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“The Gospel of Luke”

by
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About the Author



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Married to Maria Celeste Ba-a Lagapa for the past twenty years, God has blessed them with three children: Theya, Thessa and Jose Trinipil II.

MONDAY, JANUARY 1

LUKE 1:1-4

ACTS 1:1-4

*“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus,
of all that Jesus began both to do and teach...”*

A DECLARATION MOST SURELY BELIEVED

The Gospel of Luke is one of four biblical records of the life of Jesus Christ. Gospel means “good news.” Luke is the writer of this gospel. The things written therein are an account of the earthly life of the Son of God. The theme is the plan of God to save sinners from eternal condemnation in the Lake of Fire. The only means is through God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the most wonderful story men will ever hear! The eternal God of the universe came down to earth to become man, to live, to die and to rise again from the dead that men who are bound for hell will go to heaven, to live with Him and be glorified forever.

Since in Luke’s days there was no bound Bible yet, the writings were copied, distributed and passed from church to church for all the saints. This was in spite of them being under the repressive authorities who prevented the distribution of the writings. The Christians fully trusted the Scriptures from the Apostles of Jesus Christ. The scribes sent their writings to all Christians scattered abroad due to persecution.

The Gospel of Luke was written to Theophilus (Greek meaning: love of God). It is likewise addressed to all those who are the objects of God’s love, like you and me. Luke’s Gospel was recorded to confirm that the Christian faith is genuine and trustworthy. The Holy Spirit, working in the heart of the readers, gives illumination that they might know and love Him more and more. Regular reading and meditation of God’s Word constantly reminds us of who Jesus Christ is.

The authenticity and historicity of this record shows the truth of the life of Jesus Christ. The truthfulness of this gospel is most surely believed for the Holy Spirit, through believers, attests to it since its writing. Today, we are to receive this record and share this gospel to those who have not yet known the salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Do I truly believe this gospel is without doubt?

PRAYER: Father, help me to understand Thy words that I may more deeply know Thy Son Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent for me!

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2
2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17
ACTS 4:18-20

“...For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

A GOD-GIVEN RECORD

The Apostles were eyewitnesses who saw, heard and even touched the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter wrote, “*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty*” (2 Pet 1:16). These gave them courage to face death even by the cruelest forms of execution. They “...cannot but speak the things which... (they) have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

There were also other disciples of Christ, “...men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22). These men had first-hand understanding of the life of Christ. They were not hearers of the story but were eyewitnesses of what Jesus did. There were also women who ministered to Him (Luke 8:2-3).

Eyewitnesses may fail to see and remember the minute details of an incident. But through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the Bible writers recorded infallibly the life of Christ. God who is All-powerful inspired the words and kept them pure for His people until this very age and forevermore. This God-given record can be fully trusted and believed for it was made perfect by the power of God. The record of Luke is inspired by God. The whole Bible is God’s Word, authored by God. And it is also perfectly preserved. By God’s providential care, we have today the very words that Luke personally wrote.

Do you have thoughts that the Bible may contain a few mistakes? Do you embrace the idea that the Bible was perfectly inspired in the past but, when it was copied, through the course of time, it was corrupted by the errors of men? Perish those thoughts!

THOUGHT: Do I believe the Bible is a record authored by God?

PRAYER: Lord, let me see the truth that Thou has perfectly inspired and preserved Thy Word. Let me believe Thy witnesses and Thine own witness of the inerrancy and infallibility of Thy Holy Scriptures.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3

COLOSSIANS 4:14

2 TIMOTHY 4:10-11

"...Demas hath forsaken me,

...Only Luke is with me..."

LUKE, THE WRITER

Luke, the writer of the third Gospel, was the only Gentile among the writers of the Bible. His gospel is the longest among the four narratives. Luke was the Apostle Paul's companion in the missionary journeys as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles which he also authored. The church father Eusebius said that Luke left us two inspired volumes in the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. The external testimony for the Lukan authorship of these books is as strong as we could wish for. The total of these two volumes is fifty-two chapters. This makes Luke the author of one-third of the New Testament and his companion Paul, the other third of it. This means, the two of them penned two-thirds of the New Testament.

Luke was not only a writer but a physician by profession (Col 4:14). This was manifested in the way he painstakingly recorded significant details of the life of Jesus and in the Book of Acts. He wrote as one covering a medical case, and medical terms markedly emerged in his writings. He is recognized as a great historian, the writer of the greatest life story of all time. His is an excellent account of the key events of the life of Christ. He recorded the most important era in church history, undoubtedly proving the authenticity of the beginning of Christianity. He is considered by many as a Christian apologist who zealously defended and established the absolute truth of the gospel, emphasizing the legitimacy of Christianity in his two books.

Luke, above all, was a true believer of the Lord Jesus Christ. He never once referred to himself nor mentioned his own name in his writings. He was content to be humbly hidden behind his writings and let the majesty of his Lord and Saviour dominate.

Every believer must have this same intense devotion to share this gospel with others.

THOUGHT: Is Christ exalted daily in my life?

PRAYER: Lord, please grant me the zeal and boldness to testify for Thee. Let me proclaim Thy historicity and Thy Church as recorded in the Bible.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4

LUKE 1:1-4

LUKE 19:10

*“For the Son of man is come
to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

THE PURPOSE OF LUKE’S GOSPEL

Luke primarily wrote to the most excellent Theophilus. This could either be a person or an appellative name for those who are loved of God. However, as Barnes suggested, “significant names were very common, and there is no good reason to doubt that this was some individual known to Luke.” The title “*most excellent*” occurs only in three other places in the New Testament. It was given to men in office: Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). It expressed not the quality of the men, but their office which suggests that Theophilus was an individual person.

Luke presented the perfect humanity of Christ. Christ is the Son of man, the God-man whose genealogy Luke traced back to Adam, the first man. The phrase “*the Son of man*” is used frequently in Luke. The key verse is in Luke 19:10, “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” It was in many ways a gospel to a humanity that needed compassion, and sympathy towards the brokenhearted, the poor, the sick, the persecuted, and the bereaved. It presented Jesus as the Saviour of all mankind regardless of age, race and status. It encouraged the believers to live according to Jesus’ teachings, “*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations ...*” (Luke 24:47).

This gospel presentation on the humanity of Christ buttressed the truth of God’s incarnation. Jesus became flesh and dwelt amongst sinful men. “*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil 2:6-8).

Do you realize how great a sacrifice the Lord Jesus has made for us?

THOUGHT: Do I appreciate the reasons God moved Luke to write this gospel?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to value Luke’s record by reading and meditating upon it that I may share it with others.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5

LUKE 1:5-13

MALACHI 3:1

*“Behold, I will send my messenger,
and he shall prepare the way before me...”*

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S BIRTH FORETOLD

The birth of John the Baptist was announced to his father, Zacharias. He was identified as a priest from the line of Abia, a priest during Nehemiah’s time, tracing a long line of priesthood ancestry. His wife Elisabeth was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Aside from being considered righteous and blameless, Zacharias was ceremonially cleansed at the time of announcement because priests must first offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could go into the temple to offer for the people.

The announcement was a fulfilment of a prophecy in Malachi 3:1, *“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”* This prophecy affirms that Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

The announcement was in the temple, during the burning of the incense. It was a holy proclamation and was rightly done in a holy place where only priests could enter during the offering of sacrifices. John’s life was prepared, for being yet unborn, the angel’s announcement foretold his ministry. The angel showed that he had a commission from heaven. The miracle of divine power which took place at his conception invites readers to respect him as a divinely-sent prophet. The objective of the announcement was to place John in more profound regard, and that his coming forth would unveil the glory of Christ. Thus, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day affirmed how all the people were persuaded that John was a prophet (Luke 20:5-6).

Every Christian is a herald. Many today are still in darkness, devoid of the presence of God in their lives. Let us be heralds to the unbelievers that they may let Christ come into their hearts.

THOUGHT: Am I a herald of the Lord Jesus Christ?

PRAYER: Father, make me a bold herald of my Saviour and Lord. Give me the courage to preach repentance of sins to the lost.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

LUKE 1:14-17

ISAIAH 40:3-5

*“And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together...”*

THE PURPOSES OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist's birth made the people rejoice. It caused gladness to the people of Israel for he represented the dawning of that day when their long-awaited Messiah would come. Although the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, the Bible prophesied that soon they will look on Him whom they have pierced (Zech 12:10-11). The rejoicing was because John would be great in the Lord's sight. He was chosen for an extraordinary purpose, which was to prepare the way for the Lord's first advent.

He was also separated from evil and was filled with the Holy Spirit since conception. Thus Jesus said of him, *“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist ...”* (Matt 11:11a). He would make the children of Israel turn to the Lord. John preached repentance of sins. Many Jews in those days trusted the ceremonial, moral and extra-Biblical laws prescribed by the Pharisees and scribes for their salvation. They thought obedience to their traditions and sacrifices as demanded by the law were the means for them to be reconciled to God. They trusted in what they could do rather than what God would do for them. John's mission was to turn the hearts of the people to seek the right way. He caused people to know that they had strayed from the Lord. He would point out their lack of righteousness that they may hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As prophesied, he would herald the coming of the Lord (Matt 3:3; Isa 40:3-5). John's main mission was to announce the coming of the Messiah. In John 1:29, he pointed to Jesus as the *“Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* He identified Jesus as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Christians are to be heralds of Christ's second coming. His second coming begins with the rapture of the saints saving us from the wrath to come. May the Lord help you and me to be as faithful as John the Baptist in proclaiming Jesus' second coming.

THOUGHT: Have I been a herald of my Lord Jesus Christ?

PRAYER: Lord, let me wholeheartedly obey Thy commission for me to proclaim the imminent return of my Saviour and Lord.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 7

LUKE 1:26-33

ISAIAH 7:14

*“Behold, a virgin shall conceive,
and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*

THE MOST MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION

Six months after the announcement of the conception of John the Baptist, God sent Gabriel to Nazareth to a woman named Mary. The mission was to announce that she would conceive the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. God proclaimed it according to His perfect plan. In His sovereignty, He had foreordained the best time for His only begotten Son to be born on this earth. *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”* (Gal 4:4).

The great news was announced to Mary, a virgin in Nazareth. She was a humble woman who received great tidings. She would conceive and give birth to God's beloved Son. The Father highly favoured her not because of her outward beauty nor for any talent she possessed but out of God's own good pleasure and choosing. She would conceive in her womb, *“... and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end”* (Luke 1:31-33).

Announced as the Son of the Highest, Jesus was not an ordinary child. Even before His conception, it was made known that He was the Son of God. He will sit on the throne of David His father and His reign shall be forever and His kingdom shall have no end. *“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”* (Rev 19:16).

Mary's conception of Jesus defies the laws of biology. Mary, a virgin, conceived, thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy, *“a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”* (Isa 7:14). This supernatural conception is the only one ever in man's history! Jesus is indeed God with us! Immanuel!

THOUGHT: Do I believe without doubt that Jesus is 100% God?

PRAYER: Father, may I fully trust in Thy Son's divine nature.

MONDAY, JANUARY 8

LUKE 1:34-38

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

“...For ye are bought with a price:
therefore glorify God in your body...”

THE CONCEPTION FULFILLED

Mary thought it was impossible for her, a virgin, to conceive, but the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her. Mary surrendered quietly to the words of the angel. Mary's response to the angel's announcement is very exemplary, reflecting the kind of woman she was. *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”* (Luke 1:38). A handmaid depicts a slave, one who is, under all conditions and in all situations, subject to her master. She understood the power and sovereignty of God over her.

Mary conceived Jesus by God's supernatural power. The baby was implanted in her womb not by the power of man but of God. *“For with God nothing shall be impossible”* (Luke 1:37). The power of God is beyond man's comprehension. Calvin said that God, “in performing miracles, withholds from us the manner of his proceedings, so what he chooses to conceal from us ought to be viewed, on our part, with seriousness and adoration.”

Although Jesus was manifested as the Son of God in the flesh, it did not negate Him being the Word begotten of the Father before the ages. On the contrary, He who is the Son of God in His eternal Godhead, appeared also as the Son of God in human flesh. He is the God-man, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

Man must realize his subjection to God's authority and obey His words. Above all, Christians must acknowledge the Lord's redemptive work. *“... ye are not your own ... For ye are bought with a price...”* (1 Cor 6:19-20). We must be more than willing to submit to His will. Just as Mary humbled herself to obey all that God wanted her to do, we must also obey every command He has for us.

THOUGHT: Am I submissive and obedient to the Word of God?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, please use my body to glorify and honour Thee. Let me be willing to submit to Thy holy will. Help me live a holy life, and be a worthy vessel to bring others to know my Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9

LUKE 1:39-56

COLOSSIANS 1:12-20

*“For it pleased the Father
that in him should all fulness dwell.”*

THE CONCEPTION MAGNIFIED

John the Baptist, while still a foetus, was filled with the Holy Spirit and leaped in his mother’s womb upon Mary’s arrival. It brought joy even to the unborn. Not only did the baby in Elisabeth’s womb rejoice, she also praised the Lord for the marvelous works done to them. She rejoiced not for their pregnancies but because God was using them as instruments in the wonderful plan of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Elisabeth called Mary “*blessed*” for the fruit of her womb was the Blessed One.

Mary called Him her Saviour. She acknowledged her sinful state and her need of a Saviour. She was not sinless as the Roman Catholic Church portrays her to be. She was born a sinner and without the saving work of Christ she deserved to be condemned forever in the Lake of Fire. The Mary of the Bible did not exalt herself as the mother of God; rather she repeatedly mentioned her being a handmaiden or slave of the Lord (Luke 1:48). She praised the Lord and uttered the “Magnificat” in acknowledgement that God would one day put down the mighty and send the rich away empty. Indeed, she did not seek her own glory but for His, to whom all glory is due.

Mary magnified the Lord and ascribed greatness to Him for He is rightly the perfect representation of the Godhead bodily, the image of the invisible God. *“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”* (Col 1:19). Thus, all who diminish Christ, or impair His excellence, or rob Him of His offices, or take away even a drop from His fullness, overturn God’s eternal counsel of glorifying Him and Him alone. Let us always bear in mind that as we ascribe to Christ what belongs peculiarly to Him, no portion of His glory may be transferred to any other. Any form of such transfer is idolatry and abomination, *“my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images”* (Isa 42:8).

THOUGHT: Do I worship and give Jesus alone glory?

PRAYER: Father, help me to worship Thee alone and not to transfer Thy glory to another or even to myself.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10

LUKE 2:1-5

“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda...

MICAH 5:2

shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”

PERFECT PROVIDENCE

God perfectly assigned places, people and provisions for the Son of God. The place where Jesus was born was not Nazareth but Bethlehem according to the prophecy given hundreds of years before His birth, *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”* (Mic 5:2).

Mary and Joseph were not living in the appointed birthplace of the Son of God. God arranged everything to fulfil what was prophesied. It was no accident that a decree for taxing went out from Caesar Augustus. The couple had no option but to travel to the place of their fathers to be taxed. God in His sovereignty prepared all things for the soon-to-be-born Messiah. *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Prov 21:1). Mary and Joseph did as the angel told them. They did not do things according to their own plans but wholly performed the words of the Lord. There was no questioning and arguing, neither murmuring, but obedient hearts submissive to the will of God were evident in their lives. As the children’s song goes, *“Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.”*

How remarkable God’s providence was in bringing Mary up from Nazareth to Bethlehem that Christ, as prophesied, might be born there. How God, in His wisdom, overrules the acts of men for higher or nobler ends than what they intended. The emperor’s aim was, by his edict, to fill his coffers; but God’s end was different, it was to fulfil His prophecies. God’s arrangement is beyond the wisdom of this world. So is His order for every child of God. Nothing happens in your life without His mighty hand doing it. *“But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows”* (Luke 12:7).

THOUGHT: Do I see the providence of God in my life?

PRAYER: Sovereign Lord in heaven, Thou alone has chosen me and laid out the plans for my life. Please help me appreciate everything of Thy providential arrangement of my life.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11
LUKE 2:6-7
1 CORINTHIANS 1:27

“...God hath chosen the weak things
of the world to confound
the things which are mighty.”

