD

Training a child is the God-given responsibility of every parent.

Ron Rhodes, speaking on “Recognizing the Promises of God,” warns that Proverbs 22:6 is often misconstrued as a promise. He said, “I know of parents who have claimed this verse as a promise and have done everything they could to bring their children up rightly and in the fear of the Lord. But in some cases the children have ended up departing from Christianity and going astray in life. The parents of these children become disillusioned and wondered what they did wrong. But Proverbs 22:6 was never intended your promise.”

Few would doubt Rhodes comment that children can go astray, and that the parents can become disillusioned. But that does not mean that training and nurturing a child in love and truth and training them in His Word is wrong. King Solomon (the King of Israel) was raised with the truth of God’s Word and although he made his mistakes, he returned to the Lord, saying “*Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity*” (Eccles 1:2).

Godly parents do not live by the stars or base their decisions upon horoscopes, astrology or numerology. Parents must balance love and discipline (2Tim 1:5; 3:15; Acts 16:1), being neither too authoritarian nor overly permissive.

THOUGHT: The biblical pattern of effective parental training emphasizes a balance between instruction and discipline.

PRAYER: Lord, may our godly parents continue to nurture their children in the fear of God’s Word. And may our wandering children return because they know the way home.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28

EPHESIANS 6:1-3

COLOSSIANS 3:20, 21

*“Children, obey...parents...
well pleasing unto the Lord.”*

LIVING LONGER

The Word of God speaks of a godly parent as having salvation and wholehearted love for the Lord (Deut 6:4-9; Prov 20:7), who corrects the child (Prov 13:24; 19:18), sets a good example (Prov 4:11), nurtures the child and does not discourage nor provoke the child to wrath by a lack of consistency, by being unreasonable or lacking of spirituality (Eph 6:4).

In his book “The Ten Commandments,” Thomas Watson mentioned respect for both superiors and inferiors and with regards to honouring the father, that there are different kinds of fathers. Watson commenced by encouraging to pray for the political fathers of the country who are to promote justice (1Tim 2:1-3). Watson also makes reference to spiritual fathers such as Pastors and Ministers, who he describes as instruments of rebirth (Mal 2:7; cf. 1Thess 5:12). The Word of God warns to clear the spiritual fathers of unjust slander (1Tim 5:19).

Ephesians 6:1-3 says that children ought to be submissive in their behaviour. God commands children to hearken unto their parents in spiritual matters, and other matters if they are correct and not contrary to His Word (Col 3:20). Although children must obey their parents, there are limitations, for it must be in those things that are just and honest. The father is also given an express command with relation to his children (Col 3:21). Careful obedience is instructed (Prov 1:7-9).

Respect for the mother is mentioned first in Leviticus 19:3 because the mother is the one who tends to suffer more from her children and endures more for them. Failure to obey parents could result in punishment or death (Exo 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 21:18-21). Children who obey and honor their parents (Exo 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16), shall obtain mercy.

THOUGHT: Obedience brings blessings. Disobedience brings consequences.

PRAYER: (Pray for the salvation of our children.)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 29

2 PETER 1:4

JOHN 17:14-26

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

A DAILY COMFORT

In the advanced years of his life, Peter had drawn closer to Jesus. Originally a fisherman, the “Apostle of Hope” was dealing with internal challenges of persecuted churches, and was concerned about the activity of false teachers. He reminded them of the divine power of God and that everything with which to serve God and know Him was given by Him, pertaining unto life and godliness by the glory and virtue Jesus. Peter encouraged them that they had received the fulfillment of the precious promises of God (2Pet 1:4).

The emphasis was placed on the fact that they were privileged to live in a time when the reality of the teachings of the prophets and the preaching of the gospel had been fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Peter was not a prophet, neither was he making any new promises, but was a partaker with them of the divine nature of God. Simon J. Kistemaker said, “He says that we participate in God’s nature, not in God’s being. He has chosen the term *nature* because it indicates growth, development, and character. The expression *being*, by contrast, points to essence and substance.”

Christians thank God for His great provision, and through the promises of Jesus obtain God’s holiness, enabling fellowship with God the Father and His only begotten Son, the Lord and Saviour Jesus (1John 1:3). It is a blessed promise for the Christian to focus on Jesus and share in, and be partakers of, His heavenly calling (Heb 3:1, 14).

Safely escaping corruption in the world was proof of salvation (2Pet 1:5-7). If these virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-7 are added to a person’s faith, they will be productive of good works.

THOUGHT: True believers, knowing that you belong to God, shun corruption and evil desires (John 17:14-19; 1Thess 5:22; Jas 1:17).

PRAYER: Lord, may I cling to Your promises for my daily comfort.

SATURDAY, MARCH 1

MATTHEW 16:13-20

1 PETER 2:1-10

"I will build my church."

THE CORNERSTONE OF THE CHURCH

Jesus is the foundation of believers (1Cor 3:11). He is the Chief "Cornerstone," chosen by an infallible God from eternity past, but rejected of fallible men (Ps 118:22). Jesus is the "Living Stone" to believers (1Pet 2:4, 5), the "Stumbling Stone" or "Rock of Offense" to non-believers, who ruin themselves by rejecting Him (Isa 8:14; 1Pet 2:8), justifying themselves by practising good works and religious rituals (Rom 9:32, 33; 1Cor 1:23). The Cornerstone binds the building together. And, as the Chief "Cornerstone" of the Church is set by God, no man has the right to remove it (Isa 28:16).

Jesus asked His disciples whom the people thought He was, and then, whom they thought He was. Peter replied on behalf of the group, declaring the Divinity of Jesus (Matt 16:16).

Jesus Christ said, "...*thou art Peter* (Greek: *petros* = stone or pebble) *and upon this rock* (Greek: *petra* = bedrock, being Jesus Christ Himself) *I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt 16:17, 18). In this instance there is a play on words as in the Greek, *petros* means "a stone," and *petra* means "a rock" or "bedrock." Although Peter's name means stone, Jesus was not talking about the Church being built upon Peter, but upon Himself.

Jesus chose twelve men to lay the foundation of the Church (Luke 6:13-16; Eph 2:20), which included the Apostle Paul (1Cor 15:7-9; 2Cor 12:11-12; Gal 1:1), to whom the gospel keys were given (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8), and after the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in its power at Pentecost, they witnessed to the Jews, Gentiles and Samaritans.

THOUGHT: Jesus promised that the True Church in Him has victory over the adversary (Matt 16:18).

PRAYER: Lord, may I walk victoriously, as Jesus Christ is the Chief "Corner-stone," the "Living Stone" to believers and a "Stumbling Stone" to non-believers.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 2

PSALM 23:1-6

JOHN 10:1-21

"I am the good shepherd."

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Psalm 23, the "Pearl of Psalms," speaks of God as Israel's Chief Shepherd (cf. Ps 80:1; Ezek 34:14). Jesus Christ is revealed as the Good Shepherd, linking His divinity to the humble occupation (John 10:11-19, 26-28; Heb 13:20; 1Pet 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17).

On some occasions, it was needful for several shepherds to pen their sheep together, and in the morning, they would call their sheep, and the sheep would immediately go to their respective shepherds. Jesus intimately knows each of His sheep (John 10:3-5) and says, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*" (John 10:27).

