

July to September 2008

“Revival of the Soul: Finding Divine Assurance, Comfort and Strength for Every Troubled Soul”

by
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About the Author



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TUESDAY, JULY 1

1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16

1 SAMUEL 17:19-58

*“The imagination of man’s heart
is evil from his youth.”*

LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH

Today, the world is celebrating Youth Day. It seems to be a commonly accepted notion that youths be given ‘extra’ freedom and right without any interference from parents and teachers since this is their day – just let them do what they want. But there is a high possibility that a small group of them may just abuse it for evil.

According to 1 Timothy 4:12, God’s design for the young person is that he will be an example. He is to be a good example in all manner of life including his speech, conduct and behaviour. But today’s youth is moving towards the opposite. In the company of worldly friends and unbelievers, it seems ‘strange’ indeed for one to be a good and morally upright person. A ‘normal’ youth will insist on having his freedom and right especially from his parents and teachers.

To all young people in particular, God has a purpose for your life. Sometimes it may seem life is a total confusion and mess, but be comforted that God is there with you. Don’t give yourselves up to despair, for God will help you. He may not remove your problems but He did promise to grant you sufficient grace to go through them (2 Cor 12:9). If you have any struggles or challenges in your life, talk to God first, and then open up to your parents, your church leaders and your brothers and sisters-in-Christ. Share your burdens, don’t carry them alone. Young men and women, you are important to your parents, your pastor, the church and ultimately to God. If you have been bought with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are no longer a child of the devil but a child of God.

THOUGHT: Being young in age does not mean one is immature in faith. In the same manner, mature in age does not mean mature in faith. Maturity has to do with one’s level of wisdom, knowledge, value, spirituality and ability to make good decisions in life. How mature am I?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be an example and not a stumbling block.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2

PSALM 46:1-11

GENESIS 19:15-29

*“Be still and know that
I am God.”*

REVIVING YOUR QUIET TIME

One has said, ‘Quiet-Time is the secret of a Christian’s daily life.’ How true! Are we found often in a little corner spending a quiet moment with God? Observations show that Christians who fail often in Quiet-time soon grow cold and eventually backslide away from the Lord. But the one who perseveres in Quiet-Time grows steadily day by day with the Lord. Abraham is a good example who keeps his Quiet-Time according to Genesis 19:27, *“And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD.”* Let us note a few things about Abraham in this verse. (1) He got up early in the morning to meet with God. (2) He met God at a special place. (3) He stood before God. Are these demanding to you in any way? Yet how often we lack the discipline to get up early, go to a special place and spend some time alone with God!

There are at least two purposes for keeping Quiet-Time: to fellowship with God and to grow in grace and knowledge. To accomplish these two purposes, three important items must be found in Quiet-Time: worship, prayer, and meditation. In Quiet-Time, quality is better than quantity. It is better to spend 15 minutes with God meaningfully than an hour feeling very restless and distracted by the things of the world. Satan will also see to it that your Quiet-Time is opposed every time. Keeping your Quiet-Time will be a constant and daily struggle. Yet this is the only ‘channel’ where you can draw special strength from God daily. As the physical body depends on oxygen, food and water in order to survive, the spiritual body needs nourishment from God in order to be strong. Let us persevere to keep our Quiet-Time daily that we may grow in fellowship with God and also to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Who do you think Satan fear most? The weakest saint praying on his knees or the strongest saint serving God on his feet?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, remove from me the strong desire for worldliness and let me enjoy my Quiet-Time with You.

THURSDAY, JULY 3

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

HEBREWS 12:1-2

“So, run that ye may obtain.”

RUNNING OUR CHRISTIAN RACE

Our Christian life is not a 50-metre or 100-metre dash where the runner bursts out for a few seconds and then collapses at the finishing line. The Christian race is a tough, enduring long distance race, in which every ounce of energy, discipline and perseverance need to be exercised and utilized until we finish the race and stand perfect before the presence of our Lord.

True faith is a call to action with total dependence upon the Lord. This call involves laying aside anything that hinders our progress in running our Christian race. No one can lay aside for you the weights and sins that hinder your Christian life — you yourself must do it by faith.

Dear brethren, it is time to run! Some may be idling or sleeping at the side of the racetrack. It is time to run! Some may be complaining about the condition of the course. It is time to run! Some may be out of shape spiritually, and offering endless excuses of inadequacy. It is time to run!

“Looking unto Jesus” means that we must first turn our eyes away from that which has been our attention and affections, and then focus solely upon Jesus Christ. Are there things that have captivated your focus, your affections? Are there things that seem to be more important to you than Jesus Christ? You must look away from those things and look unto Christ. Before you start to grow weary and faint, **LOOK UP!** A great cloud of witnesses is cheering you on! Deal with the weights and sins that hinder your running, and run with patience with your focus fixed upon Christ, and run on considering Christ who ran before you and who has completed the race. So let us run the race with great patience to the glory of Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Is there such a thing as taking a break from the Christian race?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, keep my eyes fixed always on You and may the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of Your glory and grace.

FRIDAY, JULY 4

HEBREWS 13:1-8

PSALM 12:1-8

*“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday,
and to day, and for ever.”*

**REMEMBER: ‘GOD WILL
NEVER CHANGE’**

Hebrews 13:8 is my favourite verse not because it is such a short verse that it is easy to memorise, but because I am so convicted how fickle and unstable man can be (I being one of them!). The truth is stated clearly that my Saviour never changes. What a comfort this inspired and preserved statement has brought to my soul that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

It is the same truth that strengthens me, comforts me and assures me over and over again of all that God has promised in His precious Word. It is my prayer that this verse will also be a blessing to you.

If God is not the same, if God could possibly change what He has said in His Word, then my faith in Him would be greatly shaken and He would not be that SOLID Rock upon which we are to build our lives. His unchanging nature should cause us to rejoice in the greatness of our unchanging God! Rejoice, and again I say rejoice!

People may fail you and forsake you. But thank God that He will never fail nor forsake you! When you sin and fall short of what God wants you to be, when your life is in a total mess, thank God that you can still count on His faithfulness and everlasting love. May the immutable Lord, the same yesterday, today, and forever be with us.

THOUGHT: Will our faithful God not preserve His Word perfectly for us today? Those who believe God is faithful and yet believe His Word is not perfectly preserved today, is there not a great contradiction over here?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to be faithful just as You are.

SATURDAY, JULY 5

JOHN 10:1-18

MATTHEW 11:25-30

*“Come unto me ...and ye shall
find rest unto your souls.”*

ARE YOU DEPRESSED? (I)

Depression is something that is very real in our lives. A man can suddenly break down over anything, everything or nothing. I believe that a person, no matter how strong he is, will have some degree of depression in him. There are those whose condition is more serious; there are those not so serious. And some may not even realize they have depression because they are able to overcome it easily.

Have you ever broken down before? Have you ever been tempted to give up or have given up because you simply cannot take it anymore? I'm sure you have. Some have chosen to live in this place called 'Depression Avenue.' It is at the corner of 'Despair' and 'Self-Pity.' It is a place of darkness, gloom and doom where you can hear all kinds of complaint, murmuring, sadness, unhappiness, and with all the 'I can't take it anymore' attitudes!

But Jesus who has saved us is calling us to come out of 'Depression Avenue.' Come out! Let this place be far away from us. He wants us to go to a better place. A place at the beautiful and green pasture called the 'Abundant Gardens.' It is at the corner of 'Joy' and 'Thanksgiving' surrounded by God's grace and mercy, overflowing with love, truth, light and abundance of every kind.

Jesus says, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* (Matt 11:28, 29). Will you come? The decision is yours to make if you would come out of 'Depression Avenue' into 'Abundance Gardens.'

THOUGHT: If medicine can help to suppress depression, do I still need God?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, let my troubled soul find rest in You.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 6

JOHN 10:1-18

PSALM 24:1-6

"By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, ...and find pasture."

ARE YOU DEPRESSED? (II)

There is a gate to 'Abundant Gardens' and on top of the gate is a banner that says: "Whosoever will, may enter but permanent residence is strongly encouraged." Many, unfortunately, would love to enter but do not stay in there for long. This is a sad thing. Many somehow cannot stay put in 'Abundance Gardens.' For whatever reasons, they like to sneak out and end up at 'Depression Avenue' instead.

The world offers many solutions for depression. They tell you, "Stop thinking you cannot do it. You can! Stop thinking of the negatives; think positive! Stop dwelling on past failures; think of the victories and successes you have already obtained and tell yourself you can do it again!" All these words when said at the right time and mood can be very motivational, inspiring and powerful. And people will buy it and pay big money just to feel good and be motivated. The problem with this kind of answers is a very serious one because you learn to trust more in yourself to lift yourself up rather than in God. But before you know it, you fall again. And again you need such motivations to make you feel "high" just like the effect of drugs.

Dear brethren, it is time to be honest with ourselves. It is time to stop deceiving ourselves, to stop believing in our own wisdom and capabilities. It is time to look up instead of looking down, left or right, front or back, or inside us. You have looked everywhere for answers but why not look up? Are you not tired of living a life that is tossed about by every wind of circumstance that comes along your way? Jesus says "... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This abundant life is promised to you not for the future but now! Jesus wants you to live it out right now! Will you?

THOUGHT: Positive thinking seems to get many out of depression. Should Christians recommend it?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to trust in You and You alone.

MONDAY, JULY 7

JOHN 10:1-18

PSALM 16:1-11

*“Therefore my heart is glad,
and my glory rejoiceth.”*

ARE YOU DEPRESSED? (III)

Dear friends, if Jesus said that we can have life more abundantly, that settles it. He won't tell us something that is not realistic. Will Jesus give us abundant life only to take it away? Will He torment us like this? Of course not! But we must decide whether to leave 'Depression Avenue' and enter 'Abundance Gardens.' And not only that, we must be willing to live there as permanent residents, and not slip out and be found at 'Depression Avenue' again.

One has said, 'Abundant life is a life with a meaningful present, not just in the future.' Do you believe this? Who does not want to be successful? Who does not want to be good in everything? Which teacher does not want to be the best teacher role model of the school? Which player does not want to be the MVP, the most valuable player? Which employee does not want to be the best employee of the month? What we don't realize is that our present life can be meaningful simply because we are wonderfully made in God's image. We certainly mean something to God for Him to be willing to do so much to save us from our sins.

Dear friends, do you fear because of what the future may bring? The possibility of failing health, failing finances, and difficulties of all sorts leave many people feeling hopeless, helpless and greatly depressed. But we who are in Christ need not be afraid anymore. Indeed, life without Christ is a hopeless end; life with Christ is an endless hope. One hymn writer wrote, 'Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know, He holds the future. And life is worth the living just because He lives.' Let us start living our abundant life today!

THOUGHT: How can I still trust God when I cannot see any light at the end of the dark tunnel?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for the endless hope in Christ Jesus.

TUESDAY, JULY 8

MATTHEW 25:31-46

ROMANS 5:1-8

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

WHEN LOVING IS HARD (I)

More than ten years ago, I got to know an unusual friend. He is physically handicapped. He was involved in a very bad accident when he was very young. That accident changed his entire life. Today, he walks with a limp, and he depends very much on his left hand because his right hand is very weak. Even his speech is affected and one can hardly understand what he says. At first, I was very happy to know him mainly because he has become a Christian. His appearance was pleasant. He was very neat and presentable. I enjoyed his company very much and learnt many things from him as well. However, slowly he began to change. His dressing became untidy. Sometimes he did not bathe for several days, and I can smell his odour even from a distance. Soon, I began to feel uneasy when I was with him. I no longer enjoyed his company. I began to shun him. Why is this so? I then realized that loving a person is not easy after all. Do you also have this problem?

God loves us when we are most unloveable. Romans 5:8, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* That is how great His love is. He welcomes us into His family regardless of how messed up we are. If God so love us, let us also love one another. Let us pray that God will give us the strength to accept others as they are, and to help us be more understanding towards those who are different from us. When loving is hard, think of God’s love.

THOUGHT: If I try to love someone whom I hate, am I not being hypocritical?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to love others as You have loved me.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9

MATTHEW 25:31-46

ROMANS 5:1-8

“Charity suffereth long”

WHEN LOVING IS HARD (II)

A story is told about a soldier who was finally coming home after having fought a war in Vietnam. He called his parents from San Francisco, “Mom and Dad, I’m coming home, but I’ve a favor to ask. I have a friend I’d like to bring home with me.” “Sure,” they replied, “we’d love to meet him.” “There’s something you should know,” the son continued, “he was hurt pretty badly in the fighting. He stepped on a landmine and lost an arm and a leg. He has nowhere else to go, and I want him to live with us.” “I’m sorry to hear that, son. Maybe we can help him find somewhere to live.” “No, Mom and Dad, I want him to live with us.” “Son,” said the father, “you don’t know what you’re asking. Someone with such a handicap would be a terrible burden on us. We have our own lives to live, and we can’t let something like this interfere with our lives. I think you should just come home and forget about this guy. He’ll find a way to live on his own.” At that point, the son hung up the phone. The parents heard nothing more from him. A few days later, however, they received a call from the San Francisco police. They were told their son had died after falling from a building. The police believed it was suicide. The grief-stricken parents flew to San Francisco and were taken to the city morgue to identify the body of their son. They recognized him, but to their horror they also discovered something they didn’t know, their son had only one arm and one leg.

The parents in this story are like many of us. We find it easy to love those who are good-looking or fun to have around, but we don’t like people who inconvenience us or make us feel uncomfortable. We would rather stay away from people who aren’t as healthy, beautiful, or smart as we are. Thankfully, there is Someone who won’t treat us that way. Let us pray that God will give us the love to accept people as they are, and to help us be more understanding towards those who are different from us. When loving is hard, think of God’s love!

THOUGHT: If God is love, why did He still send sinners to hell?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to love those whom I do not love.

THURSDAY, JULY 10
MATTHEW 25:31-46
ROMANS 5:1-8

“Charity ... seeketh not her own ..”

WHEN LOVING IS HARD (III)

Do you find it hard to love others? Unless you know God’s love, you will continue to find it hard.

There is an old story about John who works as a railway bridge controller. One day his 8-year-old son spent the day with him at work. The boy played near the bridge while John as usual was in his office. When he saw afar an oncoming ship, he opened up the bridge for the ship to pass. After the ship had passed, he suddenly realized his son was not in the office. To his horror, he saw him climbing onto the bridge. He quickly ran outside to rescue his son but just then he heard the sound of a fast approaching passenger train. He yelled to his son to crawl back, but the noise of the now clearing ship and the oncoming train made it impossible for the boy to hear him. And all of a sudden the man realized his horrible dilemma. If he did not close the bridge, the train would crash, killing all 400 on board. But if he closed the bridge for the train, his son would be killed by the train. He made his decision: He pulled the manual lever to close the bridge. As the train went by safely, he could see the faces of the passengers, some reading, some even waving to him, not aware of the sacrifice he had just made for them.

As we consider God’s love, what a great sacrifice He has made to give His only begotten Son for us! He could not spare us sinners and at the same time spare His Son Jesus. God had to allow suffering, humiliation and death to come upon His Son. While it caught the man by surprise to give up his only son to save those passengers on board the train, the death of Jesus was not a sudden or spontaneous decision. It was planned even before the foundation of the world. It costs God so much to love us. When loving is hard, think of God’s love.

THOUGHT: We are also told not to love the world, neither the things in the world. Is there a contradiction here?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love through Your only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY, JULY 11

JEREMIAH 18:1-6

ROMANS 9:6-29

“... For who hath resisteth His will?”

GOD THE POTTER, WE THE CLAY

Jeremiah 18:6: *“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”* This is a powerful verse that drives home the point. *“... Cannot I do with you as this potter? Saith the LORD.”* Of course He can. Everything is absolutely under His control and power. He has every right over them because He is the Creator and they are His creatures. The potter is in full control as to what he wants to do with the clay in his hands. The clay has no power whatsoever to resist the potter. We speak of the Great Potter not as one who is a big bully; treating us like fools, making fun of us, and destroying us. No, not that! God exercises His control over us by His enduring mercy and abundant grace. Think about that! He did not control us like robots: by the pressing of the buttons, we just turn left or right! Instead He gives us the liberty whether we would serve Him or not. He does not force us to serve Him. Have we chosen to serve Him because we love Him?

Even if we serve Him out of love and gratitude, is our service according to His way and instruction? Or are we serving Him using our own human wisdom and strength? If we serve Him in our own way, no wonder there is no power and effectiveness in our service; no wonder there is no life in our service! If only we would let God mold us that we might be fit for His service.

Dear fellow labourers, let us remember that we are always the clay and God is always the Potter. May we submit to God’s molding that we may be approved vessels for His use, to the glory of His Name.