A LOWLY BIRTH

The Bible declares Joseph and Mary just. They were godly, believing the words of God spoken through the angel Gabriel. They were not sinless but they had faith in the promised Messiah. Their willingness to take care of the Son of God demonstrated their faith. However, they did not belong to a wealthy family. This is seen in the wrapping they had for the baby. “*Swaddling*” indicates that these clothes were pieces of old castoff clothing, cut up into strips, and wrapped around the baby. This surely was not the kind of clothing for a baby of rich parents. The Messiah was born poor as Joseph and Mary were poor.

The appointed place was Bethlehem. God had a place for His beloved Son. He was in charge and in His providence He made all things possible. “*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*” (Mic 5:2). But Bethlehem was little and a poor village. The Lord is not interested in things big, great, extravagant and proud. He chooses the little, weak, simple and humble. “*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*” (1 Cor 1:27).

An animal shed was the place for the birth of God’s Son. The great humility of our Lord Jesus Christ was displayed as He lay on a hard and cold stone used only for animal foodstuff. There were inns in that little town, but there was no room for a poor couple. The God who created the heaven and the earth preferred to be born with the lowly creatures than to be with the rich. Today’s followers of the Lord Jesus Christ forget or are ignorant of who He is, they become “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (2 Tim 3:4).

THOUGHT: Am I following my Lord’s lowly way or the world’s highway?

PRAYER: Lord of lowliness, may I be humble and meek that I might do Thy holy, precious will. Rebuke me of my pride and haughtiness, for Thou art great and I am nothing.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

LUKE 2:21-25

GENESIS 17:9-12

“Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations...”

THE PRESENTATION AT THE TEMPLE

The perfect obedience of Jesus was seen from His childhood when He obeyed all that was in the Law of Moses. Through His parents' obedience, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. In Genesis 17:9-12, God made a covenant and told Abraham, *“Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.”*

Jesus is our perfect righteousness because He is perfectly righteous. Mary and Joseph saw to it that all the demands of the law were kept. The baby Jesus was presented by His parents to God at the temple in Jerusalem. *“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine”* (Exod 13:2). Likewise, parents are not only obliged to provide for the physical and material needs of their children, but most importantly the spiritual needs of their children must be met.

The law of the Lord required a sacrifice for the mother after bearing a child. *“... she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering...”* (Lev 12:6). Mary offered a pair of turtledoves. That was all she could afford to offer but she willingly fulfilled all righteousness.

The born-again believer must hunger and thirst after righteousness by digging deep into the Word of God that he may do that which is righteous and pleasing before the eyes of God.

THOUGHT: Am I seeking after the righteous way?

PRAYER: O Lord, grant me the desire to fulfil all the righteous demands of Thy Word, the Bible.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

LUKE 2:25-38

ACTS 11:15-18

*“Then hath God also to the Gentiles
granted repentance unto life.”*

BEFORE THE PROPHETS

The roles of the prophets were to forthtell and foretell. In spite of the darkness and total depravity of the people, there remained remnants who found grace in the sight of God. Simeon was known as a just and devout man. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel. No true worshipper of God is without the hope of salvation. He must depend on God's promises, and particularly on salvation grace through Jesus Christ. As the famous statement of Augustine expressed, “The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed.” The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. He saw the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament in that baby before his very eyes as the promised Messiah. He denoted expressly the bodily appearance of Christ. Likewise, Anna also understood that the baby was the Redeemer not only of Israel but of the whole world.

Their prophecies were fulfilled. Simeon prophesied that the baby Jesus is the *“light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of (the) people Israel”* (Luke 2:32). The Lord Jesus Christ came to save the world and not only the Jews. *“...Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”* (Acts 11:18). Men love darkness rather than light and men are by nature destitute of light. Christ, who is the Light of the world came that they might have light and life eternal.

The testimonies of Simeon and Anna proved the divine origin of the child Jesus. Today, there are many who still reject the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, even by those who call themselves Christians. Unbelieving hearts are darkened and eyes are blind. Is your heart enlightened and are your eyes able to see the truth of the Scriptures? Do not harden your heart, and be not blinded; believe in the prophecies of God. Be like these prophets, go forthtell and foretell the Word of the Lord!

THOUGHT: Do I believe the prophecies fulfilled in Christ?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the faith to believe in the fulfilment of all the prophecies in the Scripture.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 14

LUKE 2:39-52

JOHN 5:39-44

*"Search the scriptures;
...and they are they which testify of me."*

AMONG THE PEOPLE

To His town folks, Jesus was just the son of a carpenter. Although the Bible is silent about the details of the childhood of Jesus, the people knew Him as the son of Joseph, a carpenter. Jewish children are trained according to the trades of their fathers. To His kindred, He was just an ordinary man. Jesus grew up under the care of His family. The boy Jesus lived a perfect life in subjection to His earthly mother and foster father. The boy waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and increased in favour with God and man.

There was nothing taken from His glory even while He emptied Himself, and nothing subtracted from His divinity even while He chose not only to grow in body but also to make progress of mind. Calvin said, "Christ received, in his human nature, according to his age and capacity, an increase of the free gifts of the Spirit, that 'out of his fullness' (John 1:16) he may pour them out upon us; for we draw grace out of his grace."

As a young boy, Jesus was unknown to the doctors in the temple. Knowledgeable of the Scriptures, these teachers recognized the excellent understanding of the young Jesus but they did not question His person. Similarly, many scholars today are interested in the teachings of the Bible but not the Person of the Christ of the Bible. Jesus said, "*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39). They have the brain to know the facts and figures of the Scriptures but they do not have the heart to believe in His grace and glory!

Jesus did not grow up receiving the world's commendations. He grew up in simplicity and obscurity. It does not matter what other people think of us Christians, "*for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*" (Luke 16:15). Never be deluded to aspire to the world's standard of excellence. Jesus kept a very low profile that we may learn not to go after the world's accolades.

THOUGHT: Do I dream of becoming popular in the future?

PRAYER: Our glorious Father in heaven, Thou alone art worthy to receive all the glory and honour, now and for eternity.

MONDAY, JANUARY 15

LUKE 3:1-6

MATTHEW 11:7-15

*“Behold, I send my messenger before thy face,
which shall prepare thy way before thee”*

THE PREPARATION FOR THE WAY

The historicity of the Bible is asserted in this passage where the narrative is historically true and accurate. However, we do not subject the Bible to the historical records of man but accept the Bible as the sole authority of our faith and practice.

The year was AD 26. It was about 400 years after Malachi prophesied about John the Baptist, the Lord’s forerunner. John the Baptist started his ministry when he was about thirty years old during the reign of Tiberius Caesar. It was the time when there were two high priests: Caiaphas and his father-in-law, Annas. It indicates a state of trouble and confusion. Though there was to be only one high priest, the sacred office was torn into two by ambition and tyranny.

The Jordan River was the place for preaching and baptizing. John preached in all places along the river, specifically in the wilderness of Judea. Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins was John’s message, so it was fitting that he spent most of his time near a body of water. John did not boast about his ministry, he declared instead that One mightier than him was coming. He was referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike today’s popular evangelists, John did not blow his own horn nor set aside the name of Christ.

His preaching was for all flesh to see the salvation of God. He minced no words in rebuking the people of their sins and in seeking out fruits worthy of their professed repentance. Read Matthew 11:9-10.

The accuracy of the Bible must all the more give us Christians stronger convictions that we must continue to labour for the Lord and preach His Word to everyone. It must compel us to strive to preach and teach this truth, the only absolute truth!

THOUGHT: Do I have a zeal and passion to share the good news?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for Thy great plan of salvation.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

LUKE 3:7-14

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

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

FRUITS WORTHY OF REPENTANCE

John preached that man was like a viper full of poison, fatal and deceitful. He addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees directly, but at the same time it was a warning to all. They were cautioned that true repentance must not be hypocritical. They had miserably corrupted the worship of God, wasted the church, and overturned the whole religion. In other words, they had extinguished the light of God by their corruption, and infected everything with their crimes. They should have instead borne fruits worthy of their repentance that stemmed from true affections of their hearts. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...”* (2 Cor 5:17).

John argued that it is not by oral profession alone that a man becomes a child of God. An accompanying change of nature is to happen in his life. He illustrated it by a tree without good fruit or any fruit which God would hew down and cast into fire. James 2:17-18 likewise says, *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”*

John taught the people: *“he who has two coats, let him impart to him that hath none.”* He was referring to a change of heart that would move them to love their neighbour out of their love for God. A change from self-centredness to loving others, for a repentant heart is a loving heart. Knowing that much has been forgiven, they were to love much.

A genuinely repentant heart is accompanied always by a change of lifestyle -- from worldly to heavenly. He is now looking upward, not sideways. Do no violence and be content with your wages was John's admonition to the soldiers. The changes in the heart will eventually result in a change in lifestyle. John meant that when a person repents of his sins there is a change in the way he thinks. He now minds heavenly things rather than the earthly.

THOUGHT: Am I bearing fruits meet for repentance?

PRAYER: O Lord, show us the way of true repentance that will change our lives, not just to be noticed by men but by Thee.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

LUKE 3:15-22

ROMANS 8:1-9

“...Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

John the Baptist was aware of who Jesus was -- the Almighty God. John knew his mission was in relation to Jesus. He humbled himself and acknowledged that he was unworthy even to unloose Jesus' shoe latchet. John warned the people of their sins according to what he saw externally but Jesus would come to judge even the unseen imagination and wickedness of their hearts. *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt 10:28).

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Ghost. He sends the third person of the Trinity as a seal of His saving act. The seal of a person's salvation is the Holy Spirit. *“...Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”* (Rom 8:9). The indwelling Spirit of God will help one to overcome the flesh. Those in whom the Spirit reigns belong to Christ and should no longer serve the flesh. They who are not indwelt by His Spirit have not spiritual life.

Jesus will thoroughly purge all who come to Him for cleansing and forgiveness of sins. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins (1 John 1:7). His active obedience reckoned us as righteous and His passive obedience on the cross was the propitiation for all our sins. John's baptism was not enough, they needed to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). Such is the baptism of Jesus, it is spiritual and grants eternal life.

Are you baptized indeed by the Lord Jesus Christ? So many have undergone water baptism but not the baptism of Jesus for they have no personal relationship with Him. You must examine yourself whether you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, for vain is your profession and baptism if it is without true regeneration.

THOUGHT: Am I indwelt by the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the indwelling of Thy Spirit.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

LUKE 3:21-22

MATTHEW 3:15

*“Suffer it to be so now: for thus it
becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”*

GREAT CONDESCENSION

The Son of God condescended to be baptized by John the Baptist. *“Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness”* (Matt 3:15). Calvin says, “The general reason why Christ received baptism was, that he might render full obedience to the Father; and the special reason was, that he might consecrate baptism in his own body, that we might have it in common with him.” During His baptism, a voice from heaven was heard. It was a heavenly confirmation to openly affirm Jesus as the Son of God in the flesh. No other testimony is better than this commendation by God the Father Himself. Born-again Christians, with faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, will agree with this heavenly confirmation.

Jesus is God’s beloved Son, whom the Father loves dearly. Yet, the Son bore the Father’s wrath against sin on the cross when Jesus was made sin for us. It must have been so grave for the Father to allow His beloved Son to suffer under the hands of wicked men and to die on the cruel cross so sinners can be forgiven. What an amazing love for sinners, unfathomable and beyond our comprehension.

The Father was pleased with His obedient Son, who obeyed all the laws and subjected Himself even to die on the cross. The active obedience of Jesus was exercised when He obeyed all the laws demanded in the Old Testament. He obeyed all to become the perfect substitutionary sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. Jesus never sinned and did not need the baptism of repentance of John the Baptist. As God in the flesh, He humbled Himself before John to be baptized. Jesus showed us how to be as meek as a lamb led to the slaughter. Jesus was approved of the Father for He did what He was told to do. Jesus’ full submission to the laws of God is the Christian’s model for living. How men should emulate the Lord Jesus Christ and humble themselves before men.

THOUGHT: Do I strive to obey the laws of God?

PRAYER: Father of glory, Thou hast affirmed the great condescension of Thy Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His subjection under the baptism of John reveals to us His perfect righteousness.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

LUKE 3:23-38

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

*“Who, being in the form of God
thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”*

THE MATERNAL GENEALOGY

The genealogy of Jesus according to Luke is through Mary. Luke's genealogy began with Heli, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of Mary and traced back to the first man, Adam. He showed that Christ was the promised seed of the woman. *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Gen 3:15). Luke highlighted Jesus' humanity in his gospel by often using the title *“Son of Man”* (twenty-six times). However, Jesus did not inherit the sinful nature of Adam because of His immaculate virgin conception. Also, our Lord is 100% God Himself. God can never sin for He is holy, He can never do what is against His own nature. Being the God-man He is able to stand on behalf of all men to receive the punishment we deserve; He is our perfect representative.

After David the lineage escaped God's curse upon Jehoiakim through Nathan, a brother of Solomon, and son of David and Bathsheba. The prophecy of the Davidic line was fulfilled because Mary was from the lineage of David through Nathan. The genealogy according to John emphasizes that Jesus was not only human but also divine. He was with God and He is God. He was with the Father and eternally begotten without beginning, without end. Jesus is not a created being but is equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Word that became flesh. He is Immanuel, God with us. He is eternally the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil 2:5-8). May we truly understand who Jesus Christ is!

THOUGHT: Do I believe that Jesus is the perfect God-man?

PRAYER: Father, help me to appreciate how marvelous Jesus' love is for me and for the world.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

LUKE 4:1

JAMES 1:13-16

“...when lust hath conceived,
it bringeth forth sin...”

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST

This account took place after Jesus was baptized and was wonderfully declared to His disciples to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. The Son of God faced and endured temptations which we are constantly at war with. He single-handedly contested with the devil, so that by His victory we are assured of triumph over the enemy. Great attainments and God-given talents will not exempt us from being tempted, for even our Lord faced it. Satan will always find a way to attack God's children. He has a particular eye for faithful servants, who are not only labouring for God but are fully surrendered to His will. Therefore every believer must double his guard. But one thing is sure: God, who prepares His own elect for temptation, will also give the strength needed before a fierce trial is allowed.

Jesus did not wilfully thrust Himself into temptation but was led up by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil. Matthew Henry said, “Our care must be, not to enter into temptation; but if God, by his providence, order us into circumstances of temptation for our trial, we must not think it strange, but double our guard. Be strong in the Lord, resist stedfast in the faith, and all shall be well.” We must not presume that we have the strength to resist the temptation. We must not tempt the Devil to tempt us, we must not provoke God to put us to shame when we find ourselves knocked out by Satan because of self-confidence. We are tempted when we are drawn aside of our own lust and enticed, “*then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*” (James 1:15).

Whenever we encounter the lustful temptation of Satan, let us remember that his attacks can in no other way be repelled but by and in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of God undoubtedly allowed Himself to be tempted as a constant reminder to us that when Satan excites within us any contest of temptation, we have the promise of victory because He has conquered him already!

THOUGHT: Am I still trusting Jesus in the midst of temptations?

PRAYER: Victorious Father in heaven, help me to fight against the lustful temptations of Satan through the victory of Jesus.

LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 21

LUKE 4:1-4

“...desire the sincere milk of the word,

1 PETER 2:2

that ye may grow thereby.”

THE LUST OF THE FLESH

The Lord Jesus was without food for forty days. The devil tempted Him to turn the stone into bread. It was a pragmatic imperative with a devilish motive. Of course we know Jesus could do it, for He is even able to raise up children unto Abraham out of stones (Luke 3:8). But known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18). Nobody can dictate or command Him to do what is not according to the perfect will of God. God cannot and will not do anything contrary to His nature. God knows everything and He is in control. The wicked and devilish counsels of the enemy have no place in the presence of the thrice holy God. Satan made a direct attack on Christ's sovereignty, in hope of destroying His authority and to drive Christ to perform an unlawful and evil deed.

Jesus simply answered Satan from the written Word that man shall not live by bread alone (Deut 8:3). Man is not made of flesh only but also of spirit. Our flesh needs the physical food but our spirit needs spiritual food. A fat and strong-bodied Christian may look well-nourished externally, but without the spiritual food he is still famished and undernourished. This spiritual food is the Word of God that man must partake of daily in order to grow spiritually. However, only those indwelt by the Spirit of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ are made alive to require spiritual food.