The "Good Shepherd" will lead His sheep to fresh pasture, rest and water daily (Ps 23:2). He gives spiritual restoration to the sorrowful soul and revives the weak spirit (Ps 23:3). If His sheep strays, He would bring them back and protect them from the dangers lurking in the valleys. Sometimes, for correction, he would throw a rod at a stubborn sheep, or gently nudge it with his staff. Both rod and staff are used for their protection (Ps 23:4).

In the midst of the enemies, the believer can have peace. The Shepherd would carry ointment to place on any scratches on the sheep's head, thus depicting, the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the believer (Ps 23:5; cf. 1John 2:20). David's cup running over refers to a blissful condition in life amidst trials, being continually filled and overflowing with the Spirit of God. When walking with the "Good Shepherd," the two graces of goodness and mercy are continually with the believer, all the days of his life.

THOUGHT: One day Jesus the "Good Shepherd" will return to gather His whole flock and divide the sheep from the goats (Matt 25:31-33).

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for those who have confessed their sin before Jesus and who "*will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*" (Ps 23:6).

MONDAY, MARCH 3

ISAIAH 40:27-31

ISAIAH 30:8-18

*“blessed are all they
that wait for him.”*

WAITING ON THE LORD

God sent Isaiah at a time when Judah was in need of being reminded that salvation was of the Lord and not by human efforts. He ministered during a time when the people were turning away from God. In today's reading, Isaiah considered the magnitude of the sovereign God, realising that human idolatry is utterly ridiculous, and that it is absurd to compare the likeness of God with a graven image. He contemplated the fact that a graven image is more in the likeness of man than in the likeness of God. And he exposes the absurdity of idolatry.

God's omnipresence (all-present) and omnipotence (all-power) is observed in the creating of the universe. His omniscience (all-knowing) is observed in the naming of the stars (Isa 40:26). His omnipotence (all-perfect) is observed in that not one is missing. He holds the fabric of the world and does not become weary.

Those in exile were surrounded by an unsympathetic and hostile world. They felt forsaken by God. Today, there may be the joyless who have no happiness in service, the half-hearted who lack consistency, the fainthearted who lack courage and those who are exposed to temptation and dishonour the name of the Lord. These expose the insufficiency of human strength. It is God who gives power to be able to stand and to endure the most severe trial, to keep us steadfast and faithful.

Isaiah challenged the people to look away from self and their anxiety and to contemplate God's marvellous works. He made the world, so too does He govern it according to His wise purpose. All present trials of providence are in His hand. Waiting upon the Lord involves faith, hope, endurance and strength. Although youth have strength, without the Lord it is nothing, but all who wait on the Lord will be strengthened.

THOUGHT: It is presumptuous to expect without seeking, and it is unbelief to seek without expecting.

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to stay focused on the Lord Jesus Christ that I may not grow weary.

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

JOSHUA 1:8, 9

*“for then thou shalt make
thy way prosperous.”*

EXAMS AND BLESSED PROMISES

The blessed promises of God, or principles derived from them, are a great encouragement during examinations or other challenging times.

Exam fever: *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts... be ye thankful”* (Col 3:15). *“Let not your heart be troubled...”* (John 14:1).

Having difficulty concentrating: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever...”* (Isa 26:3, 4).

Difficulty sleeping before exams: *“I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me”* (Ps 3:5; cf. 4:8; 127:2b).

Fatigued: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint”* (Isa 40:31).

Feeling like giving up: *“Why art thou cast down?... hope in God: for I shall yet praise him...”* (Ps 43:5).

Feeling nervous during exams: *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you... Let not your heart be troubled...”* (John 14:27).

Needing wisdom: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...”* (Jas 1:5).

Things seem impossible: *“... With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible”* (Mark 10:27).

THOUGHT: Good preparation for exams or other challenges involves “Divine Sovereignty” (prayer) and Human Responsibility (effort).

PRAYER: Lord, grant me wisdom, clarity of mind, good time management, and consistent “Quiet Time.”

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

ROMANS 12:3-13

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-26

*“being many, are one body:
so also is Christ.”*

SPIRITUAL UNITY

Paul expounded the idea of a transformed life through imputed righteousness and exercised by humility. He admonished Christians not to adopt a position of superiority but encouraged them to live Christ-like lives. He also cautioned not to exercise a gift not given by God, but to recognize a gift given and properly exercise that gift.

Christians are cautioned not to overestimate themselves beyond their real value, but show consideration to others (Rom 12:3; cf. Phil 2:3-5). Each Christian has a place in the body of the Church and is given a gift or gifts by God. There is a blessedness when there is unity and harmony (Rom 12:4, 5; cf. Eph 2:19-22; 1 Cor 12:12-14), but divisiveness when there is selfish ambition (1Cor 3:3, 4).

When people are genuinely saved, they will have a unique gift or gifts. Their gifts will vary according to the intention of the Spirit. Discovering spiritual gifts is important and they are mentioned to varying degrees in Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:8-10; 1 Cor 12:27-31; Eph. 4:11.

Love is characterized by sincerity (Rom 12:9). Love is to be without hypocrisy, without ulterior motives. That which is good should be embraced with intensity. Eternal happiness is the end result of clinging on to that which is good for it is right, honourable, profitable, rewarding and abundantly worthwhile.

Christians must not show partiality to those of position in society, or those with wealth in society, but look upon other faithful Christians with respect as brothers and sisters in the Lord (Rom 12:10).

When gifts are properly understood there is spiritual unity.

THOUGHT: God-given gifts should be neither over-estimated nor underestimated.

PRAYER: Father, may I not adopt a position of superiority but properly evaluate my gifts if they be of God and not of selfish ambition.

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

1 KINGS 22:19-23

ROMANS 12:1, 2

“acceptable, and
perfect, will of God.”

GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE

In spite of the exploits of wicked men, God is still on the throne. King Ahab was a wicked king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (1Kgs 16:28—22:40) and his wife, Jezebel, was one of the most wicked women in the Bible. As a confused and wicked king, Ahab hated Micaiah (Micah), God’s prophet. Micah was the only one to stand against the false prophets and was hated by King Ahab because he did not approve of the king’s plans. Micah told Ahab the truth that he needed to hear, rather than what he wanted to hear. Due to Ahab’s pride and arrogance, and for fame and monetary gain, Ahab wanted all prophesying to be according to his desires.

Jehoshaphat was a godly king of Israel (1Kgs 15-24; 2Chron 17-20), and did many great things for God’s glory, but in his later years, sinned by unequally yoking with wicked Ahab (1Kgs 22:1-36; 2Chron 18:1-34), for which he was rebuked (2Chron 19:1-3; 20:35-37).

As with many in power, Ahab’s concern was his position, power, fame and wealth and the protection of the same, seeking his personal desire, justifying his own sin regardless of the truth, or who was hurt in the process, as he was willingly deceived. King Ahab desired to go to battle against *Ramothgilead* and as the four hundred false prophets spoke with one voice, encouraging him to do so, likewise Micah was encouraged to speak in agreement. But Micah would only speak, what the Lord wanted him to (1Kgs 22:14). Although King Ahab wanted to know God’s will, he always resorted to his own.

Even though many today seek God’s will but do their own (to their own destruction), God is still on the throne, and He will not forsake His own.