THOUGHT: Why didn’t God make us like robots so that we will do everything according to His programming?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for making me useful for Your service.

SATURDAY, JULY 12

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7

JOHN 4:7-26

“They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

KEEPING THE SANCTITY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil” (Eccl 5:1). The house of God is the sacred place of divine worship where the Word is preached and the ordinances administered. Although there is nothing mystical about the physical sanctuary of the church, we are to observe the sanctity of the house of the Almighty God. The house of God is not to be treated as though it is a marketplace, our own home or a recreation club. It is the place where sinful and depraved man appears before the sovereign God with fear and trembling. What are some of the things we should be found doing in the house of God?

1. Be early. Habitual lateness reveals our lackadaisical attitude towards God.
2. Dress modestly and appropriately.
3. Be a prayer warrior and avoid unnecessary conversation before and during the worship service. (The sanctuary is not a fellowship hall.)
4. Prepare yourself for worship by engaging in personal prayer or pre-service singing.
5. Be an active worshipper. Follow the order of worship.
6. Be reverent. (eg: avoid taking off your shoes, avoid eating and drinking.) Be considerate toward other worshippers. Avoid anything that may be distracting.

This is not a list of do's and don'ts. If it is so, we would be no different from the Pharisees who burdened the people with their by-laws. Some of the things we do may be lawful but may not be edifying when done at the wrong time. Let us worship the Lord in spirit and in truth by keeping the sanctity of the house of God.

THOUGHT: Can I worship God on my own without going to church on Sunday?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to worship You in spirit and in truth.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 13

DEUTERONOMY 10:12-22

ROMANS 3:1-23

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

FEARING GOD (I)

A life without God is likened to a man on a small boat upon the vast Pacific Ocean without the rudder to guide him. He will drift about not knowing where he is going. There are many like that who would go about their lives without any regard for God. There are atheists who either do not believe the existence of God or do not care if God really exists. So they would eat, drink, be merry and then die like anyone else, not knowing there are accountability and judgment before God after their lives have ended.

Are we also living our lives without any regard for God? How do we show that we really have a regard for God in our lives? We are to fear God. This alone deserves our immediate attention. What does it mean to fear God? To fear God does not mean that we should be afraid of God as man sometimes is afraid of lizards, cockroaches, or of height and darkness. No, these are irrational fears. They are not taught to us. Most of them come naturally. But Solomon gave a specific command: He calls us to fear God. We need to be taught and called to fear God. The fear of God is not developed according to our emotions, but in our understanding of who God is. Why should we fear God? We begin to fear God when we truly understand who He really is.

Therefore, the main reason why most people live their lives carelessly is that they fail to know and understand God. Watch out for the next few days' readings as we look at three attributes of God that will help us learn to really fear God.

THOUGHT: It seems such a thin line between fear and terror, yet love is that great virtue which separates the two far apart that they never meet.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to fear You and love You at the same time.

MONDAY, JULY 14

ISAIAH 6:1-13

EPHESIANS 4:17-29

“Put off concerning the former conversation the old man.”

FEARING GOD (II)

The first attribute of God that should help us to fear God is that He is infinitely holy. Because God is holy, He demands that His people be holy as well. Because God is holy, we are not to approach Him according to our emotions, understanding or what we think is right, but that which is in accordance with His revealed will, the Word of God. God is so holy that even the cherubim which were created to serve Him, covered their eyes and their feet as they cry out unto Him *“Holy, holy, holy.”*

How can we approach God with arrogance or without any reverence? Ought not we be like Isaiah who trembled before the holy God saying, *“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”* (Isa 6:5). That is how we ought to fear God — because He is a holy God. For us to be holy requires hard work. Doing nothing at all does not make us holy. The hard work is to separate ourselves from all uncleanness and unrighteousness. Only true believers can do it and only they will manifest true holiness. Ephesians 4:24, *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”* Only born again believers in Christ have the new man in them. One may pretend to be holy. He may be able to hide from man, but not from God. One day, this sin will be put to open shame.

The new man that God gave us is created in righteousness and true holiness. It is like a package. As we put on the new man day by day, there will be a gradual development of true holiness and righteousness in our life. Therefore, let us rightly fear God because He is infinitely holy.

THOUGHT: How can the new man and old man dwell together in a believer?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to yield to the new man that I may fear You as I ought.

TUESDAY, JULY 15

ECCLESIASTES 12:1-14

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

*“For we must all appear before
the judgment seat of Christ.”*

FEARING GOD (III)

The second attribute of God to help us learn to fear God is that He is infinitely just. *“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Eccl 12:14). Everything will come to light. This open judgment will surely come. God is fair and just. Those who have done good shall be praised and rewarded. But those who have done evil shall be shamed and punished.

We see this in our society. A man robbed an elderly woman of her money. Then a passerby stopped him and handed him over to the police. Standing before the judge, the robber is pronounced guilty and thereby punished according to the civil law. The passerby was praised and awarded a medal of commendation. The judge is fair and just in his judgment.

Likewise for us, one day we shall stand before God in judgment. How will we stand? Will we be praised or shamed? Remember, Ecclesiastes 12:14 says that even those things that were done in secret will be brought to judgment. Are we indulging in some secret sins thinking that no one will ever know?

Dearly beloved, God knows everything. Let none of us think that God is unaware of all that we do or say in secret. He sees through our deepest thoughts and hearts, of which sometimes we may not even fully understand ourselves. There is absolutely nothing that can escape His knowledge. So let us repent now and may God forgive us. God is infinitely just. He alone is perfectly just, and He shall bring all things to judgment one day. Because God is infinitely just, we must fear Him. May God help us.

THOUGHT: Is it unjust of God to punish His Son when His Son is sinless?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for exercising justice that is coupled with mercy and compassion for me.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

*“One mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus.”*

FEARING GOD (IV)

The third attribute of God to help us learn to fear God is that He is sovereign. God has absolute control over His creation. He has every right and power to execute justice against sinners and their sins. Each time we sin against Him, He has the power to judge us right there and then. But He has chosen to be gracious and forgiving, that we might repent and trust in Him. For this reason He gave us His only begotten Son that through Him we might be saved. So if we believe by faith that the Lord Jesus Christ has saved us from our sins, we need not go to the Great White Throne of judgment. We are now placed before the Throne of Grace.

He who believes that God will call sinful men to judgment one day, and therefore fear the punishment of God, may flee to Jesus to be his Mediator and Advocate. And he who has the Lord Jesus Christ as his Mediator and Advocate need not be afraid anymore. Have you ever experienced physical pain? In hell, physical pain will be very greatly intensified. Have you ever experienced the pain of a guilty conscience? In hell, the pain will be multiplied many times and will never be quenched. But worst of all, have you ever experienced fear? Every soul in hell will be filled with fear of the highest degree by the thought that God is infinitely holy and just, and that He hates sin with a perfect hatred.

Flee, therefore, to the Lord Jesus Christ while there is still time. Forsake your self-righteousness and your sin. Do not excuse yourself by saying that you are too busy to think of God and Christ. Otherwise, you will enter into that damnation of God's judgment and hell fire, and you will have eternity to regret. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Fear Him because He is the sovereign God.

THOUGHT: Since God is sovereign, why does He not destroy all His enemies immediately?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to hate sin in the same way as You do.

THURSDAY, JULY 17

JAMES 2:14-26

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-17

*“Continue thou in the things
which thou hast learned.”*

FEARING GOD (V)

We ought to fear God because He is infinitely holy, just and sovereign. Yet our fear should be out of a genuine love, and out of a deep reverence and submission to our heavenly Father. That must be our highest motivation to keep His commandments in order to fulfill the whole duty of man. If we truly fear God, we will keep His commandments willingly and lovingly. Our fear of God is different from the fear that unbelievers or the fallen angels might have. Though they fear Him, they will never love Him, much less obey or put their faith in Him. James 2:19, *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”* Therefore it is important for us to *“work out our own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Phil 2:12).

Godly fear is not for show or merely manifested in the outward appearance. We must guard ourselves against *“having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof”* (2 Tim 3:5). Godly fear is developed and cultivated from within the new man. May our new man be biblically guided and equipped that we may increase in *“the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13).

Since God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, how will you fare? Will you be praised for that which is good, or be put to shame for that which is evil? Fear Him because our God is a holy, just and sovereign God.

THOUGHT: Each time I sin deliberately, it is an outright rebellion against God.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to fear You so that I will not sin against You.

FRIDAY, JULY 18

EPHESIANS 5:1-17

PSALM 90:1-17

“Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

REDEEMING THE TIME

My maternal grandfather passed away towards the end of the year 1999. He did not live to see the year 2000. One month before he died, he was admitted to hospital because of an infection on his left leg. As it was the school holidays, I was able to look after him daily. I had so many opportunities to share the gospel with him. I always brought with me some Chinese tracts so that I can share with him anytime. But each time when the opportunity came, I hesitated and never shared. Each time I told myself: ‘Tomorrow I will definitely share with him.’ This happened again and again. Then one morning as usual, I told myself that I must really share the gospel with him. I even decided that I would go early that day so that I can have more time with him. That very same day before I left home, I received a phone call that my grandfather had passed away in his sleep. I could not believe it! I had failed to tell my grandfather about Jesus Christ. I regretted it very much. I should have shared the gospel with him. But now it was all too late. That was a very painful lesson for me. I thought there was still time but opportunity passed me by and it was gone forever.

“Redeeming the time because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). Is there something important you ought to do but you have foolishly put it aside? **DO IT NOW!** Do not repeat my mistake. Sometimes we like to do certain things simply to kill time. But the one who has nothing to do but simply kill time is in danger of being ‘killed’ himself. To redeem time is to do that which God has instructed us to do, and to **DO IT NOW!** Are you still waiting to open your Bible to get down to some serious reading? Are you still waiting for the right mood before you commit yourself to the Lord’s service? Are you still hesitating to believe in Jesus who has saved you from your sins? Dear friends, we are told to redeem time. Will you, before it is too late? May God help us.

THOUGHT: Time is more expensive than money. Time lost is permanent. Money lost is only temporary.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to cherish the time which You have given me.

SATURDAY, JULY 19

PSALM 73:1-28

1 CORINTHIANS 10:22-33

“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”

IS YOUR LIFE DRIVEN BY PURPOSE OR CHRIST?

Most of us live our life by purpose. Even doing nothing is driven by the intentional or unintentional purpose of idling time away. What is your purpose in life? Is it the goal of becoming a millionaire? Is it to have a happy and well-provided-for home? We can spend our entire life driven by such purposes, yet we can still end up feeling empty and meaningless. Pause and think. Why should your life be just a purpose-driven life? Shouldn't it be a Christ-driven life?

Our Chief End: (a) To Glorify God

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). A Christ-driven life glorifies God. How can we glorify Him unless we obey Him? How can we obey Him unless we know what He has commanded us to do? We must get back to God's Word: to know it well and live our life according to it. This is how we can glorify God.

Our Chief End: (b) To Enjoy God Forever

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psa 73:25,26). God desires that we enjoy Him too. But this is something we have failed often. Because we still crave after worldly pleasures and sinful activities, to give them all up for Christ's sake is a great struggle. Yet because we are not our own and our chief end now is to glorify God, we must let our appetite crave for the things of God and not of the world anymore. May the love of Christ constrain us that we may live a Christ-driven life: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

THOUGHT: Christ must be the Purpose that drives my life.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me acknowledge always that You are the Driver of my life and I am Your 'passenger.'

LORD'S DAY, JULY 20

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-26

MATTHEW 16:21-28

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself."

DARE TO CONFESS

Each time we go through the immigration checkpoint, we are faced with two lanes: 'Goods to declare' or 'Nothing to declare.' If you have something to declare and you honestly declare, the custom officers will usually let you go easily. But if you fail to declare and you are caught, be sure they will lock you up till you confess and pay the heavy fine. In the same way, have you declared Christ after you professed to believe in Him? Do you dare to confess Him in public?

Have you ever been in some uncomfortable situations where somehow it seems 'difficult' to stand up for your Christian faith? For example, when everyone is going to have fun at the rock concerts, night clubs, or other such places, how should you turn down the invitation? Give some convenient excuses? Say that you have another appointment? Or that you are not feeling well? Or you have no money? And not say honestly that as a Christian, you do not want to be found in places that God would not be pleased?

We may not have reached the stage where our life will be in danger when we confess Jesus Christ. However, in our daily struggle and pressure from the world, we may be tempted to deny Christ. But whatever our difficulties may be, there is no reason for us to deny Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. God is still on His throne. He who allows us to enter into difficulties will surely bring us through the difficulties. He will give us the strength and grace that we need. When we go through the 'checkpoints' of life, may we honestly and boldly declare Christ as our Lord and Saviour. If we fail to declare, it can only mean that we are too ashamed of Him. May this not happen to us!

THOUGHT: If others do not know that I am a Christian, maybe I am not shining for Jesus at all!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to boldly confess You before the whole world.

MONDAY, JULY 21

ROMANS 2:1-16

JOHN 8:1-11

“Go and sin no more.”

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONSCIENCE

What is conscience? It is a moral sense or knowledge of concurrence. The conscience is man's judgment concerning himself and his deeds, to the extent he is subject to God's judgment. The conscience consists in three elements taken from Romans 2:14-16:

1) **Knowledge.** This knowledge is knowledge of the will of God, commanding or forbidding every man with promises and warnings. The conscience prescribes what must either be refrained from or be done. The more clearly and powerfully it does this, the better the conscience is functioning.

2) **Witness.** After man's obligation to God is held before him, the conscience determines whether or not he has acted according to light and knowledge. The conscience takes note of his own action and conformity to the commandment held before him. The more clearly and powerfully conscience witnesses to man, the better it is performing its duty.

3) **Acknowledgment.** The righteous God is aware of man's actions and will reward or judge him accordingly. The more conscience subjects itself to the knowledge of God and is sensitive toward it, the more faithfully conscience will perform its task.

Man's conscience is not to be based on man's standard, but on God's alone. Only God's standard is infallible, perfect, and just. Therefore every conscience must be examined in the light of the holy commandments of God. An injured or guilty conscience can recover and be restored when there is godly sorrow over sin and genuine repentance. The recovery of it may not be immediate. It may take time for the conscience to be restored to its sensitivity again. May God help us to keep a clear conscience and seek always to glorify Him.

THOUGHT: If my conscience no longer works, what can I do?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me keep my conscience pure and free.

TUESDAY, JULY 22

ROMANS 12:1-18

PSALM 1:1-6

*“Present your bodies a living sacrifice
holy, acceptable unto God.”*

SAVED TO SERVE

There is a museum in Cambodia that houses the records (including photographs and reports) of the extreme cruelty and wickedness of the Pol Pot regime. Pol Pot was the communist Cambodian leader behind the killing of 2 million Cambodians. In this museum, located where the killings were carried out, one can easily imagine how cruel and wicked Pol Pot was towards his own countrymen. During that time, there was a daily list of names of people who were to be executed. All were to be killed except for those whose names have the words ‘saved for use’ written beside them. Only a few out of the tens of thousands were spared death because of these words beside their names. They were saved for use! But once they become useless, they were cast away and executed.

We who have believed in Christ have also been saved for use. But God is not like Pol Pot. God saved us forever. We could have been left to go our own way, but God saved us. And He saved us for His use. We have been saved not for nothing, but for His use. Are you willing to serve God? To be of use to God?

This world leads us to a hopeless end, but it is Christ who gives us an endless hope. Think about that! If you are willing to slog so hard for the world which gives you a hopeless end, why is it so difficult for you to labour for Christ who gives you an endless hope? Will you not serve Him today? You are saved to serve!

THOUGHT: If God has blessed every Christian with at least one spiritual gift, why is it that not every one is serving Him?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, let me serve You as long as You enable me to.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

HEBREWS 11:1-40

JAMES 2:14-26

“Faith without works is dead.”

BUILDING UP YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH (I)

In the world, faith is looked upon as a common denominator. Every one expresses faith in something everyday. When you get up in the morning, you turn on the tap in the bathroom having faith that water will flow. When you get into your car, you turn the key having faith that the engine will start. Or when you wait for the train or bus, you stand at the platform having faith it would come. This is faith in physical things.

Faith is also expressed in the spiritual realm. Muslims place their faith in the Koran and their prophet Mohammed. Buddhists place their faith in Buddha's teachings and meditations. And we Christians put our faith in Jesus and the Bible. What is the difference then? As far as the spiritual realm is concerned, we should only be interested in the faith that saves and works. Faith is true and genuine only when the object of faith is divine and true. Who is the object of your faith? Is it God? Is it Jesus? Or is it man or certain things you cannot live without? There are at least 3 misconceptions about faith.