The spiritual food that a man needs is the Word of God. It is the milk and meat for our spirit (1 Pet 2:2; John 4:34), it sustains our spiritual life, it revives our fainting spirit attacked by the forces of Satan, it enables spiritual growth and maturity, it arms believers against the daily fight of temptation and sin. The Word of God is more needful for man than the best food the world can offer. Physical food will only satisfy for a few hours but spiritual food will bring our souls into eternity. Which would you prefer?

THOUGHT: Do I give in easily to the lust of the flesh?

PRAYER: Almighty Father, Thou who quickeneth our spiritual lives, strengthen us by Thy spiritual provisions, for the physical and material can do nothing to help us grow in Thee.

LORD'S DAY EVENING, JANUARY 21

LUKE 4:5-8

MATTHEW 6:16-24

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

THE LUST OF THE EYES

The next temptation posed to Jesus was the lust of the eyes. The devil showed Him the kingdoms of the world which he falsely claimed as his own. He did not have any influence whatsoever over these kingdoms without God's approval. The devil's lie is to promise things which he hath no power to fulfil.

The riches, honours, pleasures, entertainment, grandeur and luxuries of this world were offered to Jesus. But it is written, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"* (1 John 2:15-17).

The devil sought the Son of God's adoration. There is nothing more horrendous and abominable in the eyes of our Creator God than the worship of the devil. He is in total opposition to God and wants to dethrone God. He is deluded to hope that he will be like the Most High. He is the Prince of the powers of this world for he is ruling over those who are outside of Christ. A person may be very religious, but if he has no genuine faith in Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour, he is still part of the kingdom of the devil. A professor of Christ but not a possessor of Him is still worshipping the god of this world. It is not possible to worship both God and the devil. Loving this world means worshipping the devil (Matt 6:24).

Instead of worshipping the devil, man must turn to the Lord and worship Him. Man, being separated from the love of God and unable to worship God in spirit and in truth needs a Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). Only through Him can we escape the lure of the lust of the eyes and the worship of Satan.

THOUGHT: Do I love this present evil world?

PRAYER: Father, may I not be entangled with worldly things.

MONDAY, JANUARY 22
LUKE 4:9-13
2 PETER 2:1-6

“...many shall follow their pernicious ways;
by reason of whom the way of truth
shall be evil spoken of.”

THE PRIDE OF LIFE

Satan's ultimate punch to defeat Jesus was brutal: *“If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence ...”* As the father of lies, he abode not in the truth and though he might quote scriptures, yet nothing comes out of his mouth without the stain of deception *“for there is no truth in him... he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44).

Jesus' reply was most appropriate. The promised assistance is that when believers humbly submit themselves to the Lord's guidance, they cannot but obey His commandments. One is sure of plunging into the lake of fire when one obeys the will and wishes of the devil. More people give in to the bidding of the devil than to the laws of God. They like to follow the path of unrighteousness and wickedness because their hearts are evil. They incline themselves to the works that will puff themselves up. Like the devil, they become proud, boasters and lovers of themselves. The devil wants us to love ourselves and sadly he has promoted some Christian authors such as Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, and Joseph Prince to spread this message. *“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of”* (2 Pet 2:2).

Modern practices in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements today include fabricated miracles and wonders. These are counterfeit ways of proving the power of God, when in fact there is no need to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. Supernatural acts will not convict anyone to believe. God's Word alone is sufficient to bring a person to acknowledge his need of the Savior. These modernistic ways are identical to Satan's temptation of Jesus.

Let us never tempt the Lord. Do not think we can manipulate God by worldly gimmicks. Do not tempt Him by asking that which is against His Word. Obey Him instead!

THOUGHT: Am I so proud as to tempt the Lord?

PRAYER: Father, Thou art worthy of my reverential fear for Thou reigneth over all the universe. Grant me the humility of heart and mind to acknowledge that I am but dust before Thy holy presence.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23

LUKE 4:14-21

MATTHEW 5:3-12

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

THE SABBATH

Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, honoured this holy day with His presence in the synagogue. His presence was not for the sake of attendance but to read the Scriptures that declared the truth about Him. He expounded the Scriptures and taught the people publicly. They were astonished at His doctrine and wondered at His gracious words. Jesus preached and taught God’s Word, the inspired and inerrant Scripture. Jesus revealed the prophecies about Him from the Scriptures and taught the people how He fulfilled them. It was the acceptable time of the Lord, the time of redemption, which was dependent on the purpose, or good pleasure, of God. It was the time which He willed and fixed for the redemption of His people.

The people were struck by the words of Jesus. The audience were the poor inhabitants of Nazareth. The Bible describes these poor people as the broken, captives, blind, and bruised (Luke 4:18). They were oppressed by so many spiritual miseries, poverty, blindness, slavery, and death. The Lord encouraged them by His life-giving light, to rescue them from the mires of spiritual depravity and the deep abyss of hell. He promised restoration of complete blessedness unto all them who believed in Jesus.

Those whom the Lord rescues are commanded to honour the Lord’s Day by hearing of the Word of God and worshipping Him together with fellow believers (Heb 10:25). Nothing is better than spending the Sabbath Day in God’s house studying God’s Word with God’s people. His Word declares clearly that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Sadly, like the people in those days, the majority today are still rejecting the truth. It is important for Christians to be knowledgeable in God’s Word, that we may be guided and led in this dark and troubled world (Ps 119:105). The Christian needs to be discerning because the devil is doing his best to deceive knowing that his days are numbered.

THOUGHT: Do I worshipfully come to the Lord on His Sabbath?

PRAYER: Father of mercies and abundant grace, keep me mindful always of who I really am when I come to worship Thee.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24

LUKE 4:22-30

JOHN 1:10-13

*“He came unto his own,
and his own received him not.”*

REJECTED

Jesus was treated with contempt by the people of Nazareth. He publicly stated their thoughts by these words, *“ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself”* (Luke 4:23). He was rejected by His own neighbours, a very sad response from the people who personally heard and saw Jesus since childhood. They were hardened and blind to the truth. This is the expected response of the unbelieving. Instead of receiving the personal testimony of Jesus, His neighbours questioned His status in society. If Jesus comes today I think He would expect more rejections than before.

Jesus said that no prophet was accepted in his own country. He *“... was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not”* (John 1:10-11). Their rejection caused Jesus to withhold His work of miracles in His own village.

Jesus, by giving the examples of how to the widow in Sarepta and Naaman was the grace of God given, implied that such grace would be removed from those of Nazareth and be granted to others. This drove them to madness. Instead of having their consciences pricked to repent and seek a remedy for their sins, they were fuming. Rather than believing Him, the men who heard Him were filled with wrath and thrust Him out. Jesus passed through the middle of the crowd and escaped. The power of God is always victorious to preserve, Jesus had yet to fulfil His mission to save us from our sins.

It is a very sorry situation when Jesus knocks at the door of a person's heart and he thrusts Him out. The gift of eternal life is freely offered to everybody but if one will not personally receive and take it he can never own it. May the Holy Spirit convict our heart not to reject Jesus but to weep before Him and cry, *“God be merciful to me a sinner”* (Luke 18:13).

THOUGHT: Am I preventing Jesus from entering my heart?

PRAYER: O LORD, my God, help me with my unbelief and grant me the grace to believe in Thy only begotten Son. Let me receive Him as Lord and Saviour.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

LUKE 4:31-44

ROMANS 12:3

“...not to think of himself
more highly than he ought to think...”

THE POWER OF GOD

Everybody who heard Jesus was astonished at His doctrine for *“his word was with power.”* This suggests that He spoke with great fervency and majesty. He was not cold or indifferent, but His words had authority. Such power went along with the words that reached the people’s hearts. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb 4:12).

His words also had power over the demons. Jesus rebuked the demons with His words and cast them out, for they were powerless before Him. Jesus was known to them, unfortunately they could not and neither would they ever have the heart to repent and believe in Jesus. They are doomed to eternal damnation.

The people saw and wondered at the authority and power of His words that commanded the unclean spirits to come out. The people were compelled to acknowledge that Christ was more than just a man. Every man has a chance to repent and believe so that before his death he will have the assurance of eternal life. Jesus will never cast away anybody who comes to Him with a repentant and believing heart to receive Him as Savior and Lord. Jesus rebuked the demons for their proclamation however true it was. The Lord does not approve the witness of unbelievers. That is why He asks this of believers, *“Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (1 Pet 1:16).

Jesus has power over diseases too. He healed Peter’s mother-in-law. He also revealed His power over all kinds of diseases by healing the sick people who thronged Him. There is nothing impossible for God’s mighty hand. He has all the power to heal and it is a comfort for Christians to know that our God not only forgives sins but can heal all our diseases too.

THOUGHT: Do I experience the power of God in my life?

PRAYER: Our Father Lord, Thou art infinite, eternal and unchangeable in Thy power. Make me to experience Thy power in my life as I daily live for Thee.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

LUKE 5:12-13

MATTHEW 8:1-4

“...Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him,
saying, I will; be thou clean...”

TRUE HEALING

Jesus is all powerful to heal all kinds of diseases. He is the world's great Physician. There is no disease that has afflicted or will ever afflict mankind that our Lord has no power to heal. The physical healing of bodily infirmities is a temporal mercy, for it is deliverance from a disease which threatens a temporal life. Christ's power over bodily diseases and His ability to cure them teaches us that He truly has divine power. It authenticated His supernatural power as the Son of God. Christ's divine power must be fully assented to and firmly believed by all seeking benefit and healing from Him.

Man's great concern is to be cleansed not from physical leprosy, but spiritual leprosy. Man must believe in Jesus who can make clean any humble believer who boldly goes to Him. Man must rest upon His power and must have confidence that Christ can make Him clean. There is no guilt so great that He cannot sufficiently and efficiently atone for through His precious blood. His righteousness is without corruption and His grace has all the power to subdue sin. What we must do is to humbly come before Him and say, *“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”* (Luke 5:12).

Christ's healing of man's diseases also shows His compassion. This is revealed in His kind answer (Matt 8:3). Without hesitation, Jesus put forth His hand and touched the sick. Leprosy was a loathsome disease, nobody dared to come near a leper, yet Christ touched him. He was in no danger of being infected by him. Christ is so pure and holy that sicknesses and filthiness are overcome by Him. Nature works gradually, but the God of nature works immediately. He speaks and it is done. The purpose of his work of healing was to authenticate His divinity. He is the Author of life and has power to bring it back to perfect health. Jesus showed His compassion but above all He authenticated His divinity by demonstrating His power over all diseases.

THOUGHT: Do I know the reason for Christ's healing?

PRAYER: Father, our great God and Physician who heals all diseases, Thou art worthy of honour for Thou art able and all-powerful to make it happen.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

LUKE 5:16-26

GENESIS 18:25

*“Shall not the Judge of
all the earth do right?”*

FORGIVENESS GIVEN

Palsy was a condition which was probably due to an injury resulting in paralysis of the lower part of the body. There was no chance for the man to go near Jesus but his faith and that of his friends found a way through the rooftop. He was disabled but his friends helped him. So it is the desire of every Christian to bring those who are lost to Christ to be healed and be saved. *“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost”* (Matt 18:11).

When Jesus saw the paralytic man and his friends, His first words were, *“Man, thy sins are forgiven thee”* (Luke 5:20). Sickness as a whole is brought about because of the curse of sin. Jesus came to save man from sin and all its influences. Born-again Christians have that assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the promise of a perfect, glorified body at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:52-57).

When the man was forgiven, the scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy. These men who were knowledgeable of the Scriptures continued to reject Jesus Christ in spite of the miracles. Many groups calling themselves Christians continue to deny the power of Jesus to forgive sins. They still rely on their own good works, church membership, sacraments and other means rather than on the Son of God who offered the forgiveness of sins to all who put their trust in His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross.

Being God Himself, Jesus has the power to forgive sins. All sins of mankind are also sins committed against the great Lawmaker. Jesus the Son fulfilled all the laws and made Himself receive the curse so that we may be forgiven. He can forgive sins because He has already paid the penalty for sins. *“Come now... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow...”* (Isa 1:18).

Unbelieving hearts cannot understand. How about you?

THOUGHT: Am I looking forward to the day of glorification?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for life eternal in heaven through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 28
LUKE 5:27-28
PSALM 84

“...I had rather be a
doorkeeper in the house of my God,
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

THE CALL OF MATTHEW

Jesus found Matthew in the tax office doing his duty. Luke identified him as Levi (Luke 5:27). As a publican, in other words, a tax collector of the Roman government, the Jewish people treated him as a traitor. A publican was employed to gather public revenue which in Matthew's case arose from the exportation and importation of commodities being at the “*receipt of custom*.” While executing his office, the Lord called him to be a follower. He gave up his work to become His disciple. Of all the publicans in Judea, Jesus singled out Matthew to join His band of disciples. This shows the sovereign and distinguishing grace of God to those whom He has ordained even before the foundation of this world. Matthew Henry says, “it was a wonder of his grace that he would call a publican, from the receipt of custom, to be his disciple and follower.”

Matthew followed, leaving his job with its profit. There is no better work than to serve the Lord and there is no better workplace than in the house of God. The psalmist said, “*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*” (Ps 84:10). It was no doubt a hard and difficult decision of self-renunciation to follow a penniless and homeless Teacher in man's perspective. But as William Bright penned,

*He sat to watch o'er customs paid,
A man of scorned and hard'ning trade;
Alike the symbol and the tool
Of foreign masters' hated rule.
Who keep Thy gifts, O bid them claim
The steward's, not the owner's name;
Who yield all up for Thy dear sake,
Let them of Matthew's wealth partake.*

THOUGHT: Have I received a call from the Lord?

PRAYER: Eternal Father, Thou knowest who belong to Thee even before the foundation of this world. Thou hast ordained some to honour in serving Thee and as Thou callest me unto salvation and service, help me to do all for Thy glory and honour alone.

MONDAY, JANUARY 29
LUKE 5:29-35
MATTHEW 7:1-5

*“And why beholdest thou the mote
that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not
the beam that is in thine own eye?”*

THE HEART OF THE CALLED

Matthew (or Levi) hosted a great feast for the Lord. It was his way of honouring his Saviour as well as an opportunity to invite his friends and relatives to meet and hear the Lord. He freely used both his house and his property to host a gathering where he introduced Jesus Christ as his new found Master and Lord. A great number of his friends and acquaintances attended the occasion that they might be convinced of the change happening in his life. It was a blessed time for the crowd to see and hear his heavenly teacher.

The murmuring self-righteous scribes and Pharisees were always indignant with the Lord. They complained that Jesus ate and drank with publicans and sinners. They did not realize that Jesus did not want to eat with them because they were more vile and outrageous than those publicans and sinners. Jesus well said, *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”* (Matt 7:3). Jesus did not express His resentment over the rebellious attitude of the scribes and Pharisees as He justly might have done, but answered them with reason and meekness. Instead of taking that occasion to show His displeasure against the Pharisees and scribes, He took it to show His compassion to poor publicans and sinners to encourage them. Jesus told them that He did not come to call the righteous (those who thought they were) like the Pharisees and scribes. He did not mean that they were righteous but that they proudly esteemed themselves to be. How foolish were these men who believed they could earn salvation by their own hypocritical righteousness.

Similarly, modern Christianity is characterized by many hypocrites. They have this “holier than thou” attitude against their own brethren who are struggling in their Christian walk. They do not know that Jesus specifically said that He came to those who regarded themselves as sinners who needed the Lord’s salvation.

THOUGHT: Do I acknowledge myself as a sinner to the core?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, grant me a broken and a contrite heart.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30
LUKE 5:36-39
2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

*“...if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature:
old things are passed away...”*

BRAND NEW

Jesus gave three parables to bring home His point of what it means to be a new creation in Christ. He described first an old piece of garment not fitted to be sewed together with the new cloth. The new piece of cloth will pull the weaker old garment and cause the clothes to tear apart. Jesus gave this illustration to demonstrate that the old character of a person is not befitting for a regenerated man in Christ. The new and old habits will always be at war with each other. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor 5:17).