THOUGHT: Let us not be discouraged by power mongers who justify their own sin, as they are ripe for destruction.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to seek out Your perfect will that my life be sanctified.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

ROMANS 12:14-21

DEUTERONOMY 32:34-38

*“To me belongeth vengeance,
and recompence.”*

LEAVING IT TO THE LORD

The Christian's attitude towards persecution is based upon the love of the Lord Jesus and in a transformed life that allows persecution to be handled in a manner pleasing to God. Revenge and getting even with the persecutors is a duty that belongs to God. The Christian must do that which is right, as God does the work of transforming and chastising. And Jesus has set us His example (1Pet 2:23, Luke 23:34). Romans 12:14 says, *“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.”* Paul is also a good example of a person who allowed God to do the work with those who persecuted him (1Cor 4:12-13; Acts 28:19).

Genuine empathy is recommended, genuine harmony is encouraged and genuine humility is required (Rom 12:15). At the marriage feast, Jesus rejoiced (John 2:1-12) whilst at Lazarus' graveside He wept (John 11:1-44). God's Word exhorts us to humility and the attitude of love and partiality (Rom 12:16; cf. Prov 3:7). Jesus is the prime example of humility and partiality towards all.

The transformed life should be characterised by love both to the Christian and non-Christian. The natural response to a wrongful act often produces an instinct to retaliate and right the wrong (Rom 12:17), but retaliation can often damage a Christian witness. The Christian is required to live and labour in harmony with others (Rom 12:18). That does not mean compromise and be involved in ungodly activities, but avoid being aggressive and offensive. The Christian is not to seek vengeance, for there is no room for retribution as it gives way to wrath.

God will bring His vengeance (Deut 32:35) on those who despise Him and His name. Cultivating good prevents the growth of sin and exhibits the Spirit of Jesus (gentleness, meekness and an overwhelming love).

THOUGHT: (Read Romans 12:21.)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to promote a sanctified life by doing good to others and exhibiting the behaviour of a transformed life, as You have promised You will deal with those who persecute.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8

ROMANS 15:1-13

HEBREWS 6:13-20

“lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The hope of the true believer in God is a certain and sure hope, it is a blessed hope in Jesus. The faith of those who place extra-biblical writings as equivalent to God's Holy Word is tragically in human organisations (Col 2:8, 1Tim. 4:1). God gives the assurance of a blessed hope for the future. Hope in the Christian life is absolutely certain, sure to the extent that there is no doubt, a confident expectation and a positively confident salvation (Rom 8:24-25).

The truly repentant sinner who has confessed Jesus as both personal Lord and Saviour, repented and forsaken sin can be absolutely certain his sins are forgiven and that he has eternal life (Rom 5:1, 2, 5).

It was God's desire that His people should come to fully understand the certainty of His promises to Abraham (Heb 6:13-20) and God's covenant was based on two immutable elements. God cannot lie and will not allow His Word to fail (Matt 5:28; John 10:35; 17:17). God's covenant to Abraham was irreversible and the two unchangeable elements of His promise are firstly, that His Word is unchanging (plenary inspired, inerrant, infallible, perfectly preserved and unchangeable, being the final authority to our life and actions). And secondly, He established His promise by His oath. The Word of God says, Hope is a *“strong consolation”* (Heb 6:18), which applies to those of us to whom the Abrahamic covenant applies. Hope is also called *“an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast”* (Heb 6:19). It is a promise for the future anchored in Heaven.

THOUGHT: To reject Jesus Christ will bring a hopeless end, but to confess Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour will bring an endless hope.

PRAYER: Father, I pray that I may know Jesus Christ personally and be filled with joy and peace in believing, for eternity in Heaven is the promised hope for the future.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 9

ISAIAH 55:6-13

ROMANS 10:16-21

*"So then faith cometh
by hearing."*

THE PROMISE OF GOD'S WORD

In Isaiah 55: 11, God promised that the words that proceed from His mouth will not return void, as it will accomplish the purpose that God has designed. Although the immediate context of Isaiah 55:8-13 gives assurance of deliverance from Babylon, it extends beyond the immediate occasion, to benefit the people of God in all ages. The promises of God will never fail, not even one word will fail (1Kgs 8:56). The promises of God's mercy and grace effects the souls of believers for their sanctification and consolation, as rain upon the earth, to make it fruitful. God's eternal plans are beyond our comprehension (Isa 55:8-10) but ultimately the preaching of His Word is the means by which the salvation of man is accomplished (cf. Rom 10:17).

God's Word is not sent forth in vanity (void), but to the contrary, God announced His purposes of salvation to mankind. All who ultimately genuinely believe His message shall prosper and experience joy and peace, being the evidence of salvation. This is indicated as being a fruitful tree, as opposed to a fruitless tree which can only produce a thorn or brier (Isa 55:12, 13).

Jesus Christ taught the same in Matthew 7:16-20. While fruitfulness is the evidence of genuine salvation, it does not earn a person salvation. Genuine good works are the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation.

As Jesus Christ was about to ascend to Heaven, He commissioned the Apostles to continue the work and to teach all nations, and make disciples. The message that they were to spread to the uttermost parts of the earth was Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1Cor 2:2), knowing that God's Word will not return void.

THOUGHT: God's Word will not return unto Him void.

PRAYER: Lord, may I share the good news of the Cross and Jesus Christ crucified with others.

MONDAY, MARCH 10

JOHN 1:1-14

REVELATION 19:11-21

*“which sword proceeded
out of his mouth.”*

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

Through the awesome power of God's Word, He created all things. On day one, God created *“the heaven and the earth”* (Gen 1:1) and *“light”* (Gen 1:3). On day two the *“firmament”* (Gen 1:6). On day three, the seas, land, and vegetation (Gen 1:9, 11). On day four, the heavenly bodies, including the sun and moon (Gen 1:14, 16). On the fifth day, the living creatures of the sea and the air (Gen 1:20) and finally on the sixth day, before resting on the seventh, through the power of His Word, God created firstly, living creatures of the land (Gen 1:24) and concluding the mighty power of creation, through His Word, He created man (Gen 1:26) *“and, behold, it was very good”* (Gen 1:31).

The power and unity of God's Word is also recorded in John 1:1, when we see that God and His Word are one and the same (John 1:1-3; cf. Col 1:16, 17). The Psalmist also recognized God's fiat in Psalm 148:5-6.

God's Word was manifested in the flesh to God's glory. This was the incarnation of Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God (John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18) who made Himself of no reputation (Phil 2:7), emptying Himself, by veiling His glory, taking on a sinless human nature, and submitting to the Father voluntarily, but not giving up His deity.

Jesus gave life with a Word (John 11:43, 44; cf. Mark 5:39-43), made the lame walk with a Word (Matt 11:5, 15:31; Luke 7:22), healed the lepers with a Word (Luke 17:12), calmed the sea with a Word (Luke 8:25) and cast out evil spirits with a Word (Mark 1:27). Jesus came to save the lost, but those who reject Him will be judged by the Word (John 12:48).

In the final battle, by Jesus' Word, the world's Gentile armies against Israel will be slain and devoured by the birds of prey (Rev 19:21).

THOUGHT: God's plan is man's salvation, but as He created, He will destroy.

PRAYER: Lord, give me courage to share the gospel, as the end is drawing nigh.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11

NUMBERS 32:1-33

GALATIANS 6:1-10

*“Be not deceived;
God is not mocked.”*

KEEPING THEIR WORD

Numbers 32 relates to a promise made by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh who settled on the east of the Jordan River.