The first misconception about faith stems from some people believing that faith is that ability to manipulate God. This is the clever approach of the 'health and wealth' prosperity gospel found in many extreme charismatic churches. For example, they use the Prayer of Jabez as a formula to demand things from God. Recite Jabez's prayer many times and God will eventually give you what you want. The attitude is: "If God doesn't give me what I want today, I will pester Him again tomorrow." No, we must not do this! Faith is NOT our ability to manipulate the hands of God!

THOUGHT: True faith is a faith that works the hardest, all because that precious faith comes from God.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, may You increase my faith to trust in You more and more.

THURSDAY, JULY 24

2 TIMOTHY 1:7-18

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-21

*“What things were gain to me,
those I counted loss for Christ.”*

BUILDING UP YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH (II)

The second misconception about faith is that we must take a leap of faith in order to believe in God. Is there such a thing as “a leap of faith”? To me, it sounds like jumping into a dark hole without knowing how deep it is. “Oh, come on, don’t worry, just jump!” This is even worse than bungee jumping or parachuting. At least you know you are jumping off the cliff or the plane and you are able to see what is below.

Instead of “a leap of faith,” we should take a STEP of faith.

The step of faith is the logical step that is based on the knowledge and understanding of who our Saviour really is. It is not just one step only. As we take more steps, we know Him deeper and closer. The Apostle Paul says, *“I know whom I have believed ... ”* Because Paul knew his living Saviour, he was able to share Him with others who need to know Him too.

But there are some who say, “I don’t know God. I don’t even know if God exists but I just believe.” Can such a belief save a person? This is blind faith, isn’t it? Do you know Him who saved you? If your answer is no, then why not get to know Him and take that step of faith and believe in Him today?

THOUGHT: True faith demands that we must know the Giver of that faith. Many today do not know Him and yet they say they have faith. What kind of faith is that?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, increase my faith as I seek to know You more and more through Your Word with the help of the Holy Spirit.

FRIDAY, JULY 25
ROMANS 1:16-32
GALATIANS 3:1-14

"The just shall live by faith."

BUILDING UP YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH (III)

The third misconception about faith is that people believe that faith is simply a devotion to whatever god one happens to follow. As long as they are sincere, they will get their rewards and will enter heaven. Really? What if they are sincerely wrong about their faith? What if the object of their faith is a false one? I don't want to take such a risk. I must know who really can save me.

The Christian faith is the only religion that tells sinful man that God saves. No human effort can contribute to man's salvation. Jesus alone saves, period! If ever salvation were to depend on ourselves, we worry because we know how unstable and sinful we are. We can never save ourselves. But if salvation is of the Lord, we can rest assured in Him.

We are like a three-year-old child who is secured in his father's arms in the middle of the pool. But as the father begins to go deeper into the pool, the child begins to show an increasing degree of panic and will hold all the more tightly to his father. Is there a need for the boy to panic at all? The answer is no. The boy should have realized there is no reason for increased anxiety. The depth of the pool in any part was surely more than his height. But he is not left alone by himself, he is safe in the arms of his father. He has reasons for anxiety only if he chooses to leave his father.

At some point of our lives, we may feel anxious or worried like the little child in the pool. Yet the comforting truth is that we are safe in the hands of our heavenly Father. It is this faith that will give you confidence and trust in the Lord.

THOUGHT: Many are sincere in seeking the truth about God. But why is it that they cannot accept Christ after knowing Him?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to examine my faith if I have truly believed in Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour.

SATURDAY, JULY 26

JOHN 15:1-11

JEREMIAH 2:1-13

"I am the vine, ye are the branches."

HOW FULL IS YOUR JOY?

(I)

People everywhere attempt to live a life that is worth living. They try every means available in the hope of producing a quality of life which they think will bring them joy and fulfilment. But Jesus tells us that we can only find that kind of life in Him. Is Jesus your vine? Are you His branches? Please don't pretend if you are not. Jesus says, *"For without Him we can do nothing."* But what is it that we can't do without Him? It is those things that please God, things that glorify Him and promote Him. Is your life pleasing to God? Without Him we can do nothing.

Some people have made themselves the husbandman or the vine. They try to find joy and fulfilment in life according to their human wisdom and philosophy. Perhaps they are looking at their own success in studies, in career, in their material wealth and possession. Some may even look at how good their health is. Will they find joy in these things?

Dear friends, we must realize that we are only the branches. We are neither the husbandman nor the vine. We must know our place. Our place in Christian living is to stay connected to the True Vine and allow Him to give us the nutrients we need so that we may bear fruit for Him. This is what we are as believers. We are completely and utterly dependent upon Him in everything. Without Him we can do nothing to please God. Our place is to be the branches. We are servants, not the Master. We are slaves, not the Lord. We are the creatures, not the Creator. God is the Master. He is the Lord. He is the Creator. He alone owns this right. If we know our place in Christian living, God will bless us because Jesus is our True Vine. There is no way we can enjoy a greater sense of joy and fulfilment until we know our true position in life.

THOUGHT: If without Christ, I can do nothing, how is it that I can still do something?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to abide in Christ.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 27

JOHN 15:1-11

JEREMIAH 2:14-23

"Without me ye can do nothing."

HOW FULL IS YOUR JOY?

(II)

After knowing our place, we must realize that there is a pruning work to be done in us. The word Jesus used is *"purgeth."* It means to purify; to remove impurities; to clear away those things that are harmful or useless. Sin is still very much active in our life, though we have been wonderfully saved once and for all by the grace of God. There is a work of purging to be done in our life.

As branches to the True Vine, we must bear fruit. In order to bear fruit and more fruits, we must submit to the purging and pruning work of God. This is crucial if we want joy and fulfilment in life. If there are still sins in our life, we will not experience true joy. We must let God do the pruning work in our life to remove whatever that are preventing us from bearing fruit for Him. Sometimes purging from God can be painful. In order to bear a good testimony, many a time, we may have to stand alone while others are having a good time in places of sin and temptation. But the pruning is worth it, because there is joy waiting for us.

After knowing our place and realizing God is pruning us, we must abide in Christ. To abide means to remain; to continue; to stay and to dwell. But how do we abide in Christ? Verse 7 tells us to *abide in His words*. We must get into reading, studying and meditating on God's Word daily if we say we abide in Him. We need to allow His words to get into our lives and influence everything that we think, say and do. It is a perfect filter, clearing off all the unclean thoughts, words and actions in our life. In the same verse, abiding in Christ also means engaging in the only communication line with God through Christ. That is the hotline. We need to keep that line hot all the time if we say we abide in Christ.

THOUGHT: Prayer is that hotline I can use to call God so as to draw strength from the divine powerhouse.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be still and know that You are my God.

MONDAY, JULY 28

JOHN 15:1-11

JEREMIAH 2:24-37

*“If ye keep my commandments,
ye shall abide in my love.”*

HOW FULL IS YOUR JOY?

(III)

What happens to a believer if he chooses to ignore all the three important steps to full joy? Let us recap: 1) We must know our place. 2) We must know there is a pruning work to be done. 3) We must know how to abide in Christ.

The one thing for sure that will happen is that he will not bear fruit if he chooses to ignore the abovementioned. And because of that, he will be cut off and set aside. This is very unfortunate for anyone of us whose life is not abiding in Christ. Therefore it is a great challenge for all of us who profess to bear the Name of Christ to keep abiding in God’s Word, to keep that hotline of prayer busy, to keep loving God and one another based upon the truth of God’s Word. Otherwise, there will be no true and complete joy for us. His joy will be taken away from us all because we bear no fruit for Him.

The first half of this year has come and gone already. Very soon, we will reach the end of the year. Are you still procrastinating to do that which is right in the eyes of God? Do it now if you want your joy to grow and to be full. That is God’s desire for you, for He said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* God gives us His Word for a good purpose: that His joy may remain in us and that our joy may be full always. May God help us.

THOUGHT: We may not be happy Christians due to circumstances, but we can always be joyful Christians despite any circumstances.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, may Your joy remain in me and my joy be full always.

TUESDAY, JULY 29

JOHN 16:1-33

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-10

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.”

CHEER UP (I)

It is very easy to be pessimistic about life, about anything and everything under the sun. There is every reason to be down because of what we are, and because of what is happening in the world around us. Some of us may be struggling in our own little corner at work, with our unfriendly colleagues in the office, in church with difficult brethren, or even at home with our unloving family members.

Very often we might evaluate how our situation has gone from bad to worse. That is the kind of situation Jesus was referring to when He was speaking to His disciples. The times are not getting better. They had been following Jesus all this while. Never before did anyone dare to talk back to a Pharisee or a religious leader, only Jesus. Not just once, but many, many times. Yet it is amazing that they continue to follow Jesus. Truly they had found hope and safety in Him whom they believed is the eternal Son of God.

Jesus could have continued to stay with them forever. No matter how bad the situation they may be in, it will never be so bad because Jesus is physically with them. So long as Jesus is with them, they have nothing to worry about because Jesus took care of all their problems. They can be cheerful the whole day long. But that is not what Jesus wants His disciples to learn. Therefore Jesus gave them John 16:33. They have to learn to cope without His physical presence. Only then will their faith grow and God's great ministry be done through them.

THOUGHT: It is when we are in trouble that we can see the power of God clearly manifested, delivering us. Should we thank God for troubles?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me not to take You for granted. Help me to trust in You always, in times of adversity as well as prosperity.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

JOHN 16:1-33

2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

“If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”

CHEER UP (II)

If Jesus is going to be with His disciples physically forever, He does not have to tell them ‘these things’ at all. But Jesus has spoken to them clearly that He must go away. He must go to the cross. He must die, be buried and rise from the dead on the third day. And He must ascend into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. Prior to this chapter, Jesus had spoken to them about the heavenly home. He has spoken about another Comforter. He has spoken about true peace. He has spoken about having fullness of joy. He has spoken about His love for them. He has spoken about the persecution they will face in the world. He has spoken to them about His death and His resurrection. Jesus has spoken to them all these things for two reasons: One is found in verse 1 of chapter 16 which says, “... *that ye should not be offended.*” The other one is in verse 33, “... *that in me ye might have peace.*” Jesus is about to leave them. The things that are going to happen may be too much for the disciples to bear. But they are given two great promises, that they should not be offended when these things come, and that in Christ they might have peace in their heart no matter what happens.

In a world of tribulation and trouble, there is every reason for them to be down and out. But there is also reason to cheer because Jesus has overcome the world. This is what unbelievers will never experience. They may cheer up because the Nike motto tells them to ‘Just do it.’ They may cheer up because someone promises a reward to them as condition. They may cheer up even for no good reason, maybe just to prove they are better and stronger than anybody else. But how can they remain cheerful when they have no true peace in their heart? They have no peace because they have no Christ in them.

THOUGHT: Christ has willingly sacrificed His life to save yours. Are you willing to sacrifice your life for His sake?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be willing and ready to suffer and die for Christ.

THURSDAY, JULY 31

JOHN 16:1-33

PSALM 144:1-15

*“Happy is that people,
whose God is the LORD.”*

CHEER UP (III)

Only those who are born again, redeemed by the blood of the perfect Lamb of God, can cheer up because in Christ we can have peace. He has overcome the world. Can we still have peace when sickness and death strike us? The physical body may be tortured and killed. It may be painful and unbearable. But Jesus has overcome the sickness for you. One day, He is going to give you a body that is perfect, complete, without pain, suffering, or sickness.

We have no excuse not to cheer up. We have every reason to cheer up because of Jesus. But how should we cheer up? To cheer up is more than just a smiling face.

1. To cheer up is to trust in God to help us serve Him better, love Him even more and obey Him with all our heart, soul and mind.
2. To cheer up is to make use of the talent God has given us to serve Him better, love Him even more and obey Him with all our heart, soul and mind.
3. To cheer up is to persevere on for the Lord's sake that we may serve Him better, love Him even more and obey Him with all our heart, soul and mind.
4. To cheer up is to seek Christ's honour alone that we may serve Him better, love Him even more and obey Him with all our heart, soul and mind.

May God help us to cheer up for His sake.

THOUGHT: Am I a Christian who is grouchy, fixing my eyes on self rather than on the resurrected Lord?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, set me in my proper place and encourage me just where I am in the service of Your house and help me to cheer up for Your Name's sake.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-25

EPHESIANS 5:22 - 6:4

“Lest thou forget the LORD.”

KEEPING FAMILY WORSHIP

(I)

A noted pastor in church history made the following observations about the breakdown of the family: ‘I have observed many married couples coming together in such a great passion that they were ready to devour each other for love, but after half a year, one ran away from the other. I have known people who have become hostile to each other after they had five or six children and were bound to each other by marriage and by the fruits of their union. Yet they left each other.’ The pastor who said this is Martin Luther, the great German reformer of the 16th Century Reformation. His comment which is more than 400 years old still stands as a signpost to us today in the 20th Century.

I have seen struggling families burdened with common conflicts among spouses and children. Many families are hurting and in trouble today. We need a fresh appreciation of the biblical blueprint for a well-ordered family:

- 1) A family that is filled with Christ’s love and truth, and
- 2) A family that is filled with the Spirit of the Living God.

What kind of a spirit do you want to see in your home? No, not that unforgiving spirit! No, not that provoking spirit that is out to run one another down! As much as we want peace, harmony, purity, love and unity in the church, the home is often the place we have so often neglected. The home needs just as much peace, harmony, purity, love and unity as the church.

THOUGHT: If the father is an unbeliever, can the mother who is a believer lead her children in family worship?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me start today a family time to worship You.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2

DEUTERONOMY 11:16-28

COLOSSIANS 3:12 - 21

“Ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you.”

KEEPING FAMILY WORSHIP

(II)

I have learnt that in order for a church to be healthy and to rise from strength to strength, the most important factor to work on seriously is not to begin with the world or with society, but with the family right in our home. If we want to see the church grow and if we want to see a revival in the church, we must begin right from our home.

One of the important ways to begin right from our home is through Family Worship. In many churches and homes, family worship is almost unheard of. Many children and adults of the Christian faith grow up with no experience or impression of the Christian faith and worship as a day-to-day reality.

To Christian fathers and mothers, what will your children remember you for in your spiritual guidance for them? Will they just sheepishly remember how you have shouted at them to get up from bed to go to church on Sunday?

To Christian husbands and wives, what will your spouse see when he/she looks at you as a child of God? Will they see you behave like many other Sunday Christians who have no devotional life, no family worship, no prayer, etc.? Would we see revival in our homes?

THOUGHT: It seems easier to manage a company of 1000 staff than one wayward child at home. What is the problem?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to start family worship and not to give it up.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 3

JOSHUA 24:14-27

PSALM 127:1-5

*"Except the LORD build the house,
they labour in vain that build it."*

KEEPING FAMILY WORSHIP

(III)

In the 16th Century, there was a revival of the fundamental faith of the Christian religion. Part of that revival resulted in a revival in the home. It caused the Christians then to pen their commitments: 'To reform our families, engaging ourselves to a conscientious care to set before us and to maintain the worship of God in them; and to walk in our houses with perfect hearts in a faithful discharge of all domestic duties, educating, instructing, and charging our children and households to keep the ways of the Lord.'

How badly we need such a revival and commitment in our homes today! As goes the home, so goes the church, and so goes the nation. Family worship is that which keeps the home intact for the Lord. How many homes have been broken already? I am not talking about non-Christian homes, but Christian homes. It is sad when a marriage or a family that is built on Christ ends up in separation or is broken up.

Having family worship might help to prevent a home from breaking up since its purpose is to strengthen the home in the right and biblical perspective. The fruit may not be immediately obtained. It requires long, persistent and regular time of family worship in order to bear much good fruits. It is more than just praying together as a family. It is more than your daily quiet-time. It is the most blessed time when the family comes together to meet before God for a time of worship that consists of prayer, reading of the Word, sharing of God's blessing and praising God in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

THOUGHT: What happens if the wife is spiritually more mature than the husband?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be more forbearing towards my loved ones and teach me how I can minister to them.

MONDAY, AUGUST 4

GENESIS 8:20-9:19

PSALM 128:1-6

“Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.”

KEEPING FAMILY WORSHIP

(IV)

I hope by now you are convinced that a Christian home cannot do without family worship. But who is supposed to take the lead? Our God is a God of order and peace. He deals with the human race through the covenant, headship, what we call the representation principle. In daily life, parents represent children, husband represents his wife, church leaders represent church members, etc.

This principle of representation surfaces everywhere in the Bible. We see the examples of Noah and Job offering sacrifices on their children’s behalf. We see the examples of Moses and Aaron, representing God’s children to speak to Pharaoh. God organized the human race through families and tribes, and dealt largely with them through the headship of the father.