Another similitude is that of an old bottle not suited for new wine. In those days wineskins were made of animal hide, generally of goats. New wine in the process of fermentation produced gas that would cause the old wineskin to burst because it was no longer stretchable but brittle. These old bottles would not be able to stand the fermentation of the new wine as the old skin, like the sewing, would be prone to give way. This was to illustrate that a born-again believer was no more fit for the old tradition, old system and old pattern of living. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col 3:1-2).

Finally, old drunkards do not like new wines. This illustrated that a man with the “old nature” is not inclined to behave like the “new man,” neither would the unregenerated man desire the things of God. Natural men having drunk the old wine of their carnal lusts and pleasures would not desire the new wine of the Gospel and of the grace of God. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor 2:14). Which are you? Are you made new in Christ through faith in Jesus?

THOUGHT: Am I manifesting a life as a new creation in Christ?

PRAYER: Gracious heavenly Father, Thou art the Giver of life, even the new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray for Thy regenerating power to change my life according to Thy Word and Thy will.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31

LUKE 6:1-11

MATTHEW 15:1-9

“But in vain they do worship me,

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

THE LORD OF THE SABBATH

The scribes and the Pharisees were adversaries of Jesus. They were always scrutinising Jesus with their watchful eyes. Another opportunity they had was to question Jesus of His disciples plucking with their hands and eating corn on the Sabbath which was prohibited by the Pharisaical law. They adhered very strictly to their unscriptural additions and considered those as obligatory requirements for justification. *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt 15:9). They judged according to their man-made laws rather than the Scriptures.

Jesus declared the Son of man as Lord of the Sabbath. They did not realize they were talking to the God who created the universe in six days and declared a day of rest on the seventh. While the Pharisees were bound to legalism, they rejected the great Lawmaker. *“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God”* (Rom 10:2-3).

On another Sabbath Jesus healed a man with a paralytic right hand. The scribes and Pharisees kept watching Jesus to accuse Him. When Jesus healed the man, they accused Him of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus knew the thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees. He is the Omniscient God and nothing is hid from Him. Jesus exhibited the right kind of work on a Sabbath, love and patience were demonstrated. Jesus was grieved at their unbelief and constant fault-finding. To show His authority as the One who instituted the Sabbath, He demonstrated His power by healing the sick man, and the withered hand was marvelously restored. They should have marveled and believed in Jesus, but their reprobate hearts denied the privilege to understand what Jesus tried to convey to them. Instead of believing in Jesus, the Jewish leaders were furious with the Lord.

THOUGHT: Do I remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy?

PRAYER: O LORD of the Sabbath, help me to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. In the day that Thou hast ordained for me to worship and honour Thee, help me love Thee with all my heart.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1

LUKE 6:12-16

MATTHEW 10:5-8

*“...as ye go, preach, saying,
The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

THE TWELVE

Jesus separated Himself from the people to pray on a mountain. His prayer was most probably in relation to the choice of His twelve Apostles. He showed by His example how important it was to pray before embarking on a task or making decisions. He communed with His Father all night, showing the difficulty that lay ahead.

Many followed Him, but He called only twelve to be His apostles. An Apostle is one who is sent forth directly by Christ particularly commissioned to preach the gospel. They became the inner circle of His ministry. He knew them even before the foundation of the world. Having known that Judas was the traitor, Jesus could have removed him from being an Apostle. But God who foreordained these things allowed Jesus to choose one who would betray Him (John 6:70-71).

He chose the twelve men personally, one by one. He appointed and ordained them that they should be with Him and later work in the ministry He had for them. They were not chosen to be His inner circle of friends but as partakers of His authority and power. The Master gave them the authority to preach the kingdom of God, and on top of that, Jesus gave them power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils.

Today, we may not be Apostles, but as believers, we are given the commission to preach and teach God's Word. We are granted the honour to speak forth the Word of Life that has the power to save from the condemnation of eternal fire. We are God's messengers of the great, glad tidings of eternal life in heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. Having this privilege of being ambassadors for the Lord Jesus Christ sent forth to do the King's business, are we doing it with zeal? Are we obeying the command of God to be His representatives on earth? Are we doing the assignment that He has given to us?

THOUGHT: Am I doing what is expected of me as a Christian?

PRAYER: Father, Thou hast granted me that great and heavenly calling. Help me to do it with all my might.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2

LUKE 6:17-26

COLOSSIANS 3:1-7

*"... If ye then be risen with Christ,
seek those things which are above."*

BLESSINGS AND WOES

In this sermon of the Lord Jesus Christ, He described how men are blessed and expressed how they might sink into griefs. His blessings are not according to the world's standards. Being poor in spirit assures a place in His kingdom, hungering for righteousness will earn satisfaction, weeping today will merit laughter, and being hated and reproached for His name's sake secure blessings.

The woes of Jesus are expressions of great sorrow and distress. These result when a Christian lives in conformity to the world's crazes. The prophets of old separated themselves from the world and endeavoured to seek things of eternal value. Jesus directed this to those who laboured to be rich materially and to fill themselves with the world's cravings. He showed the gloomy future of those who lavished upon themselves temporal joys and worldly pleasures. Men who seek material gain shall never be content nor be rewarded. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"* (Col 3:1-4).

Believers are to shun the world's craze and fanfare, for these are of the devil. These will pass away and are nothing compared to the everlasting jubilation in heaven where eternal bliss abounds (Rev 21:4). We might be poor, falling short of the world's standards, but we are to rejoice waiting for that life where we shall dwell with our Saviour for eternity. As heaven-bound children of God we should not be entangled again by the world's allurements. We must take heed of Jesus' words which lead us to a blessed life not only here on earth but forever and ever.

THOUGHT: Do I take heed of God's instructions for my life?

PRAYER: Lord, the Creator of all things, Thou art the spring of all blessings, the strength that enables us to resist the temptations of this world and the shield to protect us from the enemies.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3
LUKE 6:27-49
1 JOHN 3:14-19

“... and shutteth up his
bowels of compassion from him,
how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

EXHORTATIONS AND WARNINGS

Jesus exhorts us to love our enemies and to do good to them, even those who hate us! What a command! This is only possible to those who have experienced the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers of Jesus. Naturally, it is difficult to bless those who curse us, it is hard to offer the other cheek when we are hurt, and it is so tough to offer our coat also to those who have taken our garments.

Jesus also exhorts us not to love only those who love us and do good only to those who do good to us. He encourages us to lend without expecting any repayment. He exhorts us not to judge others and to be forgiving as God has forgiven us of all our sins. He demands from Christians to be givers and dispensers of the many blessings they have received from Him. *“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”* (1 John 3:17).

On the other hand, Jesus warns against blind leaders. They are hypocrites who desire to lead, but the end of their ways are destruction. These leaders do not walk their talk. Jesus also warns of the corrupt doctrines of these false teachers. Poisoned food destroys the physical body, so with erroneous teachings, these bring corruption and even eternal damnation to souls. We must be vigilant to keep away from them (1 Cor 15:33). The antidote is to be thoroughly grounded in the pure, uncontaminated and perfect Word of God.

Jesus again exhorts through a parable of the only way we can be delivered from blind, hypocritical leaders and their toxic teachings. Believers must truly be founded upon the Rock, the Lord Himself. Christians must not be like a house whose foundation is sand, so weak that it cannot withstand any calamity.

THOUGHT: Am I receptive to God’s exhortations and warnings?

PRAYER: Father, help me to love others and keep myself from the seductions of this world.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 4

LUKE 7:1-18

JOHN 1:1-5

*"In him was life;
and the life was the light of men."*

POWER OVER SICKNESS

Jesus is omnipotent. No sickness or any disablement is beyond His power to heal. He is the Creator and He knows how to fix His broken creatures. He is willing to restore not only physical ailments but also spiritual afflictions. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb 4:15-16).

This centurion, a Roman officer with a hundred soldiers under him, pleaded for his servant. Although he was not a Jew, he was sympathetic to the Jewish religion for he is described as one who loved the nation of Israel and built them a synagogue. He beseeched Jesus through the elders. Jesus, however, was not interested in what he had done but in his faith. The centurion's faith was manifested when he said to Jesus, *"Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof...say in a word, and my servant shall be healed"* (Luke 7:6-7). Jesus commended him, *"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"* (Luke 7:9). The dying man was far from where Jesus was, but His power was not limited by distance. The servant was made whole again at the exact time Jesus pronounced the healing (Matt 8:13). Do you have faith like this Gentile centurion?

Jesus further demonstrated His power by bringing to life again a dead man. John declared *"in him was life; and the life was the light of men"* (John 1:4). He is the Author of life and He came to give us life not just on this earth but life eternal in heaven. He alone can preserve our earthly life and even perfectly preserve us forever. Jesus offers us more abundant life in heaven with Him when we truly repent of our sins and trust in Him.

THOUGHT: Do I believe God has power over every sickness?

PRAYER: Thou art the Great Physician, I pray for my spiritual healing which I know will grant me physical healing for eternity!

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5

LUKE 7:36-39

JOHN 8:12-24

*“... for if ye believe not that I am he,
ye shall die in your sins.”*

THE ANOINTING OF THE ANOINTED

A Pharisee invited Jesus to his home to dine. Although Jesus knew the heart of this man, He accepted the invitation. Later, this Pharisee found fault with Jesus because of a woman who came to anoint Him. He judged Christ as having no spirit of discernment, for He allowed the woman who was a sinner to anoint Him.

The woman, known for her sinful behavior, deserved condemnation. But when she heard about Jesus, she wept realizing her grave sinfulness. She used her tears to wash Jesus' feet. Surely those were tears of repentance (2 Cor 7:10). She humbly bowed before her Lord and wiped His feet with her hair. She even kissed His feet, an act in ancient times that signified love, religious reverence, subjection, and supplication. She brought an alabaster box of ointment. Such boxes were made of a kind of lime and used as vessels to hold valuable ointments. Anointing with oil was an act of hospitality during Jesus' time, and in Luke 7:46, Jesus contrasted her act with the inhospitable reception of the Pharisee. She welcomed Jesus not into a house but into her heart as her Saviour and Lord. It is said that the ointment was used as part of her sinful lifestyle. Repentant sinners must likewise cut off all that pulls them back to their past ungodly life and surrender them to the Lord. *“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched”* (Mark 9:43).

The faultfinding Pharisee condemned the woman as a sinner but was not mindful of his own sinfulness. He did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah having all the nature of Jehovah God of the Old Testament. Indeed, *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). Have you repented of your sins and acknowledged Jesus as your anointed Messiah?

THOUGHT: Do I have faith or find fault in Jesus?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to have faith in Thee.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

LUKE 7:40-8:3

ACTS 3:12-21

*“Repent ye therefore, and be converted,
that your sins may be blotted out...”*

OF SERVANTS AND DEBTORS

Jesus gave a parable to explain the situation in the previous passage. He described two debtors: one owed much more than the other. Both were forgiven by the creditor. Jesus then asked which of the two would love the creditor more. The Pharisee answered correctly, not realizing that he was the one being rebuked by the parable. He is like many professing Christians today who do not love God as much as they should because they do not realize how much they owe God. Many believe in Jesus not because they have understood their guilt of sin against a Holy God, but for the convenience of their own lives. They think Christianity is equal to financial prosperity! Isaiah 29:13 says, *“Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.”*

Jesus explained to the Pharisee that the woman’s actions revealed her true repentance. Her service was to God a sweeter smelling savour than the Pharisee’s for he was full of self-righteousness. Jesus explained that his offering Him a meal in his house was nothing without a genuine change in his life. *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”* (Acts 3:19).

Jesus demonstrated through this parable how He freely forgives sins. Regardless of the Pharisee’s contempt, Jesus showed His mercy and grace upon the woman for she had faith in Him and was truly repentant. Jesus did not stop there but continued to preach and shew glad tidings to many. Many of the women who received healing followed Him. Those who had seen God’s light of salvation ministered to Jesus with their substance. We who have experienced the great deliverance of God must come forward to serve Him. Saints are not on altars to be served, but before the altar to serve!

THOUGHT: Am I saved by grace alone through faith alone?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I appreciate Thy abundant grace and everlasting mercy upon me, a vile sinner.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

LUKE 8:4-18

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16

*“...work out your own salvation
with fear and trembling.”*

OF SEEDS AND THE LIGHT

Jesus put forth another parable. Although this parable is well known as the parable of the sower, the intention is not so much on the act of sowing but on what happened to the seeds as they landed on four different types of soil. And Jesus said, *“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”* (Luke 8:8). This parable teaches that the scattering of the Word of God far and wide may not bear fruit all the time, especially when the soil is not fertile or well cultivated. Jesus declared that He was there in the capacity of a husbandman, who was going out to sow seed, but that many of His hearers resembled the hard and stony soil, while others resembled the thorny soil.

Jesus continued to describe that men light a candle not to hide it. Instead they place it where it may be of use. So it is with salvation. After we are saved, others must see the grace of God in our lives. Our salvation is not to be concealed, but must be revealed as light that the surrounding dark and wicked world will see. We must let God shine His light through us. Otherwise, we might as well not have the light at all. We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). We are accountable to God if we do not share this light.

May we pray for the Holy Spirit's illumination to understand these parables. As God's children, we thank God for the mind of Christ and spiritual eyes to comprehend God's Word. Matthew Henry has an interesting illustration: A parable is like the pillar of cloud and fire. It turned a dark side towards the Egyptians, thus confounding them; but a light side towards the Israelites, thus comforting them. The same light directs the eyes of some, but dazzles the eyes of others. Jesus' interpretation is our model for understanding biblical parables. Interpret scripture with scripture. The Lord will cause us to see the truth of His Word.

THOUGHT: Do I desire to know the meaning of the Word of God?

PRAYER: Father, teach me to live out the power of the Gospel in my life. Help me to understand Thy perfect words.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8

LUKE 8:22-56

MATTHEW 8:23-27

*“Why are ye fearful,
O ye of little faith?”*

JESUS' POWER OVER CREATION

Jesus went with His disciples to the other side of the lake of Galilee. As they crossed the lake a raging storm started. Great strong waves filled their boat with water. Among the disciples were fishermen who had experienced many storms before. However, their reaction suggested that this storm was worse than usual. They thought they would drown. Although Jesus was sleeping, He knew what was happening. He had told them earlier, *“Let us go over unto the other side of the lake”* (Luke 8:22), so whatever storm came they would surely reach their destination. It was a good thing that the disciples realized, in the midst of the terrible storm, they had Jesus to save them (Matt 8:25). Jesus rebuked the waves and the mighty wind. Immediately, it was calm!

A naked man possessed by demons met Jesus when He arrived at Gadara (a town east of Jordan). The demon that possessed the man knew Jesus and understood the eternal torment that awaited him. Named Legion, many demons (even a regiment of at least 6,000 soldiers) were with him. Jesus wanted His disciples to witness His overruling power over the demons. The demons were cast out and the man was restored back to his normal state of mind!

Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, pleaded with Jesus to come to his house to heal his daughter who was at the point of death. Jesus agreed, but as they went, a woman having an issue of blood for twelve years came seeking healing. By faith she supposed that by touching Jesus' garment, she could be healed. And indeed she was instantly healed! Jesus told her, *“Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace”* (Luke 8:48). When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, his daughter was already dead. He took her hand and called her to rise. She arose straightway! Do you believe in the power of Jesus? Is He your Saviour?

THOUGHT: Do I trust Jesus' power to save me to the uttermost?

PRAYER: O God the Omnipotent, Thou knowest how to restore our physical and spiritual lives. Restore me, O my Lord!

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

LUKE 9:1-17

ZECHARIAH 4:1-10

“...Not by might, nor by power,
but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Jesus has all power and authority. He is far wiser than the greatest commander, for He not only equips His army with training and ammunition, but also by His presence. “...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech 4:6).

In service, Jesus personally sent the Apostles to preach and He also took care of their message. He warned them not to rely on their own knowledge and wisdom but on God’s Word alone. He sent them equipped with the tool of the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. They must be ready always to be harmless as doves and wise as serpents as they serve Him.

Herod, a ruler of one-fourth of the Roman Empire, wondered at the authority of Jesus. He thought Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected, for John the Baptist lived a Christ-like life. If we are in Jesus, He will keep working through us till the day we see Him face to face.