When the children of Israel arrived on the east side of the Jordan River, the tribes of Reuben and Gad went to Moses and Eleazar, and the leaders of the congregation with a request, seeking to settle in the land of Gilead, as it was suitable for their large number of cattle (Num 32:1-5). Moses was furious that they asked for such a request, allowing their brethren to go to war, whilst they comforted themselves. Such conduct would undermine the morale of the people, discourage them and cause schism. He mentioned that Israel had already wandered 40 years in the wilderness, because of the same attitude of their fathers, preventing them from entering the “Promised Land” (Num 32:6-15). The Reubenites and Gadites, after dialogue and deliberation then went to Moses with an alternate proposal. They proposed to build their sheepfolds and fenced cities, and then the armed men would enter the “Promised Land,” with their brethren and only return to their families, when the land promised to the Israelites by the Lord had been inherited, and distributed (Num 32:16-19). The conditional acceptance of the second proposal is recorded in Num 32:21-27.

Moses knew that he would not be entering the “Promised Land,” and Joshua had been commissioned. Moses called Eleazar, Joshua and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel to witness the undertaking and ratification by the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh (Num 32:28-42). If they broke their vow, they would not escape the punishment of the Lord.

Today, many are like the Reubenites and Gadites, thinking of their prosperity and comfort, and discouraging the faithful brethren.

THOUGHT: It is selfish and discouraging to sit in comfort seeking personal pleasure and attainment, whilst brethren battle for the Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, may I not sit back and discourage my brethren.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

PROVERBS 11:30

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27

“To the weak became I as weak...”

WISDOM IN SOUL WINNING

Speaking of Proverbs 11:30 Matthew Henry said, “This shows what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued...The righteous are as *trees of life*; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God’s church on earth, for whose sake it stands.”

Let us understand that apart from Jesus we are helpless and sinful. We are all born sinners (Ps 51:5) and have gone astray (Isa 53:6). Through Adam, we have all sinned (Rom 5:12, 19) and if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves (1John 1:8-10). Apart from God’s grace, our hearts are deceitful and beyond cure (Jer 17:9). Without Jesus Christ in our lives, we are without hope (Eph 2:12-13).

The understanding of sin comes from God’s Word (Rom 3:20) as the law helps us understand sin (Rom 7:7). In His justice God punishes sin (Gen. 2:16-17) and the result of sin is death (Rom 5:12; 6:23). It is not possible to save ourselves as by nature we are at enmity with God (Rom 8:7-8) and we are dead in sin, being objects of God’s wrath (Eph 2:1-5). We can only be saved through His grace, and not of any good works we do or good living we may practice (Eph 2:8-9).

Jesus suffered and died for sinners (Isa 53:1-11) and all who genuinely believe in Him will have eternal life (John 3:14-16). Those who truly believe in Jesus Christ are redeemed from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), by His blood (1Pet 1:18-19). Being of no sin (2Cor 5:21), He bore our sins on the cruel tree (1Pet 2:24, Heb. 9:22, Heb 9:27).

THOUGHT: It is God’s supernatural work that turns sinners to saints.

PRAYER: May I reach out with the truth of God’s Word understanding that there is wisdom in soul winning.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13

1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20

HEBREWS 13:1-17

*“they watch for your souls,
as they that must give account.”*

THE SOUL WINNER’S CROWN

Every Christian is to witness for Jesus (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8). The soul winner’s crown is the crown of rejoicing.

Hendrickson said, “At this *coming of the Lord Jesus Christ* for the purpose of blessing His people with His abiding *presence* the missionaries will see the ultimate realization of their *hope*, and will experience supreme *joy* when they behold the fruits of their missionary efforts standing there, with gladness, thanksgiving, and praise, at Christ’s right-hand. For these missionaries this will be the *glory-wreath*, the prided victor’s shackle chaplet.”

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians as they had been infiltrated by those who were defaming him and claiming that he was a wandering charlatan. There were some who were confused about the Second Coming of Jesus and were concerned about those who had died before His return. There were also some who believed that because His return was soon, it was unnecessary for them to continue working.

Although Paul was with them in heart and desired to see them. He had been forced to depart from them because of the rage of his persecutors (Acts 17:10). He had desired to go back to them, but the adversary had hindered him (1Thess 2:18). Paul claimed them as his hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing. Even though he may never be able to meet them again, the time would come, when they would stand united with the Lord. They were his reason for glorifying in the Lord.

At the Second Coming of Jesus, He would judge His enemies and set up His earthly rule (Zech 14: Matt 24:27-31; Acts 1:11; 1Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:14; 2Thess 1:5-10; Titus 2:13; Jude 14,15; Rev 19-20).

THOUGHT: The Christians at Thessalonica, being his “soul-winner’s crown” were the glory and joy of Paul.

PRAYER: Lord, may those who persecute soul-winners, be convicted of their sin.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

REVELATION 19:11-21

*“And I saw heaven opened,
and behold a white horse.”*

A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul knew that he was forgiven of his past mistakes and did not dwell on them. His present difficulties did not consume him, but he looked to the glory of that which awaits in the future, being *a crown of righteousness*, because of faithfulness unto death. He was fully aware that the Scriptures make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2Tim 3:15, Rom. 10:17).

A crucial question each one needs to contemplate is, “Are you genuinely saved, definitely knowing where you will spend eternity when you draw your last breath?” If you are genuinely saved, may you be reminded of the Word of God in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

Another important issue we need to consider is: as we live in this temporal and transitory life, are we living for the present, or are we living in the present? The answer, with regards to eternity is very important. If we are living for the present, then our perspective is self-centred and limited, with its trappings of desires, pleasures and self-gratifications, without any regard to eternal values.

Paul was ready to be with the Lord. Are you prepared for the Appearing and Return of Jesus Christ? Do you read your Bible daily? Are you consistent in your daily quiet time and devotions? Do you pray constantly? Do you encourage those who may have back-slidden? Do you invite others to faithful fellowship gatherings or to church? Do you reach out with the Gospel? Do you participate in evangelism or giving out tracts? Do you participate in missionary work? Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Are you looking forward to the Soon Coming, “Second Coming,” of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? (Rev 19, 20).

THOUGHT: A crown of righteousness awaits those who are genuinely saved and look forward to the soon coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be found faithful, and inherit a crown of righteousness when You return.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

HEBREWS 10:26-39

COLOSSIANS 3:12-25

*“ye shall receive the
reward of the inheritance.”*

IT WILL BE WORTH IT ALL

The Word of God clearly cautions that the person who has greater revelation will receive greater judgment (Matt 11:20–24) and also to whom much is given, of him much is required (Luke 12:48). A person’s knowledge of God ought to be that which strengthens, rather than weakens, an awareness of God’s inevitable judgment (Heb 10:30-31).

God’s Divine character demands justice and holiness and consequently before the death of Moses, God’s final warning to the children of Israel is recorded in Deut 32:35, 36. Judgment is similarly recorded in Heb 10:31. The true believer is reminded of the need to be reverent, respectful and obedient to the Living and True God, whilst those who reject Him need to fear God for a different reason. In the second exhortation (Heb 10:35-38), the author encourages them to boldly hold onto that which they have known, and not cast away their confidence, as it will be worth it all. A just man must live by faith (cf. Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11) as God will reward perseverance.

The many sacrifices faithful Christians must often make cannot be compared to the glory that shall be revealed: *“...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom 8:18). *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...”* (2Cor 4:17, 18).