The book of Numbers tells us that during the Exodus, God commanded the father to lead the family in Passover worship and to instruct his children in all its meaning. The father’s leadership role in worship continued throughout the monarchy in Israel from Old Testament to New Testament times under Roman power.

So to all who are Christian husbands and fathers, are you assuming this important role in your own home?

THOUGHT: Will a Christian family enjoy true happiness when they do not have regular Family Worship?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to be a blessing (and not a burden) at home.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5

PSALM 132:1-18

PROVERBS 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go.”

KEEPING FAMILY WORSHIP

(V)

How should we go about our family worship? There are three main activities that are highly recommended: 1) reading of the Word, 2) prayer, and 3) singing. Family worship is no worship without the reading of God’s Word. You may use any good guide such as RPG or Spurgeon’s Morning and Evening, but they must never replace the Bible. It is also good to memorise a verse together.

Prayer is another important aspect in family worship. It is the life of family worship. Get every member to take turns to pray (including the youngest so long as he is able to speak). This is one good way to teach him and every member to grow in his relationship with the living God.

The last aspect is singing. Music is next to theology, Martin Luther says. Singing adds even more life to family worship. Choose a chorus or a meaningful hymn to complement the reading of the Scripture.

Let family worship be short, savoury, simple, tender and heavenly. Family worship does not have to be long. Quality is more important than quantity. If it is too long, it may cause restlessness and a wandering off of the mind. A 20-minute family worship is recommended. 5 minutes for reading, 5 minutes for singing, 5 minutes for sharing and the last 5 minutes for praying. As the Spirit leads, don’t worry if it exceeds 20 minutes. Just be sensitive and make sure every one enjoys the worship time together.

THOUGHT: Every one’s daily schedule is different and irregular. How should my family come together for family worship?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to give You first place in all that I do, including Family Worship.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

“We wrestle ... against principalities ... powers ... the rulers of the darkness of this world.”

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE (I)

Serving the Lord is no easy task. Having “survived” the tough theological training in the Far Eastern Bible College, I entered the Christian ministry with much fire and enthusiasm, without any idea at all of how difficult the full-time ministry can be.

There were times when people poured out their sorrows and problems uncontrollably. Though equipped with all the relevant Bible verses ready to do the healing work, I felt so helpless and useless. Maybe I should give up? Maybe I should go to another place to serve? These thoughts lingered in my mind. I was reminded again that it is a spiritual warfare. The adversary, the roaring lion, is prowling around me, seeking to tear me apart! Just when the thought of giving up crossed my mind, I was reminded of 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, “*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*”

There is every reason for us to glory and rejoice, because we are children of God, serving our Lord and Master. But “something” seems to be preventing or disturbing us. This “something” may be a person, a weakness, or a problem that constantly causes us to be unfruitful. Paul also has “something” that disturbed him: a “*thorn*” in his flesh. He has a physical discomfort that is so terrible that he asked the Lord three times to remove it. Have you also prayed for a “*thorn*” to be removed from your life?

THOUGHT: Oftentimes I am disturbed by the “thorns” in my flesh. What if I am the “thorn” in somebody’s flesh?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be a blessing and not a stumbling block to others.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7
2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10
ROMANS 7:14-25

“But I am carnal, sold under sin.”

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE (II)

What happens when God does not remove the thorn in your flesh? Do you then decide that you want to stop serving Him? Paul did not do that. What was his attitude? He said *“... Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”*

Paul was not deceiving himself, pretending to be more godly or spiritual. Neither was he paying lip service or making sweeping statements to make himself feel better. Paul was a very down-to-earth person. He did not pretend that there was no problem. He did not laugh when he ought to be crying. This is because he knew the Master whom he served.

Unkind words from men did not matter to him. People may doubt his apostleship, people may attack his integrity and character. If Paul took to heart what people had say or done to him, he would have given up a long time ago. But he cared only what his Master would say to him. *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* These few words are enough! Need I say more? The words of Jesus are enough for us to press on in our service, no matter how difficult it may be, no matter how frustrated and disappointed we may be.

Remember: God’s grace is sufficient for us in every problem and in every situation that we are in. May the Lord help us.

THOUGHT: If God’s grace is sufficient, how is it that some Christians still contemplate suicide?
PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your amazing grace that is sufficient to carry me through every single trial, no matter how difficult it may be.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8

JOSHUA 1:4-9

ISAIAH 55:1-13

*“So shall my word be that goeth forth
out of my mouth: it shall not return
unto me void.”*

WHY CHRISTIANS MUST MEDITATE (I)

Think about the last Quiet-Time you had. Do you still remember? Was it meaningful? Do you remember what you prayed about? Do you remember the Bible verse or passage you have read and the lessons learnt? If you can't remember, is it because you were distracted during your Quiet-Time? Just as we need to keep our eyes on the road and our minds on driving at all times while driving, have we kept our eyes and minds upon God and spiritual things when we do our QT? Or are we easily distracted? Dear friends, if we are easily distracted and unable to remember a single thing about our last QT, it is time for us to do something about it. One of the things we can do is biblical meditation.

Biblical meditation means reflective thinking on biblical truths which God speaks to us through His Word and through the thoughts that come to our mind as we reflect on the Word. While New Age teaching aims to empty the mind, biblical meditation, however, is an attempt to empty the mind of the wrong things in order to fill it with what is right and true according to the forever inspired and preserved Word of God.

Our Christian life is not to be lived out based on our thinking or our own ways. It must be all God's thinking and all His ways (Isa 55:8-9). This is exactly the goal of biblical meditation: to fill our mind with God, His works and words so that our lives can be transformed to live for Him successfully and victoriously. God revealed this secret to Joshua in Joshua 1:8 and to us as well. Will you take heed?

THOUGHT: Can the listening of instrumental Christian hymns be included as part of meditation?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to hide Your Word in my heart so that I might not sin against You.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9

JOSHUA 1:4-9

JAMES 1:19-25

*“Don’t be a forgetful hearer
but a doer of the work.”*

WHY CHRISTIANS MUST MEDITATE (II)

God promised Joshua good success as part of the fruit of his meditation on the Word. This has nothing to do with the prosperity mentality of positive thinking or the New Age claim that one is able to control one’s destiny through meditation. Success, according to the Bible, is when one experiences God’s provision and deliverance from the spiritual darkness of the world as a result of obedient and godly living. What biblical meditation does is not to help us shy away from trials and difficulties, but to help us go through every trial, challenge or difficulty by God’s way. Every trial, challenge or difficulty happens for a purpose and it is the design of the Lord to make us stronger spiritually, and to be more dependent upon Him. How do we meditate? Remember the 3 Rs:

1. **Reading.** Careful reading is necessary if we want to understand God’s Word. We have to be mindful that God’s Word is not an ordinary book. It is not a novel or a history book. It is God’s Book, a long letter to us from heaven.

2. **Reflecting.** Reflecting is the mind and heart at work: thinking over and concentrating on what the eyes have seen in the Word. Reflecting is more than just remembering or memorising. To reflect is to expect God to teach or show us more deeply His perfect revealed will.

3. **Responding.** The purpose of reading and reflecting is responding. It is to apply the Scripture to our own lives. Through biblical meditation, we personalize the truth so as to apply it into our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* There is always application for us from every truth of God’s Word.

THOUGHT: Faith without works is dead. Works without faith is also meaningless. Let us examine ourselves and make sure our faith produces good works.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, increase my faith that I may serve You more and more.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 10

LUKE 7:19-23

GENESIS 50:14-22

*"Ye thought evil against me,
but God meant it unto good."*

WHEN LIFE IS JUST NOT FAIR (I)

Being locked up in prison, John the Baptist became increasingly perplexed by the reports he heard of Jesus' ministry because it was not what he had expected the Messiah to do. Like John, we sometimes expect God to do certain things in certain ways. And if He does not, we think God has failed us. Such expectations cover a variety of situations — from God helping us to get a certain job, to God healing us of a complicated medical condition, to our expectations that the Christian life will be free of problems or at least not so problematic.

When we do not get what we expect, we say "God, this is not fair. You are not treating me right." Even a man as great as John the Baptist wrestled with confusion about whether or not God was treating him right. Not only was he perplexed by what Jesus was doing, he was even more perplexed by what He was not doing. Why was Jesus helping others and yet left him to rot in a dark and miserable dungeon? After all, he was the one who had announced to the world that Jesus was indeed "*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). He had been faithful in the ministry given to him, and so how can God allow him to remain in prison? This is certainly the darkest day in the life of John the Baptist.

However, John did not raise a fist of victory at the face of death; he raised only a question. His final act was not a proclamation of courage but a confession of doubt and fear. He bid his disciples: "Find out if Jesus is the Son of God or not." The forerunner of the Messiah was beginning to doubt. In John's case, his doubt was not born of wilful unbelief but of doubt that was fed by physical strain and emotional turmoil. John sincerely wanted to know the truth.

THOUGHT: When an unbeliever despairs, his hope is gone. When a believer despairs, his hope is in God.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to acknowledge that You are always fair.

MONDAY, AUGUST 11

LUKE 7:19-23

JOHN 14:1-6, 27

*“Peace I leave with you, let
not your heart be troubled.”*

WHEN LIFE IS JUST NOT FAIR (II)

Jesus' actions answered John's questions. The disciples were to simply rehearse what they have seen or heard Jesus did. John was to do what every saint must do today: compare the prophecies of the OT with the deeds and declarations of Jesus. Jesus pointed to His deeds and to the scriptures that speak of those deeds. The words that Jesus spoke alluded to the words of the prophet Isaiah (26:19, 29:18, 35:5, 61:1). He asked John to examine the evidence. The application for us today is clear. Examine the evidence: if Jesus is truly the Son of God, if He alone fulfills the prophecies of scripture, if He indeed has died, was buried and rose again, then we must believe and stand by it.

“Blessed are those like Job, who suffered, yet stay faithful. Blessed are those like Joseph, who endured unjust treatment, yet refuse to live in bitterness. Blessed are all those who can live with unanswered questions, and who can wait patiently for God to reveal what they can't see.”

When life is just not fair, let us believe in our hearts that God is always fair. He may not take away our present mess and danger, but He promised that He would walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death. When life is just not fair, let us thank God because He will be there for and with us. Let us not be discouraged. God knows what is best for us. John revealed his expectation of what Christ ought to do. But Christ showed John what God has done and will do. It is God's way, not man's way. Going our own way is the way to destruction. It is safer and better to go God's way. When life is just not fair, go God's way and keep walking that way.

THOUGHT: If God is fair, why does He allow His children to suffer?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me always to remember that life on earth is only temporal and look forward to life in heaven which is eternal.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 12

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

JOHN 8:23-47

*“He that is of God
heareth God’s words.”*

IS SINCERITY ALONE ENOUGH?

‘It does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere about it.’ Have you ever heard this before? Why would people make such a statement? Generally, most people see the value of harmony, peace and unity. It is the same in religion. They tell you, ‘You believe what you want and I believe what I want. Let us not quarrel about it. Let us not bring up the differences but similarities so that we can work together hand in hand. Anyway, it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere about it.’ How do we respond to such ‘nice, peaceable and friendly’ words? To go against this statement seems to ‘rock the boat’ and invite trouble, isn’t it? Is sincerity alone enough?

Have you ever been sincere about an answer during an exam but then realized that you were sincerely wrong? Dear friends, you can sincerely believe with all your heart that $2 + 2 = 5$, but it will not change the fact that $2 + 2$ will always be equal to 4.

There was a fire that took the lives of a pair of siblings. When they first detected the fire, they ran for their lives. Were they not sincere enough about the way to safety? But they were sincerely wrong and paid for their mistake with their lives. Sincerity is good, but it is not enough! Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:8, *“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* Sincerity and truth go hand in hand. It is important for us to seek to be sincerely right. There can be no true sincerity without the truth. Let us then seek to be sincere but make sure that our sincerity is founded upon the truth. May God help us.

THOUGHT: Sincerity may touch a million hearts. But with truth, it changes them!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to reach others with sincerity and truth.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-6

PSALM 119:73-80

*“I pray thee, thy merciful
kindness be for my comfort.”*

HE IS THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT (I)

Out of all the churches which Apostle Paul had ever ministered, the Corinthian church was the most problematic. But Paul did not give up on her. He knew the Corinthian believers needed God and that they needed to be assured of Him who is the God of all comfort. From these four verses alone, the root word for ‘comfort’ or ‘consolation’ (Greek: *parakaleo*) appears 9 times! This shows the emphasis that indeed our God is the God of all comfort. He assures us by His comforting promise that He will always be present to help us whenever we face sufferings, troubles and tribulations. The Greek word for ‘comfort’ literally means ‘to call alongside.’ It describes the power of God to strengthen, encourage, and assure you that you need not fear at all though you may be walking through the valley of the shadow of death because He who called you into suffering is also walking alongside you! Do you know Him who comforts?

God the Father Comforts

In verse 4, God the Father is described as the One “*who comforteth us.*” The word “*comforteth*” (Greek: *parakalon*) is a participle used as a substantive. It is written in the present tense and active voice, indicating an ongoing or characteristic activity. Simply, it means that God continues to care for us and to comfort us wherever we may be. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is also the Father of mercies. He is One who has compassion upon His children. What was Paul’s secret to victory when he went through great trials and temptations? His secret is his trust in God who has mercy upon him. Without the mercy of God, he could not have made it to the end. He could not have been faithful and true to his calling as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is God your Father? If so, His mercy is upon you!

THOUGHT: Sometimes we are overwhelmed by the loss of a loved one and refused to be comforted. May this be a reminder for us to let God comfort us.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, may Your merciful kindness be for my comfort.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14

JOHN 14:10-21

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-17

*“God hath given us everalasting
consolation and good hope through
grace.”*

HE IS THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT (II)

God the Son Comforts

After being called to be the minister of the gospel, Apostle Paul went through many tremendous persecutions and much suffering for the sake of the gospel. Yet he was able to find comfort under such situations. The source of his comfort is God. Paul knew that his Lord, Jesus Christ Himself, had gone through all the hard times and troubles when He was on this earth. Since Jesus had experienced trials and temptations while He was on earth, surely He is able to identify with and feel for those who are going through difficult times for the sake of the gospel. In John 14:16, we know that Christ Himself can comfort. He had gone through the worst kind of sufferings for us, therefore He is able to comfort us and give us sufficient grace to go through our difficulties (see Hebrews 4:15,16). Jesus Christ can comfort all Christians throughout the ages.

God the Holy Spirit Comforts

All the occurrences of the word “*comforter*” in the New Testament refer to the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself has named the third person of the Holy Trinity as the Comforter (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Indeed the Comforter sent by God the Father in the name of God the Son, has come and is now indwelling us, empowering and strengthening us to run the Christian race victoriously. The biblical term for such empowering is the filling of the Holy Spirit. With this divine filling, indeed “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Phil 4:13).

God is such a wonderful Comforter. Surely He is to be blessed above all the earth. Blessed be God the Comforter!

THOUGHT: Whom have I but You?
*“It is better to trust in the LORD
than to put confidence in man”* (Ps
118:8).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank
You for Your comfort.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15

PSALM 119:49-56

ROMANS 8:18-28

“Present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with future glory.”

HOW BELIEVERS ARE COMFORTED

Through God’s Word

We are comforted by God’s precious Word in all our tribulations. The Psalmist has these words for us, *“Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself”* (Ps 119:49-52). A Christian finds great comfort by spending time reading and meditating on God’s Word. God’s Word is the best cure for our troubled and restless soul. It is through God’s Word that we receive the knowledge of all His precious promises. If we neglect His Word, we are depriving ourselves of the comfort that God is ever ready to grant unto us.

Through God’s Work

Sometimes our comfort comes in knowing that God is at work in our lives. One has written, *“A saint’s life is in the hands of God as a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see. He stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says, ‘I cannot stand it any more!’ But God does not heed. He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, then He lets fly.”* Romans 8:28 is the perfect verse for us: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* The more we are tried, the more we are comforted since we know God has the best interest for us. May the God of all comfort be our comfort today.

THOUGHT: Is there any problem too big that God cannot solve? Is there any sorrow too deep that God cannot comfort? Absolutely not!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for the comfort that You have given me.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 16

GENESIS 3:1-6

1TIMOTHY 6:6-12

*“Godliness with contentment
is great gain.”*

WHAT! DEPRIVED IN PARADISE? (I)

Eve had it all, but there was something troubling her. There was this forbidden tree whose fruit she was not allowed to eat. It grew right in the midst of paradise. God saw that everything was good but Eve lost sight of everything that was good. She focused on this one tree and its fruit. She focused on what she was deprived of.