In life, Jesus can provide for our needs. The disciples did not think that Jesus could provide enough considering the vast number of people and so they asked Jesus to disperse the multitude. Instead, He told them, “Give ye them to eat” (Luke 9:13). Our God, while being greatly concerned for our spiritual condition, also takes care of our physical needs. Jesus knew that they did not have anything to offer but exhorted them because He wanted the Apostles to trust in Him alone. One of the disciples found five loaves and two fishes from a lad. After blessing the fishes and the loaves, the disciples distributed these to the people. All were satisfied, and they gathered twelve baskets full of fragments.

The authority of Jesus is all encompassing and limitless. He directs His people to serve and to maintain their witness. He controls every one’s life and provides for our needs. Let us lean on Him. He is God!

THOUGHT: Do I acknowledge the authority of Jesus over me?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, help me to be submissive to Thee.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

LUKE 9:28-36

2 PETER 1:17-18

*“...he received from God the Father
honour and glory...”*

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Jesus went up to the mountain to pray together with three of His disciples. As He was praying His countenance changed and His raiment turned white and glistened, foreshadowing His glorification in heaven. How marvelous that our Lord displayed the truthfulness of what He had prophesied. Yes, He was going to die but He was also going to be resurrected and to sit at the right hand of the Father. He would go through the dark valley of suffering and death so that all who believed in Him would be glorified with Him forever.

Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of that transfiguration of their Lord. Jesus wanted not only one but three living witnesses in order to authenticate the event. The three Apostles saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Although the Apostles were sleepy, surely it was not a dream, for how could three men have the same dream at the same time? They heard how Jesus would suffer and die at Jerusalem. But the transfiguration provided them assurance of the blessed hope that the work of Christ would bring. The Apostles did not only see Moses and Elijah but also heard the voice of the Father from heaven: *“This is my beloved Son: hear him”* (Luke 9:35). This was the second confirmation from the Father, the first was during Jesus’ baptism. The Father wanted to reassure the Apostles that Jesus indeed was the Christ and He was who they must follow. Peter wrote, *“For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount”* (2 Pet 1:17-18).

Jesus’ transfiguration gave the disciples a taste of His glory: His face shone as the sun. In the past, God appeared to the patriarchs and the prophets. But in heaven, all the saints will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2), far beyond the brightness of the sun, on His glorious throne.

THOUGHT: Do I have the assurance of seeing Jesus face to face?

PRAYER: Glorious Father in heaven, may my heart always long for that day when I can behold Thy lovely face for eternity!

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 11

LUKE 9:37-56

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

“...in lowliness of mind

let each esteem other better than themselves.”

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE DISCIPLES

The disciples of the Lord were found to be powerless over the devil possessing a child. Although Jesus gave them power to do wonders and miracles to make proof of their ministry, they lacked faith to exercise what the Lord had given them. When Jesus told those who were healed by His mighty power, “*thy faith hath made thee whole*,” they were not healed by their own subjective faith. Rather, it was because of their objective faith in Jesus’ promises and the power of God the Almighty. Jesus described those unbelieving people as faithless and perverse, for they were stubborn and morally corrupt in character. They were men of natural minds who did not know the things of God. They did not believe God had the power to cast out devils. Even when Jesus told them of His death and resurrection, they were so foolish, unable to fathom His deep sayings.

The disciples were proud and conceited in themselves. Even among the Apostles, they were vying to be the greatest. Jesus taught them by using a child as an example. He wanted them to have a childlike faith, not childish faith. Jesus also had to rebuke their sectarianism telling them to forbid none, for he that is not against them was for them.

The disciples were also prejudiced. Jesus knew His time to die was near, and steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, to fulfill the prophecy. He was to be offered as the Lamb of God. The disciples found the Samaritans rejecting Jesus because they were envious that He set His face to Jerusalem and not to Samaria. James and John who were unaware of Jesus’ plight wanted to destroy the Samaritans for not receiving Jesus.

We must thank the Lord that He came not to destroy men’s lives but to save them. Though the disciples had their weaknesses, our Lord is the One who preserves us all, He alone deserving all glory!

THOUGHT: Am I truly a disciple of Jesus Christ?

PRAYER: Lord of mercy and grace, help me be the kind of disciple that Jesus wants me to be for I desire to give glory unto His Name!

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

LUKE 9:57-62

MATTHEW 28:18-20

*“Go ye therefore,
and teach all nations...”*

FIT FOR THE KINGDOM

Are you ready to sacrifice for Jesus? A certain man wanted to follow Jesus, but He warned that He did not have a comfortable place to live in and if the man should follow he must be willing to make sacrifices. Jesus indicated that He was living a sacrificial life even unto death, likewise Christians must do the same. After His death, He commissioned His disciples to go till the ends of the world to preach the gospel (Matt 28:18-20).

Are you ready to preach His Kingdom? When another was asked by the Lord to follow Him, he asked for permission to go and bury his dead father first. Jesus rebuked him. The phrase *“let the dead bury their dead”* indicated that he should leave all worldly entanglements and practices. Followers of Jesus must be willing to be separate from the world’s affairs and concentrate on co-labouring with God in the salvation of men. It is not that Christ’s followers are to be unconcerned for their loved ones. The Bible teaches us to be kind and good in every relationship and to show piety at home. However, we are not to use these as excuses not to do our duty to God.

Are you ready to labour for Him? The third one, although he desired to follow, was still attached to his kindred and former lifestyle. Jesus told him to leave everything and follow him. For those who have decided to follow Jesus, there is “no turning back, no turning back.”

Matthew Henry said, “If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world, and not reckon upon making any thing more than heaven of our religion, as we must resolve not to take up with any thing less. Let us not go about to compound the profession of Christianity with secular advantages; Christ has put them asunder, let us not think of joining them together; on the contrary, we must expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations, must deny ourselves, and take up our cross.”

THOUGHT: Am I ready to forsake everything for the sake of Jesus?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, help me to serve Thee with all my life.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13
LUKE 10:1-24
EZEKIEL 2:1-5

*"...I send thee to the children of Israel,
to a rebellious nation that
hath rebelled against me..."*

THE APPOINTED AND SENT

The Lord Jesus sent the disciples two by two. He personally appointed them to go to places He had assigned. Jesus said the harvest was great but the labourers were few and He asked His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He may send forth more workers. Jesus told them to go as lambs among wolves, for God-sent workers must be meek and harmless, not vengeful against persecutors but humbly submitting to the Father's will as Jesus did. He told them not to worry about their financial (purse) or material (scrip, shoes) support. They must urgently bring peace in the person of Jesus Christ to every house they entered.

Jesus denounced the indifference of the people from Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Their hearts were hardened against the gospel of Christ. It is not for man to judge persons or places who are rejecting God, but for the Lord to declare His woes upon them. (Read Ezekiel 2:3.)

The disciples were rejoicing in their successes and reported back to Jesus. They seemed to be puffed up because of the wonders and miracles they had performed. They immediately forgot that they were just instruments of God and the power was not their own. God's servants must give all glory to God. The disciples' wrong convictions were corrected. They were not to focus on the outward results of the ministry, but to rejoice that they were saved and called by God even before the foundation of the world to perform God's work. It is a great privilege to serve God and be counted as servants of His Kingdom. In spite of their failures, Jesus thanked the Father for His sovereignty in choosing weak and insignificant men of the world to do His will. Verily, no man can boast before God. All things were granted by the Father according to His own good pleasure.

THOUGHT: Am I a sent-one of Christ?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, Thou art the One who has called me to salvation and service. Help me fulfil the tasks I am assigned.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14
LUKE 10:25-37
MATTHEW 5:17-20

*“Whosoever ...shall break one of these
least commandments,...he shall be
...the least in the kingdom of heaven...”*

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAW

God demands that we love Him with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. A lawyer questioned Jesus about the way to inherit eternal life. Jesus dealt with the heart of the lawyer's problem by asking him about the law. The lawyer replied with the two-fold law: the first is to love the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength and with all his mind; and the second is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Jesus told him to do all those things he mentioned and he shall have eternal life. Jesus was not teaching a salvation by works, but was causing the lawyer to realise that he was not qualified in any way to enter eternal life. God still demands perfect obedience of His laws and this is still applicable today. *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt 5:19).

The lawyer could not accept his being disqualified. He continued to ask Jesus who his neighbour was. Mercifully, the Lord told him a parable. It was about a victim of a theft who was left for dead. A priest passed by but on the other side and did not help. Priests were to offer sacrifices as sin offerings for the people, yet they had no heart for people. A Levite who was supposed to have seen the real need of the injured man likewise did not lift a finger to help. Belonging to the tribe of Levi, he was in charge of the works in the Tabernacle. He ought to have known the demands of God's law to love his neighbours. Lastly, the Samaritan, who was considered to be outside the kingdom of God, on the contrary did the right thing.

The Law of God has never been abolished. It is not kept in order that one be saved, but it points us to Christ, who alone lived as our perfect Righteousness and died as our perfect Representative.

THOUGHT: Is the Law significant to me?

PRAYER: O Lord, Thou hast given me the great privilege of belonging to Thee, grant me the wisdom to obey Thy Law.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

LUKE 10:38-42

PSALM 27:4

*“One thing have I desired of the LORD,
...that I may dwell in the house of the LORD...”*

ONE THING NEEDFUL

Giving our best to God is what is expected of us. Luke recorded this account of Mary and Martha to bring home the point of how we are to express our love for the Lord. Read Luke 10:27.

Martha was a busy servant of the Lord. She was concerned with the physical and material aspects. She did her best for the Lord Jesus. In fact, Jesus did not prevent her from doing all that was needful. Her way of loving God was based on things she could do for the Lord. There is a need for more Marthas in our churches today: those who possess a servant's heart. As Calvin said, “we know that men were created for the express purpose of being employed in labor of various kinds, and that no sacrifice is more pleasing to God, than when every man applies diligently to his own calling, and endeavors to live in such a manner as to contribute to the general advantage.”

Mary, on the other hand, left everything to sit and listen at Jesus' feet. She chose to love the Lord with all her heart by focusing on Him alone, with all her soul by leaving everything behind for Jesus' sake, with all her strength by spending all her energy to hear the words of Jesus and with all her mind by attending unto Jesus. She was like the Psalmist who desired to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple (Ps 27:4). Jesus commended Mary for she chose the good part.

We must do that which is needful, but there is no need to compare ourselves with others. Jesus rebuked Martha not because she was wrong in serving but for her anxious attitude. She also thought it was more needful to do outward service rather than to partake of Jesus' spiritual provisions. In loving the Lord what is required is our faithfulness to His will, not our own heart's desire.

THOUGHT: Am I labouring for as well as learning of the Lord?

PRAYER: Father, may I learn from Thee with all humility.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16
LUKE 11:1-4
MATTHEW 6:6

“...pray to thy Father which is in secret;
and thy Father which seeth in secret
shall reward thee...”

THE BLUEPRINT FOR PRAYER

The disciples observed the Lord Jesus Christ's prayerfulness. This caused the disciples to ask Him to teach them to pray, and He did. This is taught by the Son, the second person of the Triune God. He taught them how to pray for He knew well how to perfectly communicate with the Father. This is God's perfect blueprint for prayer.

This prayer is directed to the Father, who is ever ready to bestow His grace. *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”* (Matt 6:6). Prayers are directed to the Father through the leading of the Holy Spirit by the intercession of Jesus. Although, the three persons in the Godhead are one, each has His own office. Jesus clearly taught that Christians must pray to God the Father alone, not to Mary or to any so-called saints and pagan idols. Jesus instructed them to praise the Father who is in Heaven and is perfectly holy, and to pray that His kingdom comes according to His will, and for submission to the Father's will both in heaven and on earth.

This prayer is a necessity for every Christian who desperately needs the Spirit's and Jesus' intercession and the compassion of God the Father. Jesus taught the disciples to pray for their needs. These petitions imply our dependence on our God. He understood that man cannot provide for himself without the Father's help. He reminded them that they should forgive the sins of others as they were forgiven by God the Father. Jesus urged them to ask for God's protection against sin and temptations, for He was their perfect shield.

THOUGHT: Am I praying aright?

PRAYER: O God my Father, cleanse and forgive me of my sins for I cannot come before Thy holy throne of grace with sins in my life.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17
LUKE 11:5-13
EPHESIANS 6:10-18

*“Praying always with all prayer,
with all perseverance and
supplication for all saints.”*

THE ATTITUDE IN PRAYER

Persistence demonstrates faith and trust in God's power. Jesus told His disciples a parable about persistence in prayer. It shows how man must understand that God will answer his requests in His own perfect timing and will. It is important for man to acknowledge God's sovereignty in prayer. (Read Ephesians 6:18.)

Passionate prayer demonstrates helplessness without God's aid. This attitude is shown in the man pleading that he had nothing to set before his visiting friends. Jesus illustrated how man must see his absolute helplessness and that he cannot do anything without the Father's help. Profound prayer reveals hopelessness without God's answer. It is characterized by a heartfelt pleading with tears. It was not given him only because of his persistence and passionate request but because he conveyed the intensity of his pleading.

God guarantees answers to prayer. Ask and it shall be given you. Jesus taught them that if man follows His blueprint for prayer there will be guaranteed answers. No man who asks and seeks and knocks will be denied for our God is a loving and gracious God. He cannot deny His nature to provide and care for His people. If earthly fathers give good gifts, how much more will our Heavenly Father? His love is wise and just, His grace is bounteous and punctual. Only God has the power to do what is impossible for man.

Answered prayer is guaranteed because of the Holy Spirit's interceding work. But do you have the Holy Spirit? The Father is ever ready to give the Holy Spirit to those who receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Having been made holy through Christ's righteousness, they will surely receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, for the Holy Spirit to reside in man, repentance of sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are required.

THOUGHT: Do I pray with a sincere heart?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the humility of heart to come before Thy presence for Thou art worthy to be praised!

LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18

LUKE 11:14-23

1 JOHN 4:1

“...believe not every spirit,

but try the spirits whether they are of God...”

BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SPIRIT

We are now in the tail-end period of the last days characterized by rampant deception that seeks to destroy the Christian faith. Satan's first and foremost specialty is to let people doubt the Word of God, “*Yea, hath God said?*” (Gen 3:1). Here, because they doubted His words, so also were His works doubted. They did not believe Jesus had the power of God. They did not know that Jesus is the same as the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the denying of His power. The people accused Jesus of getting that power from the devil. The Jews blasphemously charged the Lord that He cast out demons by Beelzebub and called Him the prince of the demons. They associated the Lord to be the head of those demons which He cast out (Matt 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18-19). That was blatant irreverence! Jesus explained to them that only God and not Beelzebub (Matt 12:25-29) could do the casting out of devils. Only a stronger power could overcome the devil's power. But beware because there are counterfeits today who claim they have the Holy Spirit but actually their powers are of the devil. The Charismatic and Pentecostal movements emphasize experiences and miracles which are not biblical and therefore are not of God. These are lies of Satan to deceive the people. This is his subtle method: to present an appearance of discord then pacify it in order to entrap the minds of men as if he is the source of comfort.

Blasphemy is despising the power of God. Jesus assured them that those who would not gather with Him will be scattered. True unity can only be achieved in Christ. The false unity of the Ecumenical movement today is doing harm, uniting for the devil rather than unifying them in Christ. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6).

THOUGHT: Do I discern if the spirits are of God?

PRAYER: Father of Wisdom, grant me the discernment to know the Spirit working in my life. Help me not to be deceived.

LORD'S DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 18

LUKE 11:24-32

JOHN 5:31-40

"Search the scriptures;

...they are they which testify of me."

SIGNS OF UNBELIEF

Trusting self is a sign of unbelief in God. Jesus showed an example of how self-reformation was vain. A man appeared to have been delivered from the bondage of evil spirits but because he was not indwelt by the Spirit of God, his reformation was just for a little while. No sooner was he bound again by more demonic spirits. Self-reformation may appear effective for a time or may even last a lifetime, but the final judgment before God will uncover the truth. Without genuine faith in Jesus there is no indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, self-approbation is vain. Jesus corrected a woman who exalted man rather than God. Those who hear and keep the Word of God are more blessed than those who are exalted of men (no matter how mightily used of God they may be).