Slothful service will bring about disappointments, but there will be rewards for faithfulness (Col 3:24, 25), enduring hardships, and fierce opposition.

THOUGHT: Each Christian must hold fast to the faith and be willing to bear his own cross for Jesus Christ, otherwise he cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:27).

PRAYER: Lord, help me not to compromise Your Word to seek popularity as there is a woe to those who do so (Luke 6:26). Thank You for the assurance that for the faithful, it will be worth it all.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 16

ZECHARIAH 9:9, 10

MARK 11:7-11

“And Jesus entered into Jerusalem.”

THE TRIUMPHANT ENTRY

The “Triumphant Entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem, was prophesied (promised) in Zech 9:9 and the promise was fulfilled in Matt 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44 and John 12:12-19.

“Palm Sunday” occurred on the first day of the “Passion Week,” or “Week of Suffering” (the final week of the life of Jesus Christ on earth). It is also the fulfillment of the first gospel message recorded in Scripture in Genesis 3:15.

The Messianic arrival was five days before His cruel death. The Passover occurred on the fourteenth day of the month, and on the tenth day, the paschal lamb was taken up (Exo 12:3) and set apart for sacrifice. On that day Jesus, the Passover Lamb, to be sacrificed, was publicly displayed.

Jesus and His disciples entered Jerusalem, marking the beginning of the end, and the new beginning. Thousands gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover and welcomed the King whom they thought would deliver them from Roman rule in a military manner, but He was to “*save his people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21).

Jesus Christ gave instructions to two of His disciples to go into the village to a specific place and find a donkey and its male colt tied, which none had ridden before prepared for Him (Matt 21:3; cf. Zech 9:9). The disciples loosed the unbroken colt and brought it to Jesus Christ and the stubborn will of the unbroken colt submitted to Jesus Christ. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy.

THOUGHT: At the beginning of the week, they cried “*Hosanna,*” meaning “Save me now” or “Please save.” At the end of the week, they cried “*Crucify Him.*”

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the Triumphant Entry. Thank You for saving my soul.

MONDAY, MARCH 17

JOHN 6:30-46

1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

“For as often as ye eat this bread.”

THE TRUE BREAD OF LIFE

There were “miracle mongers” who had witnessed the feeding of the 5,000 with the five barley loaves and two small fish (John 6:9) by Jesus on the previous day. They were searching for Him, desiring him to show them a sign. The “Messiah” rebuked them as they should have desired that which was spiritual, as opposed to that which was physical (John 6:27, 28; cf. Matt 12:39; Matt 16:2, 3).

Speaking about His deity, Jesus declared that He was the “*True Bread of Life*” (John 6:32). As the “*True Bread of Life*,” Jesus came from Heaven to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Those who come to the Father for salvation, exercise a human responsibility (John 6:37), drawn of the Father by irresistible grace (John 6:39, 44) not of themselves (Eph 2:8, 9). God draws people to Himself through the preaching of His Word (cf. Isa 54:13; Rom 10:17).

Hendriksen said, “Jesus Christ had filled the land with ‘infallible proofs’ (cf. Acts 1:3) of the fact that He was indeed the One who had been sent by the Father, as predicted by the prophets. These signs had been of various kinds: restoration of the handicapped, healing of the sick, cleansing of the lepers, stilling of the waves, feeding of the hungry, and even raising of the dead. Asking for still another sign was clearly an insult.”

Jesus explained in John 6:63 that it was not His intention for them to physically eat of His flesh, for that would profit nothing, but it was His Spirit which gives life. The “*True Bread of Life*” refers to both spirit and life, having the potential of producing life eternal.

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is spiritually present during the Lord’s Supper. The bread and the wine should only be partaken of by those who are truly saved and have been baptized.

PRAYER: Father, may I understand Jesus Christ is the “*True Bread*” that gives spiritual and eternal life.

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

PSALM 41:5-9

LUKE 22:47-53

*“went before them,
and drew near unto Jesus.”*

BETRAYED BY A FRIEND

King David was betrayed by a “trusted friend” (Ps 41:9), a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus being betrayed by a “friend” in Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:47, 48), being the ultimate betrayal. Judas was known as a traitor (Luke 6:13-16). Although Treasurer (John 12:6b; 13:29), he was a thief (John 12:6a), and was not chosen unto salvation, having committed the unpardonable sin (Mark 3:22-30; cf. Matt 12:22-32).

Satan used Judas as a pawn in his deadly deceit. Judas was not saved, and the adversary entered into him and took control of him (cf. John 13:2). As an unredeemed betrayer seeking a reward, Judas had a low estimation of Jesus and went to the Jewish leaders agreeing to betray Him for 30 shekels (Exo 21:32). Judas appears last in three lists of the disciples in the Synoptic gospels (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16). A woe was placed upon him and his punishment would be worse than non-existence (Matt 26:24).

Judas went to the chief priests during the week of the Passover festival and offered to betray Jesus for a reward (Matt 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11). He conducted his betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. A prearranged sign was used for the betrayal (Matt 26:47-50).

The first observance of the Lord’s Supper (Matt 26:26-29) was after Judas had set off to betray Jesus, and Judas was not present as he had already suffered the consequences of betrayal. He left immediately after he ate the sop (John 13:30). Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo said, “It was the custom in those days for the host to dip a piece of bread in gravy and offer it to the most honoured guest at the table. It was the Saviour’s final loving attempt to move Judas’ heart to repentance. Judas reacted to Jesus’ loving act by hardening his heart even more.”

THOUGHT: Jesus called Judas “friend” to the very end, yet he never confessed Him as personal Lord and Saviour, but betrayed Him. **PRAYER:** Thank You, Lord, for Your supreme sacrifice for me.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

JOHN 17:1-20

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

*“But made himself
of no reputation.”*

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

Whilst in the Upper Room before His betrayal, having kept perfect obedience unto God the Father, Jesus knew that the moment of crisis had arrived for the consummation of His earthly ministry with His betrayal, and condemnation, death by crucifixion, resurrection in bodily form, and ascension into Heaven (John 7:30; 8:20). It was the hour of fulfilling all prophecies, types and symbols, the hour of triumph.

Jesus had been given power over all flesh, extending “Eternal life” to the disciples and all whom God has given to Him. A true knowledge of both God and Jesus Christ is the result of “Eternal life.” By fulfilling God’s will and completing His task, Jesus had glorified the Father. He spoke as if the atonement had already been completed (John 17:4).

Jesus requested that He be glorified in order to bring further glory to the Father (John 17:1-5). When He left Heaven to be God incarnate, it was His glory that He temporarily set aside (Greek: *kenosis*, Phil 2:7), not His divinity. It was when the work of the Cross was finished that His glory was manifest, as it was previously veiled.

Jesus had made known the Father’s name to those who followed Him as *“they have kept thy word”* (John 17:6). He prayed for sanctification, glorification, and protection for those who belonged to Him. Jesus was confident that His prayers to God the Father would be answered because they belonged to the Father as well. When He prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:11, 21), He was not speaking about an ecumenical unity but a unity with true believers, a unity that will protect them as they stand against the wickedness of the world. In John 17:20, Jesus prayed for the whole Church (all who believe in Him) that unity in truth would reveal His love, and that all believers may see His glory.

THOUGHT: As the Father manifested Himself through the Son, so the Son manifested Himself through His followers.