The devil, in the form of a serpent, gave a little twist to God’s Word while retaining some truth. This produced a most lethal poison that the woman was soon to partake. Eve allowed herself to view the situation not with God’s words but with the words of Satan. Satan’s words became the yardstick and she immediately applied it. She was convinced by what she saw (Gen 3:6) and the rest is history.

Our world today tells us that we can have it all. Advertisers play the devil’s advocate and convince us that we need it all, going for the latest IT gadget, latest fashion and design, fully automated cars, etc. They suggest that life cannot be experienced fully without having it all. The sad part about all this is that when we are kept from having it all, we concentrate on what we are deprived of instead of being contented with what God has blessed us with. We begin to stop enjoying what we have. What is forbidden or denied becomes the focus of our lives. Just as Satan stepped in and told Eve that she can have it all, Satan is today urging us to forget the many blessings we have received and to concentrate on what we are deprived of. Are you thinking of those things which you are deprived of right now?

THOUGHT: To forsake God for the world is a sure-doomed destruction and a hopeless investment.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to forsake the world and follow You.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 17

GENESIS 3:1-6

1 JOHN 2:15-17

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

WHAT! DEPRIVED IN PARADISE? (II)

Eve began to reason why she should have it all: the fruit of the forbidden tree looks good, and it would wise her up. It is also right in front of her and within reach, why not? So Eve began to feel deprived in a land of plenty. Remember she and Adam had the whole Garden except this one tree? What happened?

It is really hard to imagine being deprived living in paradise, isn't it? We find ourselves repeating the sin of Adam and Eve. We experience the same frustration afresh in our lives every day as our flesh, our eyes and our minds cry out for the things that we do not have. How come I don't have what others have? If others can have it, I must have it too, and it must be better than theirs! If we can't have it, we feel somewhat deprived. Often we take matters into our own hands and we try to rationalize in our minds why we should have it all. We say to ourselves: 'See, it looks good, tastes good, feels good and after all it would enhance my self-image. So, why not? I am sure God will understand!'

So we start working towards obtaining those things that we are deprived of. The world is encouraging us not to consider the cost or the consequences of indulging ourselves with just one more thing. Perhaps it is just a struggle between our needs and our wants. How about making all our wants to become our needs? After all we can just 'charge it to MASTERCARD'!

We can live in a land of plenty yet still create a world in our hearts and minds where we feel deprived. We allow our lives to be shaped by worldliness. The world has too easily captivated our minds. As a result we become blinded and paralyzed by the things that we do not have.

THOUGHT: *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt 16:26).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, save my soul from the perishing world.

MONDAY, AUGUST 18

GENESIS 3:1-6

LUKE 9:57-62

*“Lord, I will follow Thee
whithersoever thou goest.”*

WHAT! DEPRIVED IN PARADISE? (III)

Eve could have focused on what she had instead of what she did not have. When we focus our attention on what we don't have, our world becomes a world of deprivation. We are then no different from Eve living in the land of plenty and wishing to have it better. That is probably how most of us are living our lives! We create a world of deprivation by our thoughts, beliefs and attitudes.

God came to the Garden asking, *“Where art thou?”* As a result of his sin, man is separated from God. God's gracious hand of judgment drove Adam and Eve from the Garden causing them to earn their living by the sweat of their brow, to have painful labor in childbirth and the ground was cursed. We live with the pain of that judgment every day. God's question is still ringing out to us today: *“Where art thou?”* Are you feeling deprived living in spiritual Eden? Are you still focusing on what you want and what you lack? And have lost sight of what God has provided?

Dearly beloved, the gracious hand of God comes to bring us to our knees in order that we might look up and see the wonderful Creator. In Him we have it all. A better world for you begins when you focus on God. Do not focus on what you lack but what you have! It is within your power to refocus your life today. It is your choice. You have the same choice that was given to Adam and Eve. You can choose to dwell on what is lacking. Or you can focus on what God has given. Let us crucify self and bury that old greedy sinful nature. Let us rise to refocus our life on Christ. The choice is ours. May God help us to make the right choice.

THOUGHT: If Adam and Eve were to exercise godliness with contentment, sin could not have entered into the world.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to be thankful and appreciative for what You have already blessed me with.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 19

ISAIAH 55:1-13

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

“In everything by prayer.”

FAIL TO PRAY, PLAN TO FAIL (I)

Does prayer work? Is anything going to change because we got on our knees and engage that only channel to God? If God is sovereign and everything has already been planned and determined by Him, why bother to pray? I believe every Christian struggles with some of these questions at some point in time.

Our relationship with God will never rise higher than our prayer life. Think about this. If you say you are walking close with God but pray little, you are deceiving yourself. If you say your spiritual life is ok, not bad, but you hardly pray, you are fooling yourself.

In the battle field, communication is extremely important. Every platoon/team must have a signaler in order to communicate with the commander from the base. Without a signaler, there is no way the platoon leader is going to move forward or to retreat. Because there is no instruction or order or command given. He and all his men will be stuck. Oftentimes the enemy will try to cut off your communication line so that you will become isolated, helpless and alone.

For us Christians, prayer is our line of communication with our Commander-in-Chief who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, our Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ. He knows our situation better than we do. He also knows all the moves and steps of the enemy. Can you find any good excuse not to pray to Him? If the enemy can prevent us or distract us from praying, he has got what he wanted. We have become isolated, helpless and alone, with only our own resources, and worse still, we are completely at his mercy.

THOUGHT: The divine hotline: *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”* (Jer 33:3).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for this wonderful privilege of prayer before Your throne of grace.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20

MATTHEW 6:5-15

JAMES 4:2-3

*“Ye ask and receive not,
because ye ask amiss.”*

FAIL TO PRAY, PLAN TO FAIL (II)

God does not want us to fight the spiritual battle with only our own resources because by themselves they are of no use in the spiritual battle. 2 Corinthians 10:4 tells us, *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”* If we are not constantly in touch with God, what are we using to fight? Our resources? Our limited strength? Oh, may the God of spiritual warfare help us. Our enemy, the devil, is very concerned to keep us involved in any other thing, as long as we keep away from that ultimate source of power, PRAYER.

Why are you not praying? Why are you not at Church Prayer Meeting? Is it because you choose to work late in order to earn more money? Is it because you choose to satisfy your flesh by watching your favourite TV program? If so, you have given in to the wicked plan of Satan to keep you away from your only source of power. Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees in prayer.

Every child of God must make prayer a priority in his life. He prays with power when he prays in the Spirit. And do not just stop there. Keep persevering in prayer. Fail to pray, plan to fail. May God help us to be His faithful prayer warriors.

THOUGHT: Prayer reveals not only our total dependency upon God, but also our humility to admit our total dependency upon Him.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me not to neglect this wonderful privilege of prayer before Your throne of grace.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21

PSALM 46:1-11

JAMES 1:19

*“Be still and know that
I am God.”*

TAKE TIME TO LISTEN

To listen is one important aspect of communication. I cannot agree more with this since the day I entered into the full-time ministry in 2001. A few times, people came up to me and began telling me their problems in great detail. They just went on and on. I tried to ‘cut’ in to give them my advice, but I could not. I thought to myself, ‘I have a wonderful piece of advice. I have an appropriate Scripture verse / passage for you. I know exactly the solution to help you overcome your struggles.’ But the problem was: I just simply could not get through. So I kept listening, waiting perhaps for an opportunity to say something. But it never came. Finally, they finished sharing and thanked me for listening to them. I realized then that that was what they needed from me: a listening ear.

“Swift to hear ...” (James 1:19) is what James told us to do. If only we will just take time to listen to what people have to say, we may help begin a healing process in their lives. There are far too many of us who are quick to speak. But if everybody speaks, who will listen? We need to learn to be better listeners. Most people know the solutions to their problems but they have no one to share with. In the end, they allow their problems to be bottled up within themselves until one day they break down or they explode! When that happens, withdrawal from fellowship or depression may result. The best thing we can do to help them is to offer our listening ears, be *“swift to hear.”* Do not be too quick to speak and give our opinions. God wants us to be *“swift to hear,”* to make time for people around us, to listen to them with our hearts, and to show them that we really care through our listening. May God help us.

THOUGHT: A good communicator is more than a good speaker, he is a good listener.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be swift to hear and slow to speak.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 22

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-50

PSALM 23:4

*“The first man is of the earth, earthy:
The second man is the Lord from
heaven.”*

WHAT SICKNESS CANNOT DO! (I)

Sickness is part and parcel of life so long as we are ‘wrapped up’ in this corruptible body of ours. Sickness does not wait to be invited before it invades our bodies. It just comes. Falling sick is a growing problem among all people: adults and children, Christians and non-Christians. Some sicknesses are curable while some are not. Nonetheless we have the experiential knowledge (in various degrees) of the pain and discomfort a person has to go through when he is sick whether it is a mild flu or a terminal illness like cancer. However, we also know there is a significant difference between one who knows for sure he will recover because he is just suffering from a minor sickness (eg: a running nose), and one who is given only less than a month to live because he is diagnosed to be at the last stage of cancer.

How can we encourage those who know they have not much time left on earth? As much as we know full well that our only comfort and relief is to look to God and His precious promises found in His Word, it is a very real fear as well as a great challenge to deal with. A Christian can face sickness with a different outlook and attitude from a non-Christian who is not in touch with the living and true God.

We have the great assurance that God is with us and His precious promises can never be taken away from us when we are battling with our sickness. Psalm 23:4, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”*

THOUGHT: The perception of sickness according to some unbelievers: ‘If there is hope, I go to see a doctor. If there is no hope, I go to see a pastor.’

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me always to trust in You whether in sickness or in good health.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23
2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-18
PSALM 23:3

*“Our light affliction, which is
but for a moment.”*

WHAT SICKNESS CANNOT DO! (II)

1) Sickness can never destroy your soul

Sickness may destroy your physical body but not your soul. 2 Corinthians 4:16, *“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”*

“Day by day” our inward man is renewed through the Lord’s inner presence and His work of grace. While we grow weaker physically, spiritually we can experience the inward renewing, renovation and growth of our soul. Great as may be the physical body in its vigor, yet it must decay and die eventually.

The second law of thermodynamics is the rule of the game as far as our physical body is concerned. No amount of botox or the latest gold facial mask and advance plastic surgery can reverse or cover up the ageing process. Death is the unfailing evidence. Our body cannot stand forever under the trials of life such as diseases and sicknesses, and will soon lie in the grave one day.

But our soul is different. It is not governed by the second law of thermodynamics. It is in a prosperous condition because it is the Lord who gives life to it. No wonder David testifies, *“He restoreth my soul”* (Ps 23:3). What a marvelous promise and ever-present reality this can be in our lives today. Day by day we can experience this inward renewing of our soul. Our spiritual life can continue to blossom like a rose because of the Lord’s inner work of grace upon our heart.

THOUGHT: Since the body is corrupt, why are we not encouraged to cremate the dead body?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me look forward to the glorious body which You have promised.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 24

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-30

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-58

*"The corruptible shall put on
incorruption."*

WHAT SICKNESS CANNOT DO! (III)

2) Sickness Cannot Stop You from Giving Thanks

You may think that it is impossible to be thankful for the sickness which has invaded your body. But oftentimes, it is sickness that causes us to stop all that we are doing and reflect upon our life journey. We begin to recount how much time we have wasted on unnecessary things. We also begin to count the loss of those things which we ought to be doing. And we tell ourselves, should we recover from this sickness, we are going to make life count like never before. We are going to do that which we ought to be doing.

On a positive note, ought we not to give thanks for sickness instead? Let us always be thankful to the Lord and rejoice in the wonderful life and presence of the Lord. You can always show gratitude for the wonderful things that He has done throughout your life even as you pass through the deep valley of sickness with its related pain and treatments. In the midst of the storm there can be a song of thanksgiving and worship. After all, we are to rejoice in the Lord and the beauty of His presence. Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, *"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."*

We may find it difficult to rejoice under trying circumstances, but by remembering the beauty and wonder of God's person and the blessings of peace, joy and patience that He provides because we are His beloved children gives us every reason to rejoice in the Lord. There can be a song of worship and thanksgiving in our heart even in the midst of the storm. This is because the Christian finds thanksgiving, joy and a worshipful heart, not in the absence of pain and difficulty, but in the presence of our loving God.

THOUGHT: Don't wait for trials to fall upon you before you realize you are far from God. Examine yourselves now!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, draw me closer to You always and keep me by Your side.

MONDAY, AUGUST 25

JOB 1:6-22

JOHN 15:1-8

*“Blessed be the name
of the LORD.”*

WHAT SICKNESS CANNOT DO! (IV)

3) Sickness Cannot Stop Your Christian Growth

Trials such as sicknesses should not cause us to become bitter, but better. Job recognized that even in the midst of great loss and affliction, God was in full control. Through the sovereign fiery trial of God, Job emerged a better and stronger child of God. He has grown in his walk with the Lord. We must remember that God did not promise to change the circumstances, but He did promise to go through them with us! He desires us to continually grow in our Christian walk into the likeness of His Son.

As you trust in God in your sickness, you will also bear spiritual fruits in your life. In fact, suffering leads to greater fruits and growth when you learn to give thanks for the sufferings as part of God’s sovereign purpose for your lives. It should help strengthen your faith and increase your love, joy, peace, patience and many other Christian virtues. You are purged or pruned by God’s sovereign acts of suffering so that you might grow and bear “*fruit*” (John 15:2), “*more fruit*” (John 15:2) and “*much fruit*” (John 15:5).

Sickness may stop your physical body from functioning normally, but you can be sure that this disease cannot stop the spiritual fruit from blooming in your life. Sickness cannot stop your spiritual growth. Let us take heart and realize that the presence of trials, such as sickness, should cause us to grow more and bear much fruit in our life. Let us thank God that spiritual growth can flow out of our suffering.

THOUGHT: To the question, “*Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*” (John 9:2-3). Even sickness can be used to glorify God.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to glorify You even when I am sick.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26

LUKE 15:3-10

2 TIMOTHY 4:2-5

“There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repenteth.”

WITNESS FOR CHRIST (I)

Do you hesitate to share the gospel because you think the person simply would not be interested? Or have you been slow to share your faith because you feel that you lack the gift of witnessing? These are some emotions which every Christian has felt at one time or another. There are five compelling reasons which may help Christians to witness boldly with the right attitude:

1) Christ has given a clear command to every Christian to witness for Him. Mark 16:15 says, “... *preach the gospel to every creature.*” We should not pick and choose which of God’s commands to follow. Moreover, besides sound and faithful preaching of God’s Word, evangelism is also the church’s primary mission. ‘Without evangelism, the church will die a natural death.’

2) All are lost without Jesus Christ. Christ is the only way to bridge the gap between man and God (1 Tim 2:5; John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Without Him, people cannot know God, and have no hope of eternal life.

3) All are truly hungry for the gospel. Although people tend to reject the message of salvation whenever we share with them, in actual fact they need the gospel even more. Jesus says “*the harvest truly is great...*” (Lk 10:2). This implies that there are many more out there hungry for the gospel. Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for reaping. Can we afford to be selfish with the gospel when there is overwhelming evidence that the people are hungry for the gospel? Indeed “*look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest*” (John 4:35).

THOUGHT: The primary role of every church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. But today, many churches have changed that focus to community services. As a result, they preach a social gospel.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me not to lose focus but to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ faithfully and truthfully.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27

JOHN 3:11-21

ACTS 16:25-34

“Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

WITNESS FOR CHRIST (II)

4) We carry the good news in our hands. Do we keep the good stuff to ourselves and leave others to perish? Christ is the greatest gift that man can ever receive. He has saved us: died on the cross, was buried in the grave and rose again from the dead on the third day. We have a living Saviour who has forever secured our everlasting abode in heaven. This precious gift is available to all who receive Him as their Lord and Saviour. Since this gift is freely given to us, why do we hesitate to share this good news? (John 1:12; John 3:16; Colossians 1:13-14).

5) The love of God constraints us to share the gospel. We share the gospel because we love Christ. We share the gospel because Christ loves us. We share the gospel because we want to honour and obey Him. We share the gospel because He gives us a special love for others.

These 5 reasons should help us witness for Christ boldly with the right attitude. We have a ringing command from our Lord to share the gospel. Sinful men are lost without Him. Indeed they are hungry for the good news, and every Christian has in his possession the good news of salvation. God's love and our love for Him should compel us to obey Him as He leads us into sharing opportunities each day. Let us always be ready to share the good news. May God help us.