Sign seeking is also unbelief. Jesus called the people who were seeking signs instead of believing His words as those who belonged to an evil generation. The desire of the people for signs was indicative of their unbelieving hearts. They did not want to believe that Jesus was God Himself. The Lord had already shown them mighty miracles, yet they still would not believe. Jesus showed signs and miracles in His day to authenticate His divinity. Unregenerate hearts will never come to the knowledge of the truth except the grace of God open their understanding. Jesus revealed to them that He was the greater sign. When Jonah went to Nineveh, the people repented and believed the words of Jonah. Jesus told them plainly that He was the Messiah, far greater than Jonah and Solomon.

Today we have the complete, perfect Word of God to guide us (John 5:39). The Bible is enough for us to know God and His perfect plan of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is enough to guide our earthly sojourn. What else and where else are we looking?

THOUGHT: Am I believing who Jesus is or not?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, Thou who art full of truth, guide me to receive and believe all the words of God and let these be a light unto my path and a lamp unto my feet.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19

LUKE 11:33-36

ROMANS 8:10-16

*“...as many as are led by the Spirit of God,
they are the sons of God.”*

BE FULL OF LIGHT

Jesus illustrated that no person in his right mind will light a candle and hide it. Our all-wise God will never save a person only for him to become a “secret Christian.” Interestingly, the last word “*light*” in Luke 11:33 is a diffused light such as given off by the moon, which reminds Christians that they have no light of their own but serve only as reflectors of the light, the true source which is Christ.

Jesus further explained that this lamp of the body is the eye (or mind). If a man’s eye is single, meaning simple, not complicated or, in other words, healthy, then the whole body will be bright. On the contrary, if it is evil, or complicated, full of annoyance and distractions, and not in good condition, then the body is full of darkness. This contrasts the life of a Christian with that of an unregenerate person. One is bright because he has the true light from God while the other is in darkness for his light is from the complexities of this dark world.

Jesus warned the people to discern what radiates from their lives, whether light or darkness. For a genuine Christian who has the Holy Spirit surely has light, for no darkness is found in God. He is in the Father’s eyes radiating the brightness of Christ’s robe of righteousness. Every man who is truly saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has that true light (John 8:12; 9:5).

Read Romans 8:14. This is the confirmation that those who are the sons of God are ruled by His Spirit. The boasting of hypocrites will not bring them to heaven, for though they assume the title of a Christian, they are devoid of the Spirit. The faithful are thus confident of their sure salvation for they are led by God’s Spirit, being His children. Are you assured of eternal life? This assurance is manifested when you reflect His light. Are you full of light?

THOUGHT: Am I led by the Spirit of God?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the Holy Spirit who guides and leads me while I am on this pilgrim journey towards Thy Kingdom.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

LUKE 11:37-54

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

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

THE WOES OF CHRIST

When Jesus ate without ceremonially washing His hands, a Pharisee ridiculed His action. This washing was not really for hygiene purposes but it was one of the extra-biblical ceremonial laws of the Pharisees. They poured a little water to ceremonially show they were clean from defilement by any unclean materials they may have touched. By not washing His hands, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy. They were concerned with external appearances but their hearts and minds were filled with extortion and evil. They were unworthy vessels for they performed their righteous deeds just for show.

Jesus denounced their proud desire to be treated as very important people. The Pharisees wanted to be seated at special tables and be recognized as someone of importance in the community. Jesus condemned their arrogance and showed how they were nothing but unnamed old tombs walked over by men, and how they were but unknown dead corpses which were good for nothing.

The lawyers tried to intimidate Jesus but He was not afraid and continued to criticize their wicked lifestyles. These lawyers instructed people to do over and above the commandments of God but they themselves were exempt. They did not “walk the talk.” They supposed themselves dispensers of God’s law but they murdered the true prophets of God. Jesus rebuked them for falsely applying the law. They kept the people from true knowledge by their false teachings and lifestyle. They hindered people from coming to God by their ungodly ways.

Are we like these Pharisees and lawyers? Every believer is a regenerated person in the Lord. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor 5:17). Are you living as a new creature?

THOUGHT: Am I one of those whom Jesus has pronounced a woe?

PRAYER: Our Merciful Father, provide me an open heart to accept the reproofs and corrections from Thy Word.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21
LUKE 12:1-12
ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14

*“For God shall bring
every work into judgment,
with every secret thing...”*

THE LEAVEN OF HYPOCRISY

A hypocrite is one who feigns to be what he is not, one who has the form of godliness but without the power, one who assumes an appearance of piety and virtue when he is destitute of true religion. He is a moral or religious counterfeit. Jesus strongly reproveth hypocrisy. The Bible assures that there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed and nothing spoken in darkness that shall not be proclaimed. There is no room for hypocrisy in Christianity. God knows every heart and thought of every man. *“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Eccl 12:14).

Hypocrites fear man rather than God. The Lord told His disciples to fear Him who has power to cast into Hell. Jesus exhorts us not to fear them who threaten to kill us. Physical bodies may be destroyed but not the spirit which is more important because it is eternal. Our calling is to live as followers of Christ and we must not change our lifestyle to suit those around us but be consistent in witnessing for Him. The promises are sure, He will never leave us nor forsake us, He knows the very number of hairs on our heads. David Livingstone was quoted as saying, “I am immortal till my work is accomplished.”

Hypocrites are not true confessors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer must confess the name of Christ before men. We are to witness for Christ to whosoever we meet. If we are ashamed of Him, He will deny us also. We may face persecution but Jesus assures us of the help of the Holy Spirit even in times when we are taken to court. As long as we confess Jesus without shame or inhibition, God will strengthen us even in the midst of severe pressure and persecution from the enemies of the gospel. In times past, Christians were willing to lose their heads or be burned at the stake rather than deny their Saviour. Let us not be hypocrites, but be hyper for Christ!

THOUGHT: Am I a hypocrite?

PRAYER: Our Omniscient Father, Thou knowest the innermost recesses of my heart and mind, help me to be true to Thee at all times.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

LUKE 12:13-34

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8

*“...having food and raiment
let us be therewith content.”*

THE FOLLY OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

Life consists not in the abundance of things possessed. Security is not measured by money, and contentment is not attained by luxuries.

A man asked Jesus to divide an inheritance with his brother but was rebuked and warned not to be covetous. Jesus then told a parable of a rich man who was not content with his riches and still aspired for more. The man thought he was so secured to enjoy life. God called him a fool for he died that night. We must be content with what the Lord provides. Those who desire to be rich to enjoy the pleasures of this world forget that they can carry nothing out of this earth.

True security is in God's riches, not in this world's. Jesus therefore implied that it was better to be rich toward God and to receive the priceless treasure in the Lord Jesus Christ and the assurance of His Kingdom. This satisfaction is real and will never end nor will it be taken away. Let us seek the eternal treasures and leave behind that which are temporal.

Even as God feeds the ravens, He will feed you also. Jesus teaches us not to worry about our daily provisions for life is more than meat! Eternal life is much more important. The crows which do not sow nor store are not worried about their food, but man worries about his next meal even before consuming all that is on his table.

God clothes the grass, He will clothe you also. Thank God for a healthy body, but worrying about what to wear will cause weariness of the flesh. *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content”* (1 Tim 6:8). He will take care of us. Missionary Jim Elliot was quoted, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Are you willing to give up what you cannot carry into heaven?

THOUGHT: Am I content with what the Lord provides for me?

PRAYER: My heavenly Father who created and has sustained me until this very day, give me a heart full of the blessed hope of heaven.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

LUKE 12:35-48

1 PETER 1:13-23

*“...gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,
and hope to the end for the grace...”*

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Jesus' command for His disciples to *“let your loins be girded”* (Luke 12:35a) is to be actively prepared in the light of His second coming. In those days they wore long robes as outer garments and to *“gird”* means to tie the girdle to the body in order that one is not impeded when working, walking or running. It is a picture of a person busy in the work of the Lord while waiting for His second coming. Likewise, to keep the lamps burning describes industry and diligence. Not only is the person active during the day, but even at night he is busy for the Lord. Clarke said, “Be active, diligent, determined, ready; let all hindrances be removed out of the way; and let the candle of the Lord be always found burning brightly in your hand.”

Jewish wedding feasts in Jesus' time were held until the evening. The servant was expected to be watchful for the coming of his lord. He must not sleep until his lord has settled down and gone to bed. It was his duty and responsibility therefore he must prudently attend to it. Jesus emphasized that such waiting is like a good servant who guards the house against burglars. He must be ready always to protect his house from any intruder. This illustrates the eminency of His coming. The disciples must not indulge in other activities that might distract them from the task assigned to them.

While waiting for the master's return, the servant is expected to be working and must not be found idle. If he does not work because he believes the master is delayed in his return, he is irresponsible and does not deserve to be trusted. The servant must not wait passively, but heartily. He must be honest in his dealings with other servants while the lord is away. He must not abuse the authority given to him. He must also not abuse the resources given to him. Blessed are they who the Lord, when He comes, shall find doing His will!

THOUGHT: Am I living mindful of the second coming of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for sending our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Help me to look forward to His coming again.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24
LUKE 12:49-59
MATTHEW 10:21-24

“...the children shall rise up
against their parents,
and cause them to be put to death.”

CHRIST SHALL DIVIDE

Jesus described His first advent not as bringing peace but division. The gospel is powerful to unite all believers but separates from the unbelievers who would hate and oppose the gospel. A considerable part of this world did not and will not confess Jesus but opposes and fights against the preaching of God's Word. No man who believes in Christ is without the resistance and hatred of the enemies of Christ. Christians are warned to prepare for a spiritual battle, for they must fight for the testimony of God's truth.

Families will be divided, believing parents from unbelieving children and vice versa. *“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death”* (Matt 10:21). It is not characterized by mild dissension but great contention where believers will be heavily persecuted. Jesus mentioned this so that the people would understand that when He comes again there will be eternal separation.

Jesus castigated them for a lack of discernment, upbraiding the ignorance of the Jews in general, and the obstinate infidelity of the Pharisees in particular. They could predict the earthly elements, but could not discern the time of the Messiah. Knowing that the Day of Judgment is near they should have the urgency to be reconciled to God. Jesus illustrated that a guilty man would have made every effort to reconcile with his adversary before appearing before a ruler to be judged. He would have made peace and paid all that was required before he received a sentence when it would be too late to escape the judgment. While the lost have a chance today to be reconciled with God they should repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and not wait for that final day when there will be no more forgiveness and only righteous judgment from the just God.

THOUGHT: Am I discerning the signs of the end-times?

PRAYER: Glorious Father in heaven, I thank Thee for not leaving me ignorant of the imminent return of my Saviour Jesus Christ.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 25

LUKE 13:1-9

1 CHRONICLES 16:30-33

*"...sing out at the presence of the LORD,
because he cometh to judge the earth."*

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Jesus was informed of the unfortunate Galileans who rebelled against Rome and were severely punished. He pointed out that they must not think they were more righteous than those Galileans. In the final judgment all shall equally be judged before Him. He reminded them of the eighteen men who were killed in Siloam. Again, Jesus declared that all men were equal, all stand condemned as sinners before the thrice Holy God. No one therefore could condemn others.

Jesus said to them twice, *"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3, 5). This He did to highlight the urgency of the command to repent. Repentance is a change of mind expressed with great sorrow over one's great sinfulness against God. It causes the sinner to turn away from sin with abhorrence and consequently put his faith in Jesus Christ for the atonement of his sins. Jesus clearly told them the consequences if they would not repent. They shall perish! Without repentance all men are worthy of eternal death.

Jesus gave a parable to illustrate Him being a patient Judge. A fig tree which supposedly grew in the wayside was kept in a vineyard. It portrays the tree as receiving the water and fertilizers of the vineyard. The owner sought to get fruit from the tree but there was none. This figuratively described the Jews, having been cared for by God in very special ways by years of preaching and healing, yet showed no sign of fruit in their lives. The fig tree did not produce a single fruit during the three years of Jesus' ministry. The Jews remained unresponsive to the utmost care given by the preaching of the Word. They continued to reject the Messiah. The dresser of the vineyard interceded for another year of water and fertilizer to be given. The Lord is righteous in His judgment to cut down that which was fruitless, but the gracious Lord would make the fig tree blossom again and bear fruits in His own perfect time. Read 1 Chronicles 16:33. Be fruitful!

THOUGHT: Am I aware of the coming judgment?

PRAYER: Father God in heaven, the Judge of all the earth, I thank Thee for Thy promise that through Christ, I am ready to meet Thee.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

LUKE 13:10-17

ISAIAH 53:4-9

“...he hath borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows...”

GOD’S MERCY

Jesus is merciful to His people, teaching them the way of salvation. Israel’s outward rejection of the Son of God would have been more than enough to condemn them, but Jesus remained merciful to them, teaching them not once but continually. Their unbelief made them unable to comprehend the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They should have listened to what Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:4.

Jesus met a woman who for eighteen years had an infirmity. It did not appear that she made any request of Him, or expected anything from Him. But even before she called, Jesus gave His attention to her. She came to Him to be taught and to get spiritual wellness for her soul. She received much blessing from Christ: the physical relief to her physical infirmity and the salvation of her soul.

He healed her on the Sabbath. The Jews were very particular about their extra-biblical laws for the Sabbath, thinking that they were glorifying God by their strict observance. In their traditions, they neglected the needy people. They were more merciful to their animals than to the woman who was made in God’s own image. Instead of loving, “*curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God*” (James 3:9). They questioned Jesus’ healing of the woman, not realizing they were more needful of Jesus’ mercy than her.

The woman was healed of her physical infirmities. She was made straight and she glorified God for the healing. In response to the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus called him a hypocrite for he could not discern his great need for healing. His adversaries’ lack of wisdom would have been enough for God to judge them but He remained merciful unto them, still inviting all sinners to repent. Oh, how His mercy endures forever! Harden not your heart today!

THOUGHT: Am I seeking physical or spiritual healing from Jesus?

PRAYER: O Lord God, Thou art the only source of healing for those who are spiritually and physically sick. Help me seek what is more necessary for my life.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
LUKE 14:1-14
ISAIAH 58:13-14

*“...call the sabbath a delight
...holy of the LORD, honourable;
and shalt honour him...”*

A DELIGHT IN THE LORD

Jesus was invited into the house of a chief Pharisee for a meal on the Sabbath. There he found a man with dropsy, a sickness characterized by an unnatural accumulation of water in a certain part of the body. This sick man might have been invited also to test if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus had compassion on him and healed him. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for they were concerned with the obedience of their unscriptural Sabbath laws, but disregarded the true meaning of the day (Mark 2:27).

Christians should delight in the Lord by worshipping Him in spirit and in truth on the Lord's Day. It is not a day of outward piety but an inward exercise of the heart to worship the living and true God. Then Sabbath is truly kept *“if thou ...call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure ...”* (Isa 58:13).

Jesus followed up with a parable referring to the Pharisees who loved to be recognized as very important people. He meant that these people would receive no mercy from God for they exalted themselves in their pride. Those who exalt themselves as having done even a little part to earn their salvation are not truly saved and will be denied by God. On the other hand, he who humbles himself to sit in the lowest place will be elevated to the dignitaries' table. It is far better to be humble, to accept that man is nothing before God.

To delight in the Lord is to have true mercy. It is sharing without expecting any return. It is to invite those who cannot return the invitation. This is Jesus' way. He offered to die on the cross for all men and no one is able to repay Him. If He did this for us, we must desire to delight in doing good to others.

THOUGHT: Do I delight in the Lord according to His way?

PRAYER: Most merciful Father in heaven, Thou hast delivered me from a heart of unbelief and rebellion, create in me a clean heart to worship Thee in spirit and truth.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

LUKE 14:15-24

REVELATION 22:12-17

*"...let him that is athirst come...
let him take the water of life freely."*

THE GREAT SUPPER

Jesus shared a parable of an invitation to a feast that was extended to many people. It demonstrated the desire of our Lord to welcome many into His Kingdom. Jesus *"... is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet 3:9). This invitation was made possible through the shed blood of Jesus. It is the only effective means for the forgiveness of the sins of men since Adam until the last man on earth. It is made efficacious to those who repent and believe in Him as their Lord and Saviour.

However the invited guests rejected the offer! Jesus mentioned three different excuses which represented the worldly affections of men: the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. *"...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4). If men reject the offer of the mercy of God, the time will come when they will suffer the punishment of their sins in the lake of fire.