PRAYER: Lord, may true believers fellowship in unity and in truth, to Your Glory.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20

PSALM 35:11, 12

MARK 14:42-52

“bare false witness against him.”

FALSELY CHARGED

Due to the heart's wickedness (Matt 15:19), the means of persecuting the righteous has always been to enlist false witnesses (Exo 20:16; 23:1; Lev 6:3; 19:11, 12, 16; Deut 5:20). This was evident with David (Ps 27:12; 35:11) and with Jesus (Matt 26:59-61; Mark 14:54-59).

Jesus went through six trials yet no fault was found. For the **first Jewish trial** of Jesus (a preliminary trial), He appeared before Annas who was possibly the father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18:12-14, 19-24).

The **second Jewish trial** was an informal trial before Caiaphas (Matt 26:57-58, 69-75; Mark 14:53-54, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:25-27).

Between the second and third trial, Peter denied Jesus three times.

In the **first Roman trial**, Jesus was brought before Pilate (John 18:28-38; Matt 27:1-2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5).

Jesus' **second Roman trial** was before Herod Antipas who was in charge of Galilee but who was in Jerusalem at that time (Luke 23:6-12).

The **third Jewish trial** of Jesus was before the Sanhedrin (Matt 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:63-71) who sent Him to the Romans.

The **third Roman trial** of Jesus (His sixth trial) was before Pilate again (Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-40).

Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are blessed by Jesus (Matt. 5:10, 11, cf. 12).

THOUGHT: A false witness is an instrument of evil (Prov. 25:18).

PRAYER: Lord, may those who charge the righteous falsely, be repentant.

FRIDAY, MARCH 21

LUKE 23:32-49

JOHN 18:28-19:6

"My kingdom is not of this world."

TODAY IN PARADISE

Jesus' forgiveness of all those who wrongly tried Him is epitomised whilst He was on the Cruel Cross of shame (Luke 23:34).

Jesus forgave those who betrayed Him; those who deserted Him; those who remained silent to the false accusations; those who accused Him falsely, including three false Hebrew trials and three false Roman trials; those who spat upon Him and smote Him; those who hated Him without reason; those who mocked Him; those who humiliated Him; those who scourged or reproached Him; His enemies who prayed against Him; even King Herod who robbed Him and mocked Him, who was at enmity with Pilate yet joined forces to oppose Him (Luke 23:11, 12). Jesus forgave Pontius Pilate, who on three occasions could find no fault in Him (John 18:38; 19:4, 6) yet cowardly and unjustly condemned Him to be crucified to please the people. He also forgave the soldiers who caused Him to carry His cross (John 19:16, 17) and those who gambled for His garments at the foot of the Cross. Nailed to the cruel Cross of shame, Jesus prayed, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

One of the thieves, hanging on a cross alongside, blasphemed Him (Luke 23:39), But the thief on the other side, convicted of his sin, rebuked him (Luke 23:40-43).

Paradise (heaven) is described as a beautiful place (Luke 23:43; 2Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7) where there is no sin or evil (Ps 20:6; 1Cor 6:9-10; Rev 21:8,27; 22:15), a place of spectacular beauty (Rev 4:2-3; 21:18-21), with many mansions (John 14:2), where there is no sorrow, pain, or death (Rev 21:4), no hunger, nor thirst (Rev 7:16), no darkness (Rev 22:5), a place of service (Rev 22:3) in which everyone is like Jesus (Heb 2:10-11; Rom 8:29; 1John 3:1-2). That is Paradise.

THOUGHT: The repentant thief believed by faith, neither works or baptism had any part in his salvation (Eph 2:8-9).

PRAYER: May I always forgive and reach out so that sinners repent.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22

ISAIAH 53:9-12

MATTHEW 27:57-66

“And laid it in his own new tomb”

THE BURIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus' burial with the rich was the fulfilment of the prophecy as recorded in Matt 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:31-42.

It was an offence of the Jewish law to have a person on a cross during the Sabbath (which commenced at sundown on Friday evening until sundown Saturday evening). Consequently as the hours of the Sabbath were approaching, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves. When they came to break the legs of Jesus, they found that He was already dead, *“that Scripture should be fulfilled, A BONE OF HIM SHALL NOT BE BROKEN”* (John 19:36; Ps 34:20; Zech 12:10). Having no bones broken fulfilled the requirement of the Passover sacrifice (Exo 12:46; Num 9:12). To ensure Jesus was dead, the soldiers thrust a spear into His side and water gushed out (John 19:34).

Note: When Jesus said *“Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you”* (1Cor 11:24), He was not referring to any bones being broken, but the fact that He suffered for us.

Joseph of Arimathaea was a wealthy man and had a tomb at Golgotha. Both he and Nicodemus asked for the body of Jesus and placed it in the Garden Tomb. Joseph of Arimathaea was a believer in Jesus and after much effort received permission from Pilate to take care of Jesus' body. Pilate was an unbelieving coward, an unprincipled achiever, content to accomplish his own selfish goals rather than maintain justice. He turned Jesus over to be crucified (Matt 27:26; Mark 15:12-15; Luke 23:20-25; John 19:15-16). The pagan religion of the Roman Empire was, and still remains, an enemy of Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Evidence of conversion: Joseph was not afraid of Pilate, neither was Nicodemus now afraid of either Pilate or the Sanhedrin.

PRAYER: Help me, Father, that I be not be ashamed of Jesus.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 23

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-58

*“fashioned like
unto his glorious body”*

PERMANENT RESURRECTION BODIES

In today's readings, Paul was contemplating eternal life, and the resurrection of the body which occurs at the time of the Rapture (cf. 1Thess 4:13-18). As Jesus is the firstfruit from the dead, rising in His glorified body (1Cor 15:20, 23), so are Christians the firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom 8:23; 11:16; Jas 1:18), awaiting their glorified bodies. Believers who have any present pain or other stress, even if it be financial, can be confident by the fact that the indwelling Holy Spirit is the down-payment or first instalment of eternal glory that awaits. Believers, having been redeemed, will one day be clothed with immortal and incorruptible bodies (1Cor 15:5-55; 2Cor 5:2-3; Phil 3:21).

Jesus raised the Shunammite widow's son miraculously in his physical body (Luke 7:11-17). Jairus' daughter was miraculously raised in her physical body (Mark 5:21-23, 35-43; Luke 8:41-56). Jesus raised His good friend Lazarus from the grave after four days (John 11:43-44). When Lazarus was called unto physical life, many were called unto spiritual life (John 11:45). Not only can Jesus raise the dead physically, He can also raise them spiritually and make them never to die again.

At His resurrection, in the attainment of his new position, Jesus was raised from the grave with His glorified body, showing the renewing of life, and the reunion of the body and soul. Victory in the Christian life is because of the union with Jesus and His resurrection (Eph 2:6) by which the Christian has eternal life (John 11:25), and also spiritual power (Eph 1:19-20). May we reflect on our position with the risen Saviour, and understand our need for Him in our lives. The resurrected body is a glorified body (1Cor 15:43), a real physical body of flesh and bone (Luke 24:36-43), incorruptible (1Cor 15:42), a spiritual body (1Cor 15:44), immortal (1Cor 15:53), and is not subject to death.

THOUGHT: As the physical body is temporary, it will be dissolved, but believers can be confident of permanent resurrection bodies.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, that though my earthly body is destined to be dismantled, my heavenly body is eternal.