THOUGHT: People need the Lord. But someone must go and tell them, and show them the Lord who saves. Will I go?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, here I am, I have heard Your call, send me.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-27

1 SAMUEL 8:1-9

*“They have not rejected thee,
but they have rejected me.”*

FEAR OF REJECTION IN WITNESSING

One of the greatest fears in evangelism is rejection. Fear of rejection can greatly hinder the work of a faithful witness, for none of us likes to be turned down. We tend to take it personally, regarding the rejection as a rejection of our person. It does hurt when we are being turned down. It hurts even more when we have shown our genuine love but are rejected point-blank. It has been said: “They are rejecting Christ, not you!”

Even our Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry faced rejection most of the time. Despite these rejections, He continued to preach and teach the people the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus obeyed whatever His heavenly Father has commissioned Him, and He did it faithfully to the end. We, too, need to obey Him and continue to share the gospel faithfully.

The only failure in evangelism is the failure to evangelize. When we refuse to witness, we fail God. Whether the person receives Christ or not, we have no power over that. That work belongs solely to the Holy Spirit. We are only required to share the gospel faithfully. Initial rejection is often used by God later to bring the sinner to Himself. So let us not give up this responsibility of sharing. Having tasted the goodness of God and enjoyed the abundant life in Him, should we not share with others who are still in sin and darkness? Are you willing to bring a tract to someone who has not yet believed in Jesus, and share with him the great joy of salvation? Right where we are, we can pray, we can give and we can go. We pray often; we give often; but who is willing to go and bring the good news to the many lost souls out there? Will you go for the LORD? *“... Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Cor 9:16b).

THOUGHT: As salvation is of the LORD, those whom God has elected to save will not have the ultimate power not to receive His salvation.
PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for saving my soul. May You be pleased to use me as Your witness to those around me.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29

ROMANS 10:8-15

EZEKIEL 33:1-13

*“Turn ye from your evil ways,
for why will ye die?”*

THE FEET THAT ARE BEAUTIFUL

The beauty of the feet is spiritual rather than physical according to Romans 10:14-15. But why is “*the feet*” that go to preach the gospel called beautiful? Why not the mouth, hands or other parts of the body? Why “*the feet*”? It has nothing to do with our physical feet. I believe the reason the feet is used is because it symbolized walking. It speaks of those who go and preach the gospel of peace according to verse 15. However, it means more than just that. It speaks of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus and have called upon the Name of the Lord and whose lives have changed forever.

Have you truly believed on the Lord Jesus and called upon His Name? If not, even if you really go and preach the gospel of peace, what are you? What do you have? Beautiful feet? Far from it! It is only beautiful when you yourself have received the gospel of peace. It is only beautiful when you have received the glad tidings of good things yourself. God does not force people to go and evangelise. But He will provoke them to go by His words.

You and I must be convicted that this is our responsibility. Both individually, and as a church, we are to go and preach the gospel. The opportunity is given to others when we go and tell them the gospel. If we don't even go, how can they know and believe? The hyper-Calvinists will say, ‘If God will save them, He will do it without you.’ But a Calvinist will say, ‘I go because God has called me to. Whether they believe or not is not for me to tell. I am only called to go and nothing else.’ Are you willing to go? Will our feet be beautiful? God knows best!

THOUGHT: The act of receiving and confessing Christ to be Lord and Saviour is that faith which comes from above.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, whether people believe or not, I leave it to You. Help me to bear a faithful witness to the same glorious gospel which has saved me.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 30

JAMES 1:22-27

3 JOHN 1-14

“You are deceiving yourselves if you are hearers only, and not doers.”

**BE YE DOERS, NOT
HEARERS ONLY!**

An ex-deacon once told me to my face: “What things can you tell me which I do not already know?” Immediately I replied: “What you really need is not to be told those things which you do not know but to DO those things which you already know.” This is not some wise words that came out of my finite mind. It is from God’s Word in James 1:22: *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”*

How Christian men and women need to be DOERS of the Word today. Too many have heard the teachings of Christ but are not doing them. A good and faithful preacher of the Word does not yearn to hear compliments from you: “Oh, what a wonderful sermon you have preached!” but how your life has been transformed by the Word of God which he preached. Apostle John wrote: *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* (3 John 4).

We, who have been born again and cleansed by the precious blood of our Risen Saviour Jesus Christ, how can we not walk according to His Word? How can we hear His Word and then walk away and do nothing? God forbid! It is high time that we wake up out of our “slumber land” and be doers of the Word today.

Let us make sure that we do what the Lord wants before His watchful eyes. He wants us to be doers, and not hearers of His Word only. God promised that if you are not a forgetful hearer but a doer, you shall be blessed in your deed (Jas 1:25). Do you believe? Will you do it? Let us always remember that we are God’s children, and not the devil’s anymore. And because we are God’s children, let us behave as one by being doers of the Word and not hearers only.

THOUGHT: Today, church goers prefer to be sermon critics rather than be critiqued by the sermon.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me learn at least one lesson each time I hear the faithful preaching of Your Word.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 31

JOHN 18:33-38

JOHN 8:31-47

*"Whosoever committeth sin
is the servant of sin."*

ARE YOU TRAPPED OR FREE?

Before Jesus was led to the cross, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus if He was indeed a king to which Jesus replied, *"Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"* (John 18:37). Then Pilate asked, *"What is truth?"* This perhaps is a question we may also have. What exactly is *"truth"*?

We live in an era where some claim that there are no absolute truths. To them, truth is that which is right in their own eyes. Each lives with his own truths. They have no absolute but varieties of truth which say 'All truth is God's truth.' This sounds very 'sound,' but unfortunately that's a blatant lie from the devil. All truth is NOT necessarily God's truth! It should be the other way and can only be that way: **GOD'S TRUTH IS ALL TRUTH!** Think about that!

In a world searching for the truth, dear friends, the truth is nearer than we think. Jesus stands with us today as the glorious King of kings and Lord of lords. He says, *"I am the way, the **TRUTH** and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me"* (John 14:6). Many are still trapped by the bondage of ignorance and sin today. Are you? Let the Truth set you free today. You may be trapped in a life of sin, but are you willing to let it go and let Jesus free you from that bondage? Will you receive the Truth today? Jesus means what He says: *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). Do you want to be free? Go to Jesus and His Truth will make you free indeed.

THOUGHT: The wickedness of the present is no different from the time of the Judges, for every man today still does that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, may Your Truth make me free today.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1
1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31
EPHESIANS 4:11-14

“Teach a just man, and he shall increase in learning.”

TEACHERS’ DAY

Today is an important day for us to remember and thank our teachers for their labour and patience with us. The most important ingredient in any teaching ministry is the **TEACHER**. In the church context, the teacher is one of the few instruments besides the Pastor, Elders and deacons whom God has chosen to proclaim His Word. Not all believers are “gifted” by the Spirit to teach God’s Word in a corporate setting. God gives believers different gifts within the body of Christ, and teaching is one of them (Eph 4:11-14).

The Christian teacher must be a Christian, one who believes and has received Jesus as his personal Saviour and Lord, and has become a follower of Christ. It is unthinkable and irresponsible of the church to allow an unbeliever to be a teacher of God’s Word in the church. How can we entrust our children’s souls to unbelievers? God forbid! The teacher at any level within the church must be a Christian and should be one who, having experienced a personal relationship with God through faith in the atoning merits of Christ the Saviour, communicates and imparts to his students that which he has learnt and experienced. The Christian teacher must not be a young convert or a novice. He is one from whom, through whom, and with whom students learn. A good Christian teacher will continue to learn with his students and seek to produce spirit-filled results in the lives of his students.

However, the Christian teacher is never a replacement of parents. Rather, the Christian teacher is a “supplement” of parents to the student in the area of Christian education. Parents are rightly ordained by God to be their children’s main “teachers.” Thank God for good Christian teachers in our churches who teach us and our children. Let us remember to pray earnestly for them. May God bless all faithful Christian teachers.

THOUGHT: If the Holy Spirit is our divine Teacher, why do we still need human teachers?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me appreciate all my teachers.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

HEBREWS 5:11-14

ROMANS 14:12-13

*“Thou shalt teach them
diligently to thy children.”*

ARE YOU CALLED TO BE A CHRISTIAN TEACHER?

The author of Hebrews wrote, *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again...”* (Hebrews 5:12). Have you been a long-time Christian? Is this verse speaking of you?

Any believer can claim to be a teacher. But it takes a high calling from God to be a good Christian teacher. The teaching ministry can be very demanding and stressful. Are you called to be a Christian teacher? One of the most outstanding failures of the New Testament Church today involves the selection and enlistment of teachers. We see so many New Testament churches infiltrated by false teachers who did much damage to the growth and unity of the church. No teacher should ever be chosen solely on the basis of seniority, personality, or popularity. These traits must never be the primary criteria for choosing teachers.

Teaching the Word of God is a serious business, and must never be taken lightly. Every teacher will one day have to give an account of both HOW and WHAT they have taught (Rom 14:12-13). No teacher should be allowed to teach without first being examined and assessed by the Pastor, Elders, or some mature leaders. The qualifications and expectations of the teacher must never be compromised and must be clearly understood by all involved, and ultimately this will provide for a more healthy and spiritual church.

Still not sure whether you are called to serve as a Christian teacher? Don't rush in. This is a serious calling. Let your church leaders know and let them pray for you. You must make sure your calling to be a Christian teacher by seeking confirmation from the Lord. May His peace that passeth all understanding guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

THOUGHT: The father is more than just a Christian teacher at home. He is also the Pastor of his own children in the family.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I want to be a good Christian teacher.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

MARK 1:21-28

ACTS 4:8-21

“... they were unlearned and ignorant men, ... that they had been with Jesus.”

JESUS OUR MASTER TEACHER (I)

Christ is the greatest Christian teacher. The earthly life of our Lord was characterised by constant teaching. Did not a Pharisee, impressed by Jesus' teaching, come to visit Him at night? From whom did he receive the great teaching of his need to be born again? Did not a Samaritan woman meet Jesus at the well? From whom did she receive the great teaching of true biblical worship? The list goes on. Jesus' entire life is a life of teaching. Everywhere He went, there was not one time that He did not teach.

A careful study of the four Gospels reveals the objectives of Jesus in His earthly ministry. His four teaching objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: To reveal God's gracious and glorious plan for all who accept Him. Jesus declared, *“...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). The life about which Jesus was concerned and of which He taught was eternal, not temporal. For Him, it was not a matter of the achievement of Christian personality but one of passing from death unto life. He never sought to impress His disciples with the benefits of earthly knowledge, culture, and personal development, but He always clearly held before their eyes the divine vision of a timeless eternity and the necessity of man's preparation to enter it. To Him, it was not a question of being educated, cultured, and refined, but of being born again as a new creature into God's eternal kingdom. The temporal life, with all its questions and interests, was so unimportant and insignificant in comparison with the eternal plan of God the Father for His children that Jesus posed the provoking questions: *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Mk 8:36-37). The soul is of incomparable value in relation to the body.

THOUGHT: If Jesus is the Master Teacher, why didn't Judas learn his lesson?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, grant me grace that I may teach Your Word faithfully.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

LUKE 5:17-32

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

**JESUS OUR MASTER
TEACHER (II)**

Objective 2: To win them to active faith in Himself as the only Saviour of sinful man, the promised Messiah, and the coming King. The offer of eternal life by God was dependent on the acceptance of His Son by faith. Jesus came into the world to die for the salvation of man (John 3:16). Jesus made this truth central in His teachings from the beginning to the end of His ministry on earth. The practical issue of all His teaching was the invitation to come to Him, to learn of Him and to follow Him. *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matt 11:28). All, from the lowest to the highest, were invited into God’s kingdom. He persuaded man by His loving appeal and His winning manner to forsake the vanity of wealth, the pomp of circumstance, and the illusion of temporal satisfaction to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, making promise after promise of what glories would be the portion of all who would receive Him as Saviour and Lord of their lives.

Objective 3: To teach the Christian way of life as opposed to a dead, dry system of theology. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is an outstanding example of the emphasis He placed upon things that are truly worthwhile. Instead of mere repetition of thought, He expounded the Scriptures with life-giving power. Instead of setting forth mere ritual and formalism, He presented God as truly pictured in the sacred text. All the time, Jesus pointed His audience to God, the Source of life and power. Small wonder that *“... the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”* (Matt 7:28-29). Every Bible lesson ought to come ‘alive’ because God’s Word is living and has the power to change lives for Jesus. A spirit-filled Christian teacher will not point others to himself but Jesus and Him alone, for He is the Source of life and power, not the teacher.

THOUGHT: Each time I open the Bible, my eyelids always seem to be so heavy. What can I do?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me enjoy every spiritual lesson from Your Word.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

MATTHEW 20:20-28

ACTS 2:22-47

*“This Jesus hath God raised up
whereof we all are witnesses.”*

JESUS OUR MASTER TEACHER (III)

Objective 4: To prepare and train His disciples to be His witnesses.

At various times, Jesus commanded His disciples to go and witness to others of the kingdom which is at hand. This is especially seen of His twelve appointed disciples. He sent them out to teach and to evangelize under His oversight after having first given them training in close association with Himself. Thus they were able to reach many people with His teaching. He educated them with the most affectionate patience, bearing with their carnal hopes and their limited understanding of His Truth. He taught them what the larger body of disciples and people in general could not perceive, thus fulfilling His objective for them to carry on His work after His departure.

In all these four objectives, Jesus had unswervingly devoted Himself to keep them. This is a source of encouragement and admonition to all Christian teachers. There is no temptation, no threat, and no appeal able to cause Him to give up on us, even for a moment. When the people would have made Him a king, He taught them to look at the eternal perspective rather than on earthly values. When one came to Jesus with a view of getting his rights and requested Him to judge in the division of an estate, Jesus told him the story of the rich fool to drive home the point that a man's life consists not in the possession of earthly things which will one day pass away. All these acts, the disciples had witnessed and understood after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Having been prepared thus, they were now ready to teach and carry out the mission that their Master Teacher has given them.

Good preparation makes a good Christian teacher. So do not ever teach if you have not prepared yourself through prayer and study of the Bible lesson.

THOUGHT: To be a Christian is to be a disciple, a witness, and a servant of Christ.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, be Thou my vision and the Lord of my heart.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

1 SAMUEL 7:1-15

HEBREWS 13:5-6

“The LORD is my Helper.”

HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US (I)

Without God helping us, what would become of us? The Lord our God is our only help. These words of God in 1 Samuel 7:12 remind us of two important points:

1. **It is we who are completely helpless.**

Chapter 7 begins by saying for twenty years the children of Israel lamented and were saddened because the Lord was not with them. For twenty long years they sought the Lord. But in these twenty years, who did they really follow? They had been worshipping the false gods of Baalim and Ashtoreth, and not the living and true God. Thus God would have them learn what it would take to trust in Him and Him alone.

At Mizpeh, they demonstrated their helplessness by pouring out the water they had drawn and fasted and cried for their sins. It was at this moment the Philistines took advantage of their vulnerability since they were not prepared for war. The Israelites realized they were completely helpless, not just spiritually but physically. Their strength, their help and their deliverance were going to come only from the Lord. Only when they got to the bottom of this valley of disobedience, this valley of turning away from God, then Israel realized there was only One who could help them.

If left on our own, you and I will have the same complete helplessness. We cannot live life good enough for us to get into heaven. We simply cannot pay the price that all of the sins, evil, and wickedness require. What can we do except to cry “Help, Lord!” and say “Ebenezer” (Hitherto hath the Lord helped us)?

THOUGHT: “Self help with God’s help is the best help” (Timothy Tow).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I thank You that You are my Helper.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 7

1 SAMUEL 7:1-15

DEUTERONOMY 31:1-13

*“He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee:
fear not, neither be dismayed.”*

HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US (II)

2. It is God who helps us completely.

In the midst of great fear and anxiety, it is comforting and assuring to read, “... *the LORD heard him*” as Samuel was interceding on behalf of the despairing Israelites by offering burnt offering. It is not as if God will only hear Samuel’s prayer. The principle is the same: “*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (James 5:16b). He whose righteousness is acceptable in God’s sight will pray according to His will. It pleased God then to answer Samuel’s prayer.

The next thing we know, God defeated the Philistines before the Israelites pursued and destroyed them. The more powerful Philistines did not win, but the weaker Israel won because God heard the prayers of Samuel.

Today, the Lord is our Stone of help, our Rock of salvation. There are many things that can and may frighten us in this world, but there is also one God who is our Ebenezer, our Stone of help. No matter what happens in this life, no matter how topsy-turvy and opposed to God this world may be, God takes care of His people for their good.

May we always remember that we are completely unable to save ourselves, for it is the Lord our Stone who saves us completely. The Lord is our Ebenezer. Our God is our Helper.