Jesus illustrated in this parable that since the Jews rejected Him, His offer of mercy will be given to the Gentiles. We must remember however, that God does have a plan for Israel. We in the church age need God's great mercy in Christ. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matt 5:3-5).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17). No soul is excluded, Jesus died for all. Therefore let him who understands his need of a Saviour come and take the water of life freely.

THOUGHT: Will I take part in the Great Supper of the Lamb?

PRAYER: Merciful Father, Thou hast chosen me from before the foundation of the world. Let me be assured of entering Thy Kingdom.

THURSDAY, MARCH 1

LUKE 15:1-10

ISAIAH 53:4-9

*“All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way...”*

GREAT JOY IN HEAVEN

When the publicans and sinners came to Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes accused Him of receiving sinners. Jesus told them a parable of a shepherd whose sheep had wandered away. The shepherd launched a search and rescue operation, for he knew the sheep was unable to find its way back to the fold. The lost sheep represents a sinner who has wandered away from God. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”* (Isa 53:6). Jesus expressed here the reason why He left His throne above and came down to earth. He seeks and saves the lost by His active obedience of keeping all the law and passive obedience dying as man’s perfect representative on the cross of Calvary. This parable demonstrated the great joy of the shepherd upon finding the lost sheep. He called his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him. Jesus then described how heaven was filled with joy when a sinner repents and believes in Jesus Christ.

Jesus continued with a related parable of the lost coin. The significance of finding the lost is shown here. The parable described that the total possession of the woman was ten pieces of silver. She lost one out of the ten pieces and sought it not half-heartedly but diligently. When she found the lost coin she rejoiced greatly and called her friends and neighbours. Jesus again declared how there is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents and believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. Believers are His treasure who He rightly owns. He again showed His passion to bring back the lost by searching for them.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). Let us be like our Lord who is willing to go and seek out those who are lost!

THOUGHT: Do I rejoice over the salvation of a sinner?

PRAYER: My Great Shepherd, Thou hast sought me and brought me into Thy fold. I thank Thee for saving me from eternal death.

FRIDAY, MARCH 2

LUKE 15:11-32

MATTHEW 21:28-32

*“...the publicans and the harlots
go into the kingdom of God before you...”*

THE FATHER'S JOY

Jesus told a third parable that was complex yet comprehensive to drive the point home of how our Father in heaven rejoices over a repentant sinner. The story was about a father who had two sons. The younger suddenly requested for his inheritance. This was tantamount to cursing the father to die for such was received only after a parent's death. After getting his share, he went to a place far away. He indulged in all the world's vices and lusts until he had spent everything. He finally ended up taking care of pigs (unclean animals to the Jews). He realized he had sinned against his father and his God. He decided to go back to his father in repentance. He admitted that he was no longer worthy to be called a son but was willing to become a hired servant, one who was paid only when work was done.

Surprisingly, a grandiose welcome was made for the prodigal son. The best robe, a ring and shoes were given. The father declared a feast because his son who was considered dead was alive again. Jesus underscored how great a love the father had. This was to illustrate the Heavenly Father's love for a repentant sinner. It is an open invitation for sinners to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus. A man may have sinned greatly against God but if he repents and believes in Jesus Christ, he shall be welcomed with rejoicing.

In contrast, the older son was angered for the father's favour to his prodigal brother. Jesus made this an important point for the Pharisees and scribes around Him. The Lord is not pleased with those who are self-righteous, who think they deserve God's blessings because of what they imagined they have done for Him. To the self-righteous, Jesus says, *“...Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you”* (Matt 21:31). Have you sincerely repented of your sins and truly believed in Jesus?

THOUGHT: Do I realise the Father's joy when a sinner repents?

PRAYER: Father, help me to be mindful of my sins.

SATURDAY, MARCH 3
LUKE 16:1-18
GENESIS 2:18-25

“...a man
...shall cleave unto his wife:
and they shall be one flesh.”

COVETOUSNESS REBUKED

Covetousness is defined as a strong or inordinate desire to obtain and possess some supposed good, an inordinate desire for wealth or avarice. Covetousness leads to corruption and treachery. The man in the parable wasted what was not his own. He squandered his lord's wealth obtaining and possessing things which he could not afford. Caught for his evil deeds, he resorted to trickery. The Lord commended the servant not for his wicked action but because he *“had done wisely”* (Luke 16:8) compared to God's children. The covetous servant made *“friends of the mammon of unrighteousness”* (Luke 16:9). But believers, instead of sourcing their mammon through righteous means, imitate the ungodly by trusting unrighteous sources of provisions.

A covetous person is disrespectful because he is concerned only for his own good. When the covetous Pharisees heard the parable they ridiculed Jesus. They did not want to concede that they were serving the mammon of unrighteousness instead of God. Moreover, they coveted the people's high regard. Jesus stressed that those who were esteemed by men were not of God. In fact it was seen as an abomination in His sight.

Covetousness does not only describe inordinate desires for material things but also lustful relations. In Mathew's account, the Pharisees asked Jesus whether it was lawful for a husband to divorce his wife. Jesus rebuked them for it was not so in God's design (Gen 2:24), and no authority on earth could separate them. Lustful desires lead to extramarital relationship. Recently, it was reported that the divorce rate even among professing Christians is increasing. Covetous hearts are adulterous. Adultery starts with an inordinate desire that leads to broken marriages, shattered families and delinquent children.

THOUGHT: Am I a covetous person?

PRAYER: Father of all graces, clear my mind and heart of all covetous desires. Help me to be content with Thy blessings.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 4

LUKE 16:19-31

MATTHEW 13:24-43

“...shall cast them into a furnace of fire:
there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

JESUS' DESCRIPTION OF HELL

Our Lord related this true story and Luke was careful to place this narrative not after a parable for this is not one. Jesus mentioned an unnamed rich man who lived flamboyantly. He had all a person could ever want in this world. On the other hand, Lazarus a beggar was laid at his gate seeking help. The rich man did not lift a finger to show compassion to Lazarus who was just asking for crumbs. The rich man was so greedy and unwilling to share.

Then both the rich man and Lazarus died. Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, a description of the place for those who have faith in Jesus Christ, for Abraham was the friend of God. The rich man arrived in hell and in torment. He began to beg for mercy, a virtue he lacked while on earth. Now he understood how Lazarus suffered asking only a little sympathy of him. In hell, people regret those times when God gave them not one but many chances to repent yet they kept themselves hardened. *“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt 13:42). There is a great gulf fixed between heaven and hell.

The rich man in hell became a zealous evangelist. He pleaded for his brothers to be warned of the torments and misery in hell. He desired that his brothers would come to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Abraham told the rich man that they already had the inspired and preserved Word of God to read and to believe. There was no need to send Lazarus for even if one was resurrected from the dead, they would never believe. Jesus did rise bodily from the dead but until today people still reject Him and the good news of salvation. The story highlights the only way to escape hell: believe in the Word of God that reveals Jesus as the only Saviour of mankind.

THOUGHT: Do I believe in the Jesus Christ of the Scriptures?

PRAYER: God our great Saviour, I thank Thee for Thy perfect Word that shows me that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of mankind!

MONDAY, MARCH 5

LUKE 17:1-6

MATTHEW 6:14-15

*“For if ye forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*

THE VIRTUE OF FORGIVENESS

Jesus told His disciples that offences cannot be prevented from happening in their lives. But what was frightening was when they were the ones causing the offence! The word “*offend*” here means causing others to fall or to sin. They could cause others to stumble, eg. children or believers who were still young in the faith and were easily offended.

The millstone referred to is the large mill drawn by beasts, in fact the literal meaning is “a mill turned by an ass.” Hence, it is a great millstone. It is so heavy that if it is hanged on the neck of a person cast into the sea, he will surely drown. The gravity of the sin is signified by Jesus’ words: it is better for them to be drowned than to offend. The magnitude of the sin of causing offence is so great!

Jesus exhorted them to rebuke those who trespass against them. To do so is to avoid offending others. When those who sinned against them decided to repent, they must be forgiven. Jesus reminded them to forgive as many times as their trespassers repent of their sins (Matt 6:14). It is in forgiveness that further offences are prevented. Retaliation and taking revenge will surely and only offend others.

The disciples prayed for the Lord to increase their faith. It is not easy to forgive especially if the sin is repeatedly committed. Man’s heart naturally tends to harbour grudges. If sin is repeated, vengeance will easily burst like a mighty volcano. Jesus told them to have faith in Him. For if we have faith as a mustard seed we will be able to love and forgive. God in whom we have faith shall enable us to do so. Only believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are able to forgive without end for “*the fruit of the Spirit is love...*” (Gal 5:22). “The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell” (Lehman).

THOUGHT: Do I forgive those who sin against me?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a forgiving heart.

TUESDAY, MARCH 6

LUKE 17:7-10

COLOSSIANS 3:22-25

*“...obey in all things your masters
...in singleness of heart, fearing God.”*

THE VIRTUE OF EARNEST SERVICE

Earnestness is an ardour or zeal in the pursuit to do something. Jesus said that when we serve God we must do it with eagerness. He gave an example of a servant who willingly went to plough and feed the cattle of his master. He came back in time to do other errands for his master such as the preparation of his meal. Likewise, the servant of God must not be lazy and impede the work of the Lord.

Jesus further described the earnest obedience of the servant. After a hard day's work, he did not complain when he was requested to do other assigned tasks. He fully understood that those were part of his duty. He had to fulfil what was required of him before he could rest. A Christian must serve God in obedience to His Word. He must pray that he will obey God's commands to the jot and tittle. Calvin wisely commented, “The object of this parable is to show that God claims all that belongs to us as his property, and possesses an entire control over our persons and services; and, therefore, that all the zeal that may be manifested by us in discharging our duty does not lay him under obligation to us by any sort of merit; for, as we are his property, so he on his part can owe us nothing.”

When all serving was done, Jesus highlighted the humility of the servant. The servant must not come before God boasting of his works but must humbly recognize the truth that all he has done was part of his duty and nothing more. Christians must realize we cannot exceed the work God requires of us. All we can do is to try to fulfil all our duties with earnestness by the Holy Spirit who works in our lives.

Are we waiting on our Lord to serve Him with our best? When we serve we must not expect to receive thanks, for it is our duty to serve. We must serve Him so long as we have life.

THOUGHT: Am I doing my best for Jesus?

PRAYER: Lord, may I seek opportunities always to serve Thee.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7

LUKE 17:11-19

PSALM 107:1-7

*“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good:
for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

THE VIRTUE OF THANKFULNESS

Jesus showed in Luke 17:11-19 the virtue of being thankful. He taught in this incident that in receiving mercy thanks must be given to the one who extended mercy. So many people even Christians who daily receive abundant goodness from our Lord do not even bother to give thanks to God. Of the ten lepers who asked Jesus for mercy only one had the heart to return to give thanks for the healing. More often than not, God receives more praise and thanksgiving from those who had long lived not knowing Him, than from those who were raised up among His people and who professed to be Christians. This must not be the case! Take note that the story tells us that only the thankful man was genuinely healed for he got saved. The rest had physical healing but they still would get sick and die, ending up in hell in spite of their physical restoration.

Thankfulness must be characteristic of every Christian. Jesus here gives us this clear teaching. Although He healed even the unthankful and those who failed to recognize His goodness, such attitude makes the healing useless. The psalmist invites all men, *“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever”* (Ps 107:1), and Paul also exhorted, *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thess 5:18).

Thankfulness brings God glory. Thanksgiving exalts the attributes of God. It is the act of acknowledging that God did it all; not of our own or other means but by God’s power alone. Thankfulness is a virtue forgotten in today’s generation. Many, even Christians, fail because they displace God attributing success to themselves and other factors in the equation. They think they are the reason why things happened. We must always be most thankful, especially for our salvation, for salvation is truly of the Lord. Remember when we give thanks to God, we recognize that He alone has worked in our favour.

THOUGHT: Am I mindful to give thanks always unto the Lord?

PRAYER: Father, make me a thankful and a thanksgiving person.

THURSDAY, MARCH 8

LUKE 17:20-37

ACTS 1:6-11

*“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons,
which the Father hath put in his own power.”*

THE SECOND COMING FORETOLD

The Pharisees asked the Lord when the Kingdom of God will come. Their inquiry was made with evil intentions: to scorn and scoff at Jesus. The question was “when.” Jesus told them it would not come with an outward show. It would not be as the kings of their time who came with pomp and festivities. Jesus told them it was the Kingdom of God and not of man. Jesus Himself parted from His disciples with these words, “*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...*” (Acts 1:7). The more important question is: are we ready?

However, Jesus underscored that before this event comes, He would first suffer for our sins and be rejected. He would be crucified to save us from the bondage of sin and wrath to come. Jesus compared the days of His second coming with Noah’s days: people would not believe. They did not believe until they were swept by the raging waters, but by then the door of the ark was shut. So shall be the coming of Christ. Unregenerate people will be caught by surprise!

Jesus likened also His coming with that of Lot’s day. The immoral lifestyle was the norm in Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire and brimstone rained down on them and they all died. It will be very sudden; it will come unexpectedly to all, except the elect. Today we witness these inordinate immoral acts displayed in public with homosexuals parading themselves without shame.

Jesus exhorted: let not your heart be concerned with saving your own life, for no man can escape God’s wrath when He comes. Instead, the Lord enjoined them to lose their earthly life for Jesus’ sake that they may be saved. The disciples asked Jesus where the saved will be taken to, and where those left behind shall be. Jesus’ answer implied that those who are cursed will be in eternal damnation and those that are taken up shall be with the Lord in His Kingdom forever.

THOUGHT: Am I expectant of my Lord’s imminent return?

PRAYER: Father, I look forward to seeing my Lord and my Saviour!

FRIDAY, MARCH 9

LUKE 18:1-8

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-22

“Pray without ceasing.

...give thanks:

for this is the will of God...”

THE MOTIVATION TO PRAY

Jesus encouraged the people to always pray and not to faint. The word “faint” here means to be slothful. Believers should not be lazy in making petitions, intercessions and even thanksgiving. He went on to give a parable to illustrate His encouragement for people to pray. A widow made her request to an ungodly judge, and her perseverance led to her request being granted. How much more will the heavenly Father who is rich in grace answer His own children? Christians, however, often look to their own ways and means first, and only when nothing else can be done do they remember to come to God.

The widow knew no one could help her except the judge. She pleaded day and night for the judge’s action for he was her only hope. Christians also must be reminded that we have no other sure help except in God. We must pray continually because He is the only hope to help us with our problems. (Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18.)

The judge, though ungodly, was getting tired of the widow’s persistence and gave in to her request. It was not a delayed answer but an immediate and speedy answer. Jesus said that if such a wicked man who had no fear of God would do that, why would the Heavenly Father who is the only good God withhold blessings from His own children? Our God is never too early and never too late in answering our prayers. The only problem is our lack of faith in Him. Many professing Christians never fully understand who God is. Some even forgetting what God has done for their salvation. Jesus said, *“when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:8). The faith which was once delivered unto the saints will be denied and rejected by many. Many professing believers will not persevere to the end. Praise God that He will preserve His children unto the end.

THOUGHT: Do I pray without ceasing?

PRAYER: O Gracious Father, grant me the zeal and persistence to pray always. Let my thoughts, words and actions be done with total dependence on Thee.

SATURDAY, MARCH 10

LUKE 18:9-17

PSALM 66:13-20

*“If I regard iniquity in my heart,
the Lord will not hear me.”*

EXALTATION IS FOR THE HUMBLE

Jesus taught the people how they were to approach God in prayer. In a parable, He contrasted the prayer of a Pharisee and a publican. He rebuked the Pharisee's proud and self-righteous prayer. The Pharisee enumerated what he thought were good works that counted towards his righteousness. On the other hand, the publican was an example of a repentant man in prayer. Publicans in Jesus' days were considered sinners unworthy of heaven, but it was the publican who was justified and not the Pharisee who boasted of his religiosity.

We must not come to God in prayer as if we are worthy to approach His Holy throne. We are only given the privilege because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. No Christian should pray like the Pharisee. Jesus wants us to know that in order to sincerely come to Him in prayer we must admit our sinfulness and ask for His forgiveness. *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”* (Ps 66:18). It is not by works of man's own righteousness that justifies man before God but by his sincere repentance of sins and his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Justification is an act of God declaring the believing sinner not guilty of the condemnation because of what Jesus has done for him on the cross.