MONDAY, MARCH 24

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26-34

MATTHEW 26:17-29

*“when I drink it new with you
in my Father’s kingdom.”*

ANTICIPATING THE LORD’S RETURN

The New Testament’s parallel of the Passover feast is the Lord’s Supper. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper on the night that He was betrayed when He kept the Passover with His disciples in the upper room (after Judas had gone to betray Him). He commanded His disciples to keep the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of Him (1Cor 11:24). The Lord’s Supper looks back at Jesus’ accomplishments at Calvary when His blood was shed for the remission of our sin, and looks forward to His glorious Return.

In Matt 26:26, Jesus broke the bread, gave it to the Disciples to eat in remembrance (as a perpetual reminder) of His broken body, and took the cup as remembrance of His shed blood and His redemptive death. Participants enjoy the spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. His broken body referred to His horrendous and unbearable suffering on our behalf as God’s Word prophesied that not a bone would be broken in His body (Ps 34:20; cf. John 19: 32, 33, 36).

The Lord’s Supper grew into love feasts which became perverted when everybody brought and shared food. The nature of the abuse in 1Cor 11:17-22 caused splits as a result of gluttony and drunkenness. Paul challenged the believers to examine themselves lest they eat and drink in an unworthy manner and bring judgment upon themselves, not discerning the Lord’s body. The judgment of those who deliberately sinned and abused the Lord’s Supper was physical and temporal, not eternal. The word “*sleep*” refers to the death of believers (cf. John 11:11, 12; Acts 7:60; 1Cor 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1Thess 4:13-15; 2Pet 3:4). Consequently, each believer who is eligible to partake of the Lord’s Supper must examine himself (1Cor 11:27-30). It is a sin to partake of the Lord’s Supper unworthily and also a sin not to partake if eligible.

THOUGHT: A person must be truly born again (John 3: 3, 5, 7) and have been baptized to participate in the Lord’s Supper (cf. 12:43-45).

PRAYER: May my heart be repentant and prepared to forgive others of their sin against me, or God will not forgive me (Matt 6:14, 15).

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

JOHN 20:24-31

HEBREWS 11:1-10

*“By faith he sojourned
in the land of promise.”*

THE BLESSING OF FAITH

God’s Word clearly promises a blessing for those who believe in His Word by faith, as genuine faith rests in God’s Word and not by sight (2Cor 5:7; Heb. 11:1).

When Jesus appeared to the Disciples in the Upper Room on the day of His resurrection, Thomas was not with them. He ought to have been content with the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the other Disciples but he was not. And because of his unbelieving condition, Thomas doubted their testimony that Jesus could have possibly risen from the dead, and wanted material evidence (John 20:25). (The Chambers Dictionary defines a “Doubting Thomas” as “a doubter or skeptic; someone who needs proof before believing something.”) The following Sunday when Thomas and the other disciples were confronted by the resurrected Jesus, he then believed.

God’s Word warns against seeking after signs instead of exercising faith, for it is dishonouring to God. When Jesus Christ said, *“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah...”* (Matt 12:38-40; cf. John 2:18-22), He was speaking of His own death and resurrection, and His “Second Coming.” This was not comprehended by ‘Doubting Thomas’ neither is it comprehended by an evil generation who seeks after a sign today. Likewise in Matt 16:1-4, Jesus rebuked the leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees) for seeking a sign from Heaven.

Abraham walked by faith as Jesus said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8:56; cf. Heb. 11:8-10).

THOUGHT: The blessings of God are diminished when there is a craving for signs and ecstatic experiences while God or His Word are attacked or doubted.

PRAYER: May I repent of my seeking after signs, or attacking God or His Word. May I understand His promises and the blessing of faith.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

LUKE 19:10

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

*“For there is one God,
and one mediator.”*

SAVING THE LOST

Preaching and teaching today is often about popular subjects rather than man's lost condition and the need for repentance. Understanding what it means to be lost is often made less of a priority, but people need to know of the consequences of sin and how serious it is to be lost. Jesus came to save the lost (Matt 18:11). Sin is a transgression of the law (1John 3:4) and unless man is saved from his lost condition, he will end in eternal damnation. To be lost is to be without hope (Eph 2:12). It is also to be without eternal life (1 John 5:12).

God's Word speaks of those who turned from Him and forgotten Him (Ps 9:17). It speaks of Hell as a continual fire without rest: A horrible tempest (Ps 11:6); a place of sorrows (Ps 18:5); everlasting burnings (Isa 33:14); a devouring fire of everlasting burnings (Isa 33:14); a place of weeping (Matt 8:12); a furnace of fire (Matt 13:41, 42); where there is wailing (Matt 13:42); a place of everlasting punishment (Matt 24:46).

Hell is a place of outer darkness (Matt 25:30); a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48); a place of torments (Luke 16:23); a place where they scream for mercy and for one drop of water (Luke 16:24); a place where they do not want their loved ones to come (Luke 16:28); everlasting destruction (2Thess 1:9); where they curse God (Rev. 16:11); a bottomless pit (Rev 20:1); a lake which burns with fire and brimstone (Rev 21:8); a place of filthiness (Rev 22:10, 11); a lake of fire (Rev 20:15).

The “*Son of man*” is Jesus (Matt 9:6; 10:23; 12:8, 40; 13:37; 16:13; 17:9; 18:11). It signifies Jesus' humility in leaving His heavenly glory to take on the form of a man (Phil 2:5-8). It also signifies His love and willingness to take sinful man's place in judgment (2Cor 5:21; 1Pet 2:24; 1John 2:2). Salvation is through the Man, Christ Jesus (1Tim 2:5, 6). His atoning sacrifice was sufficient for the whole world (both Jews and Gentiles).

THOUGHT: The lost refers to all of humanity.

PRAYER: May my lost loved ones repent of their sins unto salvation.

THURSDAY, MARCH 27

JOHN 10:27-30

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

*“ye were sealed with that
holy Spirit of promise.”*

ETERNAL SECURITY

Eternal security (assurance of salvation) is a blessed teaching from Jesus. In the world, there are many different religions. In theological terms, they can be placed into three basic categories. Salvation by works is taught by many of the Eastern religions. Salvation by both faith and works is taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Thirdly for Christianity, based upon the Word of God, salvation is by faith alone (Sola Fide), by Christ alone (Sola Christos), by grace alone (Sola Gratia) and by Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura).

There is nothing we can do to save ourselves (Eph 2:8-9). As we are totally depraved (Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:10, 11, 23), it is all of grace. Faith is man's dependency on the finished work of Jesus Christ for us at the cross of Calvary and He is the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Titus 3:5). Jesus states categorically that He is the way, and there is no other. Not by works, neither by living well, nor by giving, but only by genuine confession and repentance. Salvation is not in any other god, neither is it by worshipping any other god (Exo 20:2).

Salvation can be described as the saving of man from the power and penalty of sin, the conferring of eternal happiness. Therefore, salvation is deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. This does not mean that a truly born again Bible-believing Christian is sinless, but he has the power over sin and should sin even less. Salvation will be fulfilled and completed when the Lord appears (1John 3:2). Assurance of salvation is based completely on faith in the unchanging Word of God. These include the finished work of Christ on the cross. The finished redemptive work cannot be purchased by any person, or priest, for Jesus, by one sacrifice of Himself, has paid the debt for sins (Heb 10:10). Consequently, God's people will never perish.