THOUGHT: Why look to my left, right, front, back, down and inside when I can look up to Him who promises to help me?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to trust in Your help always.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

1 PETER 1:3-9

*“Receiving the end of your faith,
even the salvation of your souls.”*

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS!

It is easy for us to focus our lives on problems and on what we do not have. There are basically two types of blessings: General Blessings (everyone including unbelievers can enjoy) and Spiritual Blessings (only genuine believers can enjoy). General blessings usually include health, food, home, apparel, and also natural resources such as sun, rain, etc.

But believers have a double blessing for they are given spiritual blessings as well as general blessings. Ephesians 1:3, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* The intimate, personal relationship we have with Him is a blessing beyond our description. There is also the wonderful blessing of fellowship with likeminded brethren in Christ within the household of faith. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom 10:17). The Bible is God’s eternal blessing to us. It is also our ever present and dependable Guide. It contains the foundational principles upon which we can build a happy and successful life.

If we would be happy, and if we would be pleasing to God, we must count our many blessings, and not our troubles. We must show our gratitude to God for His many blessings by being obedient to His commands. If you are not a Christian, let me urge you at the earliest opportunity to become one, and thereby show your gratitude to God, the Giver of all good gifts, for the many blessings God has bestowed to enrich and bless your life.

THOUGHT: I must not take my blessings for granted! If God can shower on me His blessings, He can also remove them.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, make me a blessing to someone today.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

PSALM 57:1-11

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

"I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me."

PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN! (I)

For no good reason, king Saul was out to kill David. But David refused to fight him because he knew it was not God's will for him to fight God's anointed one. Saul continued to make life difficult for David and caused him to be on the run for his life. David was persecuted and chased by Saul, but David was not forsaken. God was with David all the time. And it is amazing that David's flight from king Saul is the time when David drew even nearer to God. David was closer to God when he was a fugitive than when he became the next king.

Sometimes we are in a similar situation as David's. When things are not turning out well on our side, we immediately run to God for help. We see the urgency and need to depend on God. This is good because at least we are aware of the best help available for us. But how many of us truly go to God first, giving Him first place in our heart, and acknowledging that without Him we can do nothing?

We face opposition, conflict and problem almost everywhere. Sometimes in our workplace or school, there are those who dislike us for no good reason. As a result, we may feel that we are being persecuted. But is that the kind of persecution the Bible is speaking of?

Not many really face persecution because of our Christian faith. Perhaps only for those with unbelieving parents or family members who are strongly against Christianity. By and large, we do not really encounter any spiritual persecution. But beware, there is one powerful persecution that we need to be careful of. It is the persecution from your "*old man*" against your "*new man*" (Col 3:9-10).

THOUGHT: There is a double blessing if I am under persecution for Christ's sake (re: Matt 5:10-11).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to be willing to bear the cross for Your sake as Jesus bore the cross for my sake.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

ROMANS 6:1-23

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN! (II)

I believe there is one great persecution in which every true believer cannot avoid. The persecution that comes from our “*old man*.” After we believe in Christ and are born again, we are not immediately free from sin. Yes, we may be saved and made free from the bondage to sin. But we still have our old sinful nature in us. This sinful nature will only be taken away on the day when we meet our Lord. The sting of death no longer has any effect on us. Before we are saved, we are stung by this deadly blow and left to perish. But now after we believe in Christ, this deadly sting in us is completely removed. Not only are we healed, we are given a “*new man*” to live a new life in Christ. And this “*new man*” desires anything that is spiritual and glorifying to God.

Let us not forget that our “*old man*” is still there within us. He comes in to oppose everything the “*new man*” desires to do. Besides the great struggle within us, the evil one will use every opportunity to destroy us. Do you think the devil will without much resistance let us go so that we can trust in God? Of course not! Surely he will try to turn us away from God, perhaps by stirring our hearts to blame God for all the bad things that happen to us. Let us not be deceived by him. The more we are suppressed, the more we need to trust God for deliverance.

THOUGHT: When I sin, can I push the blame to my “*old man*”? When I do good, can I give credit to the “*new man*”?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to live a new life in Christ.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

PSALM 61:1-8

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

*“Hear my cry, O God;
attend unto my prayer.”*

PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN! (III)

Despite this struggle with the old nature in us and the evil one roaming around us, we are not forsaken by God. God did not leave us to fight this spiritual battle by ourselves. He is always with us. He guides us by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. We may ask ourselves “What kind of burdens am I carrying right now?” I have no doubt that we can easily compile a long list of our woes, unhappiness, dangers, cares, concerns, and worries. I have no doubt that we have various degrees of afflictions, and perplexities, and feelings of being struck down, just like David. However, we must thank God that we are not forsaken though we are persecuted, and that though we have been struck down, we are not destroyed. For we have a God who cares for us.

David was doing well when he was a shepherd looking after his flock of sheep. But his life started to change after he was being anointed by Samuel to be the next king. We read of David’s victory over giant Goliath and how he became the hero of Israel. However the beginning of his success is also the beginning of more troubles to come. Out of envy, king Saul tried to get rid of David. From the darkness of that moment, David learnt about trusting, loving and serving God. The foundation for his confidence in the face of all manner of adversity and trial was this: he experienced God’s unfailing care and comfort upon him. There is no one whom he can trust, only God. Only God can make his darkest night to shine.

The God of David is the same God whom we believe in today. As God cared for David, He cares for us too.

THOUGHT: Is it better for David to remain as a shepherd for the rest of his life than to heed the call to be the king of Israel?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I thank You for the wonderful promise that You will never forsake me.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

PSALM 59:1-17

PROVERBS 3:1-7

*“Lean not unto thy
own understanding.”*

TRUSTING GOD

David’s trust in the Lord is evidenced in many of the psalms that he wrote. One of which is Psalm 59. He wrote this psalm when he was on the run from Saul. He learnt a precious lesson and that is: Trusting God.

There is an account of a war that happened in London many years ago. This account reminds us of David’s trust in God through the experience of a little boy and his mother in London during the war. With bombs falling from the night sky, fire and destruction all around, one mother frantically searched for a safe place for herself and her child. Desperately looking for a shelter, she grabbed her child’s hand and ran. She leapt into a dark hole and disappeared from her child’s sight. Calling to him, she said “Jump, son, jump!” Frightened, her child screamed back, “But mom, I can’t see you!” And now with all the assurance and comfort she can put into her voice, she called back, “But I can see you. Just jump!” And he did. Landing in his mother’s arm, he was safe and comforted. This is exactly what God desires us to do. When we say we trust in God, do we really trust in Him no matter what happens?

For David, for me, for you, for all of us, our journey of faith begins with a decision to trust God. We receive a simple faith and we just believe. If we believe we can land on God’s arm, embraced by God, and comforted by God, truly we can say from the bottom of our heart, I am not forsaken. I trust God and His promises that He will never leave me nor forsake me. Therefore we can, just like David, give thanks that somehow, somewhere, in our lives God still cares for us.

May Psalm 59 encourage us to trust in the Lord even when our enemies come upon us, at the face of persecution from without or from within.

THOUGHT: Our enemies may not be God’s enemies. But God’s enemies are definitely our enemies.
PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to trust in You with all my heart.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.”

GOD’S GOOD WORK (I)

What is this Good Work?

Ephesians chapter 1 highlights the truth of our salvation. Our salvation is the good work of the triune God. We are chosen by God the Father unto salvation. We are purchased by the redeeming work of God the Son in His life, blood and death, and resurrection. We are sealed by God the Holy Spirit of promise, securing our salvation to the very end.

Why is it a Good Work?

The first reason why it is a good work is that this work DOES us good. In other words, it is a work that is good and not harmful to us. Without this work of grace in us, the power and chain of sin will still remain there and will eventually weigh us down to hell. We must be born again, says our Lord, if we are to enter into the kingdom of God.

The second reason why it is a good work is that this work MAKES us good. It not only does us good, it actually makes us good. It turns us from a wretched and vile sinner, into a holy and Christ-like saint. Have you considered what a great sinner you once were, before God did His good work in you? On the other hand, do you realize that each and every one of those Christian graces which you now possess and exhibit in some measure such as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, etc, are all solely the result of God’s good work in you?

Indeed this is a good work because it does us good and makes us good.

THOUGHT: Christ’s good works are necessary for our salvation. Our own good works are necessary for our sanctification.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, keep me doing good works because I am already saved.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 14

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

EPHESIANS 2:4-10

*"God hath before ordained that
we should walk in them."*

GOD'S GOOD WORK (II)

What is the Purpose of this Good Work?

The answer is twofold – it is primarily for the glory of God and secondarily for the glory of the saved in eternity. God does all things for His own glory. And the good work which God has begun in us is ultimately and primarily for His own glory. God, who began it, must also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Now God is working in us not just for our benefit in this life, but especially to prepare us for the life to come. Thomas Vincent said, "God gives grace here to prepare for glory hereafter."

Application

How then shall we apply this verse? Firstly, we are to take a careful look at ourselves to see if God has indeed begun a good work in us. Have I really experienced a real change in my life? My friends, without this good work, nothing good awaits you at the end of your life. Secondly, we are to be very thankful to God when we see His good work in us and in one another. When was the last time you sat down to reflect upon God's good work in you and to give thanks and praise to Him? Have you realized God has already begun a good work in you? Know that He will continue working and perfecting His work in you until the day of Jesus Christ.

Yes, we need to examine ourselves to see where we have fallen short of His glory. After which we must repent of our sins. Let us also take stock of God's blessing to us that we may thank Him for it. The day is coming soon when we shall give an account of what we have done for God. Will we pass the test? May God help us to be thankful for His good work in us!

THOUGHT: I thought all my sins were forgiven when I believe in Jesus. How is it that I still have to account for all the wrongs I have done?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your good work done within me

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

PSALM 13:1-6

REVELATION 6:1-17

*“How long doest thou not judge
and avenge our blood on them?”*

HOW LONG MORE MUST I ENDURE? (I)

I was on a missions trip to Sri Lanka many years ago when I took the opportunity to visit one of the missions stations at the mountainous Hatton. I was told that the journey would take three hours. I looked at my watch, it was 10 am. That means we should reach Hatton by 1 pm. And so I set my heart and mind praying for the Lord’s will to be done that we will reach Hatton in three hours. After about two hours of journey, I asked whether we are going to be there soon. The reply was, “We are not even halfway through the journey.” And so I asked, “How much longer?” “Soon” was the reply. After about another hour, the journey became extremely bumpy, and so I asked again, “Are we there yet? How much longer? Why are we taking so long?” The answer reflected my impatience and anxiety. The reply was again “Soon.” I could not endure the journey anymore. How long more must I endure? Isn’t this the same question we ask when we face hard times in life?

David, who was in a different situation, was on a more dangerous and difficult journey than when I travelled to Hatton. Nevertheless it captures the essence of that question in Psalm 13 (at least 4 times in the first two verses) remarkably well, “*How long ... ?*” As we read the questions of David in the first two verses, we will find that what David has recorded is a process. It is a change in his attitude and thinking as he waited upon the Lord. It is a path moving upward, out of despair and into hope and trust in the Lord.

One of the great lessons from the Psalms that David wrote is that it is perfectly all right to be honest with God about how we really feel. Being honest with God is to open up our hearts to Him. Cry if you need to cry, shout if you need to shout, agonize if you need to agonize, to the Lord. The Lord will hear. He will receive every contrite heart and all who have a broken spirit. Will you go to Him? How long?

THOUGHT: My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than yours.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, give me patience that I may endure hardships.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

PSALM 13:1-6

ROMANS 12:16-21

*“Vengeance is mine; I will repay,
saith the LORD.”*

HOW LONG MORE MUST I ENDURE? (II)

David faced many trials in his life. We do not know exactly what the occasion was when he penned Psalm 13. This psalm reveals a striking picture of a frustrated heart crying out again and again: “How long more must I endure?”

“How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?” God did promise to deliver His children from trouble and danger, but He did not say when. This is the cry of one who is getting impatient. We simply let our impatience rule our thinking. ‘We just want the solution now, not later, not tomorrow.’ With disappointment, we charged at God and concluded that He has forgotten us forever. *“How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?”* When God hides His face from His people, there is a message of displeasure or anger against them due to their sin. It will always be the sin of His people that God hides His face away from them. *“How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?”* When there is no one whom we can trust and rely upon, we begin to keep things to ourselves and wallow in despair and self-pity. We are lost, there is no clear road ahead of us. Where is the direction? Where should I go? This adds more sorrow to our anxiety and frustration. *“How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?”* This is probably the worst feeling we can ever have. When we cannot do anything to those who continually mock and laugh at us, we feel so terrible. There was one time when David was in such a situation. Running away from king Saul, he found refuge in the Philistines’ territory. There, he had to pretend to be a mad man, and to endure the company of idolatrous, sinful and wicked men. In all these, what can he do except to endure so that his life can be preserved?

How long, Lord? It is when we are brought to the lowest, that we know we have to give ourselves wholly to God to save and to deliver.

THOUGHT: When the Name of God is taken in vain, should we endure or speak up?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, assure us that You are our Saviour and Deliverer.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

PSALM 13:1-6

1 PETER 5:5-11

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

HOW LONG MORE MUST I ENDURE? (III)

After these four despairing questions from David, the Spirit of the Lord directs David's heart to plead with God in a spirit of humility. Verse 3: *“Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”* There is no sign of demand but a humble request from a broken man. *“Consider”* is the word. I am nothing but a worm, consider me. Nothing good that I deserve but consider me and hear me. That is a desperate soul in need of assurance and comfort from the Lord.

“Lighten mine eyes ...” When a soul is desperate, he cannot see the road before him clearly for it is dark. His spiritual eyes need some light to guide him, to show him the proper way as explained *“... lest I sleep the sleep of death.”* In total darkness, we are completely lost and we desperately search for anything that will give us light.

Verse 4, *“Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.”* This should always be in our mind when we meet with temptation and sin. If we fall into them, we are letting the evil one mock at God. Before you fall into sin, ask: *“Am I going to let Satan use me as his tool to mock at God?”* And if the answer is a firm no, the inclination to sin will go away. When sin is stopped, our faith begins to grow and mature.

THOUGHT: I am called to resist the devil and not to flee from him. I am called to flee from temptation and not to resist it.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

PSALM 13:1-6

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-13

“The God of peace shall be with you.”

HOW LONG MORE MUST I ENDURE? (IV)

David began this Psalm with all his complaints, but after he had cried out to God, he experienced the final summit of his circumstances as seen in verses 5 and 6, *“But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”*

Prayer has strengthened the spirit of David. His faith, his hope, and comfort from God had greatly increased by now in verse 5. From complaining to prayer, and now prayer to belief in the great mercy of God towards him. What a great change when we reflect upon the earlier verses! This is not self-deception or self motivation, but the amazing power and working of the Spirit of God in the heart of a troubled soul. Indeed, David received the blessing of peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:6-7).

David has poured out his troubled soul to the Lord as we heard his complaints that led to earnest prayer and a firm belief in the promise of God. He was truly convinced by God’s love that never fails, His covenant love, and His salvation. *“I will sing unto the Lord,”* says David, *“because He has dealt bountifully with me.”* God has been good to David, and He will be good to him forever. Therefore no matter what our circumstances may look like today, we can experience the peace that passes all understanding of our circumstances.

The question remains “How long more must I endure?” As long as the Lord enables, I will endure to the very end because I know He is always with me. May God help us.

THOUGHT: An enduring Christian is a singing and winning Christian.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I know I can endure all hardship because You are with me always.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

JAMES 1:2-12

1 PETER 1:6-9

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

SMILING AT THE STORM (I)

Our life is not a bed of roses. God never promised us a trouble-free life. But He has promised in His Word to be with us through every trial we face in life. Everyone who belongs to Christ will therefore face his or her share of trials and suffering.

As long as we live in this fallen and sinful world, in our mortal bodies that one corrupt, we will always have to fight against changes, illnesses, disappointments, and difficulties in life. Some of us here may have experienced the sorrow of losing a loved one to cancer or to some other prolonged illness. Others may experience the bitterness of a broken relationship. And perhaps many have faced countless times of failure and disappointment, or the agony of being retrenched and not being able to find a job.

All these things are part and parcel of life! Although they sometimes affect us so badly that we almost cannot hold on much longer, we still have to **accept** them as they are. How can we learn to best **cope** them? The good news is that all Christians can actually be blessed with the **ability** to cope so well with the trials we face that we can even **rejoice** in them! James says, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations”* (James 1:2). God would not have given this verse to us if it is impossible for us to count it all joy in facing our trials on earth. Surely God’s Word is true and powerful. If only we would believe it, we could have avoided so many heartaches. We must by all means **learn** to rejoice even in the midst of trials.