THOUGHT: Truly born again believers have salvation sealed by the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, that assurance of salvation is eternally secured for me.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

JUDE 24, 25

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

*“Now unto him that is able
to do exceeding abundantly.”*

A CLOSING PRAYER

Jude warns of apostasy (denying the counsel of God). The apostate is a person who has a superficial belief and falls away. He has a mere intellectual acknowledgment which is only a pretence.

The key verse and theme of the letter to Jude is Jude 3. Jude is convicted by the Holy Spirit to strongly exhort his brethren to spare no effort in identifying and exposing heresies of the malicious intruders.

Jude speaks about the stealthy intruders who infiltrate the Church (Jude 4a), who are perverters of God's Grace (v 4b), and are deniers of the Lord Jesus (v 4c). These ungodly men teach with novelty and seduce the people. They deny our Lord Jesus as the only way of salvation and seek to worship God in a wrong manner. They do not wear a cloak of righteousness but one of maliciousness (1Pet 2:16).

They are corrupt and arrogant people, who defile the flesh (v 8). They speak evil, and are ignorant slanderers, who behave like wild animals (v 10). They love money, and preach and teach only for monetary reward. They are hirelings or religious mercenaries (v 11). They are empty hypocrites and deceivers (v 12-13). They are murmurers, seeking after their own lusts, and are flatterers (v 16). They are divisive and unregenerate, splitting churches and steal away followers (v 19).

Jude exhorts the true believers to guard themselves by building themselves up in the faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life, that they not be dragged into the ungodly worship and lives of such people. Compassion and care need to be exercised, but not compromise.

THOUGHT: Compromising God's Word and worship is deceitful

PRAYER: Lord, may I understand God's protection and human responsibility.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29

ACTS 1:9-11

MARK 16:14-20

*“he was received up into heaven...
sat on the right hand of God.”*

THE BODILY ASCENSION

The ascension of Jesus into Heaven was prophesied in Psalm 68:18. Jesus spoke of His bodily ascension into Heaven (John 6:62). God’s Word mentions the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus’ resurrection in bodily form from the grave (1Cor 15:4). God’s Word also mentions the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus’ ascension, returning to Heaven, sitting at the Father’s right hand (Mark 16:19; cf. Acts 1:9-11).

Whilst in Heaven, Jesus as the Great High Priest is interceding for Christians (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1John 2:1-2). The anointing of a priest involved the sprinkling/pouring of water (Lev 8:6, cf. Num 8:6-7a), the sprinkling of oil (Exo 29:7, 21; Lev 8:12), and the sprinkling of blood (Lev 8:23) and Jesus received all three. If He was the Messiah (Anointed One), the Great High Priest, He required likewise all three to be fulfilled: the water (Matt 3:13-17), the oil (Luke 7:37-38) and the blood (Matt 26:28).

God’s Word says, *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:14-16).

Jesus is overseeing world evangelism (Mark 16:19-20), preparing a place for His people (John 14:1-4), and awaiting His Second Coming (Heb 10:12-13).

THOUGHT: At the ascension of Jesus Christ to Heaven, two men in white apparel said that He would return to earth in the same manner.

PRAYER: Since God’s Word, clearly states Your return, may I be prepared for, and love, Your appearing.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 30

REVELATION 1:4-8

REVELATION 19:11-21

*"And I saw heaven opened,
and behold a white horse."*

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Scoffers will ridicule the Return of Jesus (2Pet 3:3-4) but He will certainly return in the clouds (Rev 1:7; 19:11-12; Dan 7:13), and every person will see Him (Rev 1:7; Matt 24:30). At His incarnation, His glory was veiled and at the Transfiguration only Peter, James and John saw His glory. Those who rejected Him and those who pierced Him shall mourn (Rev 1:7; Zech 12:10) as He returns to earth to establish His Kingdom. On 16 occasions, Revelation speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus.

Many Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled with Jesus' Second Coming (Ps 2:6-9; Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-8; Dan 7:13-14, 18; Zech 14:4-9; Mal 4:1-6; cf. Num 23:19). His literal and physical Return will be a fulfilment of His own prophecies (John 14:2-3; Luke 19:11-27). It will be a fulfilment of the programme that awaits the Church (Rev 3:10; 1Cor 3:12-15; 4:5; Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10; Phil 1:6, 10; 2Tim 1:12, 18; 4:8; Rev 11:18). Jesus will return for His bride (the Church) which is the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7-9; cf. 2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-30). The Rapture (1Cor 15:51-53; 1Thess 4:13-18) may occur before the Great Tribulation (Rev 4-19), as true believers are not appointed unto wrath (1Thess 1:9-10; 5:1-9; Rom 5:9; Rev 3:10).

Upon the Return of Jesus, He will judge unbelievers (Joel 3:1-2, 9-17; Matt 13:24-30; 37-43) as, despite God's wrath being poured out on sinful men, they will still remain in their sin and idolatry (Rev 9:14-21). He will return to fulfil God's programme for Israel (Rom 11:1-2, 13; Jer 33:25-26). Then, His enemies will be made His footstool (Heb 10:13). There will be a judgment of Satan (Rev 19-20) as Satan is the temporary ruler of this earth (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and is the god of this earth (2Cor 4:4), using the power of death to enslave men (Heb 2:14-15).

THOUGHT: Jesus' literal Return is the believer's hope and expectation (1Cor 15:19; Titus 2:13; 2Tim 4:8; John 14:1-3; 1Thess 4:18).

PRAYER: Lord, may I reach out with the truth of Your Word, whilst there is an opportunity, as Your Second Coming approaches.

MONDAY, MARCH 31

REVELATION 21:1-8

ISAIAH 25:1-8

“...Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces.”

ALL TEARS WIPED AWAY

God's Word says there will be a “*new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away*” (Rev. 21:1). This will be an absolute blessed time when there will be a fulfillment of Old and New Testament prophecies, the ultimate fulfillment of peace and the blessedness of no more sin, as sin will be obliterated.

Rev Dr Gary Cohen said there will be “a New Heaven (Rev 21:1), a New Earth (21:1), a New Jerusalem (21:2, 10), a New People (21:3), a New Temple (21:22), a New Light (21:23) and a New Edenic Paradise (22:2).”

God will dwell amongst those who are His children. The fruit of each person's salvation will be shown as he perseveres until the end as he will overcome and have no more tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain (Rev 21:4). To the contrary, those who commit abominations will not have a part in heaven's blessing, but Hell's cursing, being the second death.

As Biblical prophecies never fail, so we see in both the Old and New Testaments the end time is drawing near. The prophet Isaiah saw beyond the Tribulation Period, and the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:2-7) to the New Heaven and New Earth as in Rev 21:1 (Isa 65:17). The Apostle Peter too (2Pet 3:10, 13).

God will also preserve those who believe during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:2-7) as the earth is burnt up and He is going to establish a New Jerusalem (the eternal city of the redeemed) which will come down from Heaven and have a permanency to it (Rev 21:2).

There will be no more separation or death in eternity (1Cor 15:26; Jas 2:26). In eternity, there will only be separation from loved ones who rejected Jesus, whose names were not found in the Book of Life.

THOUGHT: As sin is obliterated, there will be no more death, sorrow nor tears.

PRAYER: Lord, may I labour for You, reaching out, even amidst difficulties as in the New Jerusalem there will be no more tears.