We teach our children to sing ‘*With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm...*’ Are we really able to smile at the storm? Are we able to cope with our difficulties and trials with joy in our heart? We can when Christ is in the vessel.

THOUGHT: Is it better if God removes all my troubles?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to rejoice in the midst of trials.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

HEBREWS 4:14-16

1 PETER 1:6-9

*“Let us therefore come boldly
unto the throne of grace.”*

SMILING AT THE STORM

(II)

About 300 years ago the young John Wesley was on board a ship that was caught in a terrible storm in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. As the winds and waves grew stronger and stronger, John Wesley grew more and more terrified and he thought the ship was going to sink and that he would surely drown. On that same ship was a family of Moravian Christians. Despite the great storms and that dangerous situation, they were singing calmly the hymns of praise to God. Wesley saw them and he was absolutely amazed that they could do that. He knew they had something that he lacked – the ability to praise God and rejoice even in the most trying moments of life!

As we hear such testimonies of rejoicing in the midst of suffering and trials, it warms our hearts. It is easy for us to praise God spontaneously when He provides good things. But when things go against us, and we have to struggle and endure some degree of hardship and suffering, that is the time when we find it so hard to praise Him.

Can we really rejoice with heartfelt praise to God during times of trials? Can our hearts rejoice in the Lord? What was it that enabled God’s people to rejoice when they were going through worse things than what we are going through now? How can we also be praising God and genuinely rejoicing in difficult circumstances?

God is concerned that believers should apply their faith in Him well during times of trial and suffering. When faith is properly applied, believers will not only find peace and much comfort in the midst of trials, but also great rejoicing! With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm!

THOUGHT: Is there any storm too strong that God cannot calm? So, why worry?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to apply greater faith in You during times of trials and sufferings.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 21

1 PETER 1:6-9

PSALM 62:1-12

"Power belongeth unto God."

GOD HAS THE POWER TO KEEP US

We worry easily when we are afraid that something will go wrong in our lives, and we feel threatened by the circumstances we are in. It is in moments like these that we need to be convinced by faith that our God is the omnipotent God who has the power to keep us! There is no power that can keep us the way that God's power can!

How powerful is God's power? It is the same power that causes us to be begotten into a lively hope – the power that regenerates sinners into saints. All the power that man knows about – whether electric power, solar power or nuclear power – cannot change a sinner's heart. Only God's power is able to do that! And that is the same power by which we are now kept, *"by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* The word for "keep" used here is a military term commonly used for guarding and protecting. The power of God is able to keep us from falling till we are presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

This power now safeguards us and keeps us absolutely safe in God's hands. It warns us when we venture too far away in our own foolishness and weakness. It keeps us walking in the paths of righteousness, and never fails to chastise us when we go astray. This power will not rest until we have reached that beautiful shore which is in heaven's glory, ready to be revealed at the last time. Therefore we can rest with full assurance that we will be guarded and protected by Him through all circumstances in life. We need not be anxious about what can happen to us, or about what the final outcome will be, because the Lord Himself will keep us! That final outcome is fully settled, confirmed and assured for us. When we find ourselves being tested and we begin to doubt and lose faith, let us remind ourselves of the unlimited power of God that keep us to the end.

THOUGHT: The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I praise You for You are my omnipotent God.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

1 PETER 1:6-9

1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-17

*“Every man’s work shall
be made manifest.”*

THE PURPOSE OF GOD IS TO TRY US

We ought to realize that the trials we face in life have a divine purpose. They are not there by mere chance, but by God’s design. They have been deliberately planned and put into our lives for our own good. Trials can be very distressing and very emotionally-draining. And the common question that fills our mind when we are in the midst of trials is “Why?” “Why must this happen to us, Lord?” “Why must it be so painful?” The Lord answers with an illustration in 1 Peter 1:7, *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”*

The refining process of gold is used as an analogy of the purification of our Christian faith through trials. When we first believe in God, our faith is like unrefined raw gold that has just been dug out from a gold mine. There are three stages in the whole refining process. The first stage is to separate the raw gold from sand and gravel by using flowing water. The sand and gravel get washed away, while the raw gold, which is heavier, sinks and remains. In the second stage, mercury is added to the gold. This liquid metal combines immediately with the gold and makes it very brittle, so that it can easily be separated from other materials. In the final stage of the refining process, intense heat is applied to the gold, so that it melts into molten gold. This also vaporises away the mercury that was added in the second stage, and also burns away any remaining impurities. The end result of all this is pure gold, which is both beautiful and precious. Gold is the most precious metal to man. For us Christians, our faith is even more precious than gold. Our faith also needs to be refined like gold. Though painful, the refining process is most effective for the purification of our faith in the Lord. Our faith will reach its best form, a form that is many times more precious than the purest gold!

THOUGHT: Surely God knows all things and He knows our heart, why try us then?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, may my faith in You grow in times of adversity.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

EPHESIANS 5:1-17

2 CORINTHIANS 4:6

“Walk as children of light.”

GOD MAKES OUR DARKEST NIGHT SHINE

As there was darkness upon the earth before there was light, so there is a natural darkness in the minds of men, before any spiritual light is shined onto them. And as light was the first to be created out of the dark and unformed void (Gen 1:1-3), so light is the first thing that strikes the wandering lost soul at the point of conversion.

As light was the result of divine power, so is the spiritual illumination (or the opening of the eyes) of the understanding of man who is born spiritually blind. The heart of man naturally has no light in it. God as the fountain of light shines upon it and in it, to give man a true sight and sense of sin, and of his lost state and condition. This will cause him to see the fullness of Christ as his Saviour and his need of Him. It will warm his affections, and draw out his desire after Christ, His ways, truths, ordinances, and people, and will give him understanding of the mysteries of the Gospel.

How do we know God hath indeed shined in our hearts? The light of God that shines in our hearts is that light of knowledge of God's glory. This is a great mystery. Only those who truly have this light in them will understand this great mystery. The Bible says that, *“spiritual things are spiritually discerned.”* It is that easy, yet so difficult for many to accept by faith.

Once the light of God has shined in your hearts, it will never be taken away. It is true that sometimes this light becomes dim and seems to be fading, but it is still there and will never go out. It may be dark at times and our lives may seem to be in darkness. Dearly beloved, look to God, go to Him in prayer, and the light in us will shine brighter. Do you believe?

THOUGHT: If I am not shining as a light for God, what am I doing then?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I want to be Your shining light in the darkness of this world.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-31

GALATIANS 6:1-18

*“The world is crucified unto me,
and I unto the world.”*

THE WAY OF THE CROSS LEADS HOME

The Gospel of Christ is the Cross of Christ. This Cross is open to all. There is no discrimination whether you are yellow, black, or white; whether you are rich or poor, first class, second class, or third class in society; whether young or old, all are welcome to the cross of Christ. Whosoever will come to the cross, he is on his way to heaven which he will call his home. Let us then thank God for this way of the cross that leads home.

There was a man who served as a medical missionary for many years in India. He served in an area where there was progressive blindness. The people there were born with healthy vision, but there was a disease that caused the people to slowly lose their eyesight. After years of examination and research, this missionary finally found a cure for their sickness. So the people came to him for the cure. But the people never said “Thank you” to this missionary because that phrase was not in their dialect. They did not have a word for “Thank you”! Instead they would say “I will tell your name” as an expression of their gratitude. Wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary who had cured them of their eye problem.

We have no problem thanking God for the Cross of Christ. But if we have been touched by the power of the Cross of Christ, we must also tell others of Jesus’ Name and the power of His Cross. Jesus came down from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, and from the grave to the sky, in order to pave a way for us that we might be led to our heavenly home. The way of the cross indeed leads us home. Are you going by the way of the Cross? Will you thank Him by telling others of that same way? May the Lord help us.

THOUGHT: What do I see at the cross of Christ: the cross of shame or the cross of victory?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to carry my own cross and follow You.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

COLOSSIANS 3:1-15

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

*“Rejoice in the Lord always:
And again I say, Rejoice.”*

LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS

Thank God that Jesus is not called the Prince of Compromise. He is not a Any-truth-can-do Saviour. He is called the Prince of Peace. It is the kind of peace that is obtained on the basis of God's Truth. The kind of peace Jesus came to give is different from our worldly wisdom and understanding. It is the peace of God that passeth all understanding that will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. This is very important because day in and day out, we meet all kinds of people and some really get on our nerves and really stretch our patience to the limit. How we need the peace of God!

Colossians 3:15 tells us, *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”* Apostle Paul likes to use the human body to illustrate our relationship with God and our relationship with one another. Through Jesus, we now have peace with God. And we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Sometimes the worst enemy is not found in the world but in the church or even in our home. We belong to the same body, and we must remember it is God's will and purpose that we are different. Some are the hands. Some are the legs. Some are the ears or the mouths. We are all different yet we all belong to the same body.

Only in Christ can we have peace with one another. The secret to peace is to have the same mind. The same mind is not that everyone must think like me. No, the same mind we are to have is the mind of Christ, not our own vain and selfish mind. *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”* It is the mind of humility, the mind of esteeming others better than ourselves, the mind of looking not just on our own things but also on the things of others. That is the mind we are to have in order to have peace with one another. May God help us.

THOUGHT: Can we have true peace without having the same mind?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help us to have the mind of Christ.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-24

ROMANS 8:28

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS (I)

We have every reason to pray because there are countless thanksgiving items to praise God for. I cannot find any good reason for not praying. Am I too busy to pray, am I too tired to pray, do I not have the mood to pray? Can these be my excuses for not praying? You know and I know the answer.

While praying unceasingly, we are called to give thanks for everything. Everything means everything. It is not giving thanks for most things but to give thanks for every single thing. That includes those things which are good and that which are no good as well. We are called to be thankful in every condition, even in bad times. We know full well that it is not easy at all to give thanks for bad times. How can I still thank God when I am retrenched? How can I still thank God when the doctor tells me I have cancer? How can I still thank God when I have lost my loved ones in accidents or sickness? Very hard indeed!

Romans 8:28, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* Yes, we may never know how a retrenchment works for our good, we may never know what good cancer can bring to us except pain and burden or even losing our loved ones. But Romans 8:28 tells us that God works everything for our good. That’s it! God says it, He promises it, that settles it, and I believe it. Do you believe since *“... this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”*?

THOUGHT: “Come, ye thankful people, come. Raise the song of harvest home: All is safely gathered in, Ere the winter storms begin. God, our Maker, doth provide for our wants to be supplied: Come to God’s own temple, come. Raise the song of harvest home.” (Henry Alford)

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to give thanks at all times.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-24

PSALM 92:1-15

*“It is a good thing to give
thanks unto the LORD.”*

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS (II)

When you and I gave thanks to God, we are saying to God that we are aware of His continual presence. There are times when we simply forget that God is with us. It could be in good times as well as bad times. Sometimes we are simply too caught up in doing our own things that we forget that God is with us.

There is this story about a young lady who was rushing to a youth fellowship meeting in a taxi. When the taxi driver drove past a jamming hot rock disco, the driver said, “That’s the most exciting place to go to relax, especially for young people like you.”

But the young lady said, “I have this Friend who would not like that place, not even a bit.” The driver said, “Then go on your own or with those friends who like to dance and rock.” The lady replied firmly, “No, even if I do that, this Friend of mine would still follow me, He will always be there, and His name is Jesus.”

This young lady was fully aware of God’s continual presence with her. God is with us all the time. Are we conscious of that all the time? Sometimes when life becomes difficult, we ask, “Where is God?” When the storm of life darkens our sky, we must look beyond it and focus on the light shining above. How can an aircraft fight against the great turbulence and great storm? There is no need to fight, just fly to a higher altitude, rise above the storm clouds. Once you are above the storm clouds, you will experience calm and peace. The sun will be shining brightly, and where is the storm? It is just below you. Maybe that is what God wants us to do, to rise above a bad situation and reach Him. He is there, but are we going to Him?

THOUGHT: “For the Lord our God shall come and shall take His harvest home. From His field shall in that day all offences purge away. Give His angels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast, but the fruitful ears to store in His garner evermore.” (Henry Alford)

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, let me come to You freely and always in the Name of Jesus.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 28

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-24

HEBREWS 13:8-13

*"Let us offer the sacrifices
of praise to God continually."*

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS (III)

When we give thanks to God, we are saying to God that we are dependent on Him. God is the source of all our blessings. Thanking God is an act of submission on our part to depend on Him for all things. We are saying, "God, we need You to help us make it through this difficult time of our life. We need You to give us the strength to make it. We can't make it on our own. We need You."

When we give thanks to God, we are saying to God that we trust Him. "Lord, I may not understand why this thing has happened to me, but I am going to trust You with the outcome of this situation." There is much about life we do not understand. So when we give thanks for such times, we are putting our trust in God.

When we give thanks to God, we are saying to God that we understand what He is doing in our lives. We may not understand what we are going through. We may not understand our life's problems. But we can understand that whatever is going on in our lives, God is in full control and He is working in our lives according to His sovereign will for our good.

When we are going through a tough time and we continue to place our trust in God, it strengthens our relationship with Him. We discover that our peace is found not in the absence of difficulty, but often in the presence of adversity and trouble. Our peace is found in God no matter how difficult the situation can be. Only after we have gone through such testings will we realize that our faith in God is strengthened. Isn't that wonderful? Let us thank God always in everything because we know it is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.

THOUGHT: "Even so, Lord, quickly come to Thy final harvest home: Gather Thou Thy people in, free from sorrow, free from sin. There, forever purified, in Thy presence to abide. Come, with all Thine angles, come. Raise the glorious harvest home."
(Henry Alford)

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I thank You for revealing Your will to me.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

LUKE 15:11-24

1 JOHN 1:5-10

*“God is light, and in him
is no darkness at all.”*

RETURN UNTO THE LORD

(I)

In one way or another, we may be like the prodigal son. We must realize that we are in a sinful pathetic state that had led to separation and departure from God. Our souls are literally separated from God. If not for His mercy extended unto us graciously, we would be lost for ever.

The prodigal son's wretched state clearly shows forth the awful wickedness of sinful man. Yet how few realize their own miserable state and sinful character! Having viewed the prodigal son in his pathetic state of misery, we are to consider his recovery from it. Every sinner must realize his own sinfulness. That is a turning point in the sinner's conversion. The Lord opened his eyes, and convinced him of his sin; and then caused him to view himself in a different light from what he did before. The prodigal son immediately made a 180- degree turn. He did not wait, he acted right away, not stopping till he reached his soul's resting place.

Before, he left home with all his wealth, ambition and goals in life, now he came home a totally changed person. He came back with his heart changed, and with the hope of being reconciled to his father. How did his father respond? Did he remind his son of all his mistakes and confront him? No, he met him with unexpected tokens of his forgiving love. Again, God's receiving of the humbled sinner is like that of the father of the prodigal son. The sinner is clothed in the robe of his Redeemer's righteousness, made partaker of the Spirit of adoption, reconciled and given grace to walk in the ways of holiness, and rest in God's perfect peace. This is the happy state of one who returns to the Lord. Are you still hesitating?

THOUGHT: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see.” (John Newton)

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, forgive me for my waywardness and rebellion, and keep me by Your side.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

ISAIAH 55:6-13

MALACHI 3:1-18

*“Return unto me and
I will return unto you.”*

RETURN UNTO THE LORD

(II)

It shall not be in vain to seek God, as His Word is calling to us, and His Holy Spirit is prompting within us. But there will come a day when He will not be found. To them who refuse to respond to God’s offer of salvation, beware! A time will come in this life that at death, the door of grace will be shut.

To repent is to return to our Lord, against whom we have rebelled. To do so, we repent not only of our action, but also with our heart, soul and mind. With this repentance, God will graciously bless us. But let none of us play with God’s abundant mercy, or use it as an excuse to sin.

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” The Lord is to be sought at all times. Call upon Him while He is near. Let us seek and call upon the Lord, while we are yet alive, not tomorrow, not later. If we don’t see the need to call upon Him now, what makes us think we will call upon Him later? Call Him now if you have not done so. Seeking and calling require not only prayer, but the whole of our personal worship of God, and the time is now when the Lord is to be found, and is near us.

Therefore *“... let him return unto the Lord.”* Return from whom he has departed, against whom he has sinned, and who only can save him. What will God do? God will have mercy upon him, which shows that the returning of the sinner to God is not what saves him, it is God’s mercy and grace which receive him that SAVES! Have you returned to the Lord? Are you still hesitating? Attending church regularly does not mean you are with God. Yes, you can be in church, yet your heart and mind are far, far away from God. Is that happening to you? Return to the Lord, I plead with you.

THOUGHT: Which is theologically correct: “The Lord has found the sinner.” Or: “The sinner has found the Lord”?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me never to leave You.