Jesus used the young children as an example of how one ought to approach Him. He receives those who have the character of the young and innocent. They are humble, teachable and have no selfish ambitions. Christians must come to God with such a childlike heart, in simplicity and dependence.

We must go to Jesus without complexities or demands, only asking for the forgiveness of our sins. We must fully trust His salvation grace without thinking to add any of our own merits. Jesus said that without that childlike faith man cannot be part of God's Kingdom.

THOUGHT: Am I humble when I come before God in prayer?

PRAYER: Lord, forgive my pride and arrogance, grant me humility.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 11

LUKE 18:18-30

JAMES 2:8-13

*"...whosoever shall keep the whole law...
and yet offend in one... he is guilty of all."*

ETERNAL INHERITANCE

A rich young ruler asked Jesus how he could inherit eternal life. He called Jesus good in order to show off his own supposed "goodness." However, Jesus quickly pointed out no one on earth was good, only God is good. The young ruler thought he was assured of eternal life because of his goodness, but Jesus told him that no man can inherit eternal life by being good. Jesus is the only good man for He is God.

Jesus, knowing the heart of the young ruler, told him that the requirement was to keep the commandments. The man claimed to have obeyed all. Jesus knew it was a lie but was patient and merciful to show how the young man failed in keeping the commandments of God. He could not inherit eternal life because he did not perfectly obey all the commandments (James 2:10). The young ruler thought he had kept all but in truth he had failed in all because he loved his riches more than God or his neighbours. When Jesus told him to sell all his goods and distribute to the poor, it was proven that he valued his goods more than eternal life.

Later, Peter asked Jesus what their rewards would be. He was asking about the inheritance for those who followed Jesus. The Lord assured him that they would receive manifold, even more, not only on this earth but even more in the world to come. Peter was assured also of parents and brethren more than those they had left behind. A Christian who will do the Lord's work will be given spiritual parents and brethren. We must be careful however not to take in the lies of some cults who are polygamist. Parallel verses in Mark 10:29-30 deny such false teaching. The best commentary of the Bible is the Bible. Jesus promised that the inheritance He will give are not only for this present world but in His eternal Kingdom. The Lord promises wealth untold. Eternal riches promised are beyond our finite minds' imagination. Are you prepared to receive all?

THOUGHT: Am I assured of the eternal riches in Christ Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, Creator of heaven and earth, Owner of the cattle on a thousand hills, give me a heart that desires none but Thee!

MONDAY, MARCH 12

LUKE 18:31-34

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

“...if we believe that Jesus died
and rose again... them...

which sleep in Jesus will God bring...”

DEATH UNTO RESURRECTION

Jesus showed how it was only through His perfect active obedience in the keeping of the law and His passive obedience by dying on the cross that life eternal was earned for mankind. He alone fulfilled all the demands of the law. Therefore He as the unblemished Lamb of God is the only qualified sacrifice. Only those who have repented of their sins and have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are declared not guilty of their sins and therefore are reconciled back to a proper relationship with God.

Jesus' submission to His Father's will made the atonement possible for the sins of mankind. Read Romans 5:19. He submitted Himself to men's ridicule and abuse; He was bruised, spat upon, pierced and suffered on the cross for six hours before He died. Jesus suffered for us that we may not be sent to eternal suffering. It is not by what we have done but by what Jesus did that secures us an eternal inheritance. This message has to be preached repeatedly. Being born depraved, man will neglect it and even Christians tend to forget it.

The most valuable inheritance a Christian can receive is resurrection unto eternal life with Christ. *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”* (1 Thess 4:13-14). At the second coming of the Lord Jesus, Christians whether alive or dead will receive glorified bodies like the resurrected body of Jesus (1 Cor 15:51-55). This inheritance is received by believers as they go into His presence. Paul said, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Cor 15:19). Our faith must be anchored on the resurrected Christ and on believing from our hearts that He who was raised from the dead shall raise us up also.

THOUGHT: Am I assured of a glorified body?

PRAYER: Father, teach me to understand the believer's eternal security.

TUESDAY, MARCH 13

LUKE 19:1-10

LEVITICUS 6:1-7

“...add the fifth part more thereto,
and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth...”

A LIFE MENDED

Publicans were Jews who in the eyes of their countrymen were traitors to Israel's high calling and hopes. Being tax collectors commissioned by the Romans was an act of betrayal to the Jews. Because of this, the term “*publican*” became synonymous with “sinner” and “pagan” (Luke 15:1-2; Matt 18:17; 5:46; 21:31; Mark 2:15-16). Zaccheus, who was the chief among the publicans, was therefore considered a great sinner by the standard of the Pharisees. Being chief or overseer among the tax-gatherers, Zaccheus had many more opportunities of increasing his wealth than his colleagues.

Interestingly, he sought to see Jesus. This denotes the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart. His eagerness was shown when he climbed up a sycamore tree just to have a view of Jesus. This was foreknown of the Lord, Jesus saw him even before he climbed the tree. Jesus called him and invited Himself to his house. Do we have this eagerness to commune with Jesus so much so that He would invite Himself into our hearts and minds?

Being convicted of his sins, Zaccheus confessed to Jesus. Those who truly confessed their sins before God will be forgiven. Once a man is saved he has a new perspective and desire to compensate for the wrongdoings he has done before. “*Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering*” (Lev 6:5).

Because of this new perspective, the believer desires a life that is of God. A converted person is a new creature, with a new mind-set. He hates his past sinful life. Zaccheus told Jesus he will restore all he had taken in an evil way from others and more. A truly saved person will show outward signs of conversion. He would not remain as he was.

THOUGHT: Will I restore what I have sinfully taken?

PRAYER: Father, create in me a heart that is willing to restore and give back to those whom I have defrauded.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14

LUKE 19:11-27

JOHN 15:1-7

*"...He that abideth in me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit"*

A FRUITFUL LIFE

A parable was told because many did not believe that the Kingdom of God was to soon appear. Jesus told them about the servants who received a pound each from their lord and were instructed to "*occupy till I come*" (Luke 19:13). A pound is a Greek monetary unit worth one hundred denarii (Louw-Nida) and a denarius is the ordinary day wage of a soldier or a labourer (ISBE). The nobleman wanted them to use the money to gain more while he was away.

When the nobleman returned, he required a report from each man. Calvin commented: "whatever gifts the Lord has bestowed upon us, let us know that it is committed to us as so much money, that it may yield some gain; for nothing could be more unreasonable than that we should allow to remain buried, or should apply to no use, God's favours, the value of which consists in yielding fruit." Those who gain are the fruit-bearing ones. The master rewarded them for their faithfulness. Read John 15:5.

However, the last servant had kept the pound laid up in a napkin. He had not done anything with it. This is a picture of those who are given the chance by God to taste of His goodness but remain hardened in their hearts. The servant should have done something according to his ability. The pound was not his own, he was a servant and he ought to have hearkened to the commands of his master. It showed his slothfulness, purposely not doing anything. He was idle and now he had to give a poor account of the money entrusted to him.

Christians are unfruitful when they fail to abide in Jesus. This is the worse scenario: "*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned*" (John 15:6).

THOUGHT: Am I a fruitful Christian?

PRAYER: Father, the Giver of all gifts and strength, grant me the ability and industry to labour in Thy vineyard!

THURSDAY, MARCH 15

LUKE 19:28-44

ZECHARIAH 9:9-17

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
...behold, thy King cometh unto thee...”*

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Jesus presented Himself openly as the Messiah of Israel. The place was the Mount of Olives. It was so called for the abundance of olive trees on this mountain. The distance from Jerusalem was about a Sabbath day's journey (Acts 1:12). On the west side of this mountain was the garden of Gethsemane. On the eastern side of the mountain were the villages of Bethphage and Bethany.

This was the exact fulfilment of the prophecy about the Messianic King in Zechariah 9:9. By His foreknowledge, Jesus directed the disciples to get a young male donkey. The people put their garments on the animal and on the ground to welcome Him as their King.

When Jesus was near to Jerusalem the people shouted “*Hosanna*” (Matt 21:9) which means “Save now” or “Please save.” The people rejoiced because they were expecting liberation from the Roman rule. They were however mistaken for they expected the earthly kingdom of Israel to be established. The Jews had been waiting for their Messiah to rule as King and they thought Jesus would.

The Pharisees were envious of Jesus' popularity. They were enraged by the praises. They asked Him to stop the people from shouting Hosanna. The Pharisees attempted to silence the praises of Christ, but they could not. Jesus told them that as God could out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, so He could out of children's mouths perfect the praises to Him. He implied here the necessity of the event.

Jesus lamented over the city of Jerusalem because He foreknew what will happen to it first before His earthly throne in the millennial Kingdom will be set. He saw their unbelief, their rebellion and outright rejection of Him as the Son of God. Are we like the Jews who continually denied the kingship of Jesus Christ?

THOUGHT: Is Jesus Christ the King of my life?

PRAYER: O Lord of the Universe, may my life be ruled by Thee.

FRIDAY, MARCH 16

LUKE 19:45-48

ISAIAH 56:3-8

“...make them joyful in my house of prayer
...an house of prayer for all people.”

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Jesus was righteously indignant against those who had made the Temple a house for business instead of worship. The sanctuary is for the worship of God. He also emphasized that importance of prayer. Jesus taught daily in the temple to highlight the importance of teaching God's Word in His house. The pastor's primary duty as an under-shepherd is to feed the flock with fresh pasture daily.

Many churches today have been deformed into houses of enterprises. Pastors consider their calling a career, using the pulpit for their own profit, counting themselves as Chief Executive Officers rather than ministers of God's Word. Christians also come to church to make business connections. Jesus' warns: His house is a house of prayer, not business.

God's house should not be for entertainment, gossiping or nonsensical talks, but a house full of supplications and thanksgiving to God. *“Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people”* (Isa 56:7). It must be a house for the teaching of His Word, that the people be warned to keep away from the world's philosophies and psychologies.

Jesus wanted believers to know the real purpose of His first coming and foretold His final return when He will reign with all the saints on earth, from Adam to the last Christian. He was concerned because people were oblivious of the coming danger awaiting those who are not in God's Kingdom. He therefore urged believers to make use of His house as a place to make proper preparations for the impending judgment. Christians must worship God and be taught rightly the Word of God that through Jesus Christ they may remain faithful to the end.

THOUGHT: Do I consider His sanctuary a holy place?

PRAYER: O Lord, may I keep Thy place of worship holy.

SATURDAY, MARCH 17

LUKE 20:1-18

JOHN 5:31-47

*“But I receive not testimony from man:
but these things I say, that ye might be saved.”*

THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHRIST

The religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority while the ordinary people were listening to His teachings. These leaders were supposed to be knowledgeable of God's Word, but instead of believing they sought to find fault with Jesus. These did not believe Jesus to be the Son of God and that His authority was from heaven. The people too instead of believing looked for wonders and miracles.

Jesus of course knew the evil intentions of the Pharisees. He responded to them by asking what they believed about the baptism of John. The religious leaders were caught by their own trap. Jesus wanted to prove here that He was greater than John the Baptist. These leaders knew this but, because of their pride, refused to admit the truth that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Although Jesus left the question without an answer, it was obvious to all the people there what He meant. God's Word is not to confuse man but to give wisdom. The problem lies in the pride of man elevating his own understanding rather than submitting to the Bible.

Jesus gave a parable of the vineyard owner and his workers. The owner entrusted his vineyard to the workers. At harvest time, the owner sent servants (in three successions) but the workers maltreated them and cast them out. The last person to be sent was his son, but the workers killed him. Surely, great judgment was looming for the workers who rebelled.

Jesus plainly said that the owner would come and destroy the evil workers. The vineyard shall be given to other workers who will faithfully take care of it. Jesus warned His enemies and all who attack Christ and His Word that they will be *“broken”* (Luke 20:18). They will only hurt themselves when they fight against Christ. This includes those who say that the Bible has mistakes. This is attacking Christ. They will be *“broken”*!

THOUGHT: Am I submissive to the sovereignty of the Lord?

PRAYER: Our Master, unite our hearts to worship and honour Thee.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 18
LUKE 20:27-38
JOHN 5:24

“...He that heareth my word,
and believeth on him that sent me,
hath everlasting life...”

TEACHINGS ON THE RESURRECTION

The Sadducees belonged to a prominent Jewish sect. They were not as many as the Pharisees, a rival sect. However, their wealth and priestly descent gave them an influence which equalled that of their more popular contenders. They only accepted the first five books of Moses as authoritative and denied the resurrection and the existence of angels.

They asked Jesus about the resurrection. Their purpose was obviously to test His doctrines. The teaching about the kinsman-redeemer in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 was raised. It was the responsibility of a relative to perpetuate his brother's name for continuity of a lineage for the sake of the expected Messiah. They made up the story of a woman with many husbands for they desired to trap Jesus and accuse Him of heresy.

Jesus answered by explaining to them that the resurrected life is incomparable to the present life on earth. Jesus told them plainly that there is no marriage in the resurrection. People will be like angels who will give all their attention to praising and glorifying the Lamb of God (Rev 7:9-10).

“All Christians one day will either be resurrected or be raptured” (Tow and Khoo). Those who are in the resurrection are all alive unto God as Moses understood Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be (Luke 20:37-38). Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*” (John 11:25-26). The promise of the resurrection is unto all who have genuinely repented of their sins and have believed in Jesus, sealed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in them.

THOUGHT: Do I believe there is life after death?

PRAYER: Father, grant me faith and hope to look forward to the mansions in Thy Kingdom in Heaven.

MONDAY, MARCH 19

LUKE 20:39-21:4

PSALM 110

“...Sit thou at my right hand,
until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

CONCEITED LIVES

After Jesus explained to them about the truth of the resurrection and the life to come, the scribes who were knowledgeable about the Scriptures showed their agreement. Jesus knew they had head knowledge but no heart knowledge. They were conceited and pretended they knew but in reality they did not believe Scriptures. Jesus posed a question recorded in Psalm 110:1, “*The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*” Jesus desired that they acknowledge Him as their Messiah as told by David. Christ is David’s son being from his lineage, but Jesus Christ is God’s son for David wrote of Christ as “my Lord.” Jesus proved that He who was born in the line of David was the fulfilment of the prophecy. The Father decreed Christ to be the Ruler of all; even the enemies are subject to His power.

Jesus exposed their conceit in their greediness towards the widows. The word “*devour*” is to destroy by extortion. They were like hungry lions devouring a prey. The scribes took unfair advantage of the widows. Instead of helping, they extracted from them every cent. This was a grave crime against the poor and needy widows.

Jesus denounced conceit in their prayers which were done for show. Their prayers were spiced with many words to get the attention of men. They were actually praying to be praised by men and not to praise God. Jesus also censured the conceited attitude of the rich in offering their gifts. The collection box was on a higher elevation in the Temple. Those who offer had to walk up to place the offering. Jesus commended the poor widow for her offering, rather than the many gifts from the rich men. The widow offered more even if according to man’s calculation she gave much less. God is concerned with how we give and not how much we give.

THOUGHT: Do I withhold that which is of the Lord?

PRAYER: Father, may I live for Thy glory and honour alone and let me rejoice at Thy provisions.

TUESDAY, MARCH 20

LUKE 21:5-24

ISAIAH 46:1-13

*“My counsel shall stand,
and I will do all my pleasure.”*

PROPHECIES FULFILLED

Jesus, rebuking the Jews' conceited character, told them of the consequences of their rejection of Him. He foretold the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled about forty years later as the Romans destroyed the Temple (Isa 46:10).

In AD 70, Rome attacked Jerusalem which was then held by rebel Jews who wanted independence from Rome. The Roman soldiers destroyed the city and killed many Jews. Out of fear, the Jews left Israel and emigrated to the four corners of the world. It was indeed a terrifying invasion by the Romans. Infants, the elderly and pregnant women were brutally killed.

The Jews were dispersed and “... *led away captive into all nations...*” (Luke 21:24). The wrath of God was upon them for their rejection of the offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. During World War II, six million Jews were massacred by Hitler of Germany. They were granted their wish that the blood of Jesus be upon their children. Yet, God was so gracious -- He still fulfilled His promise to His chosen nation. In 1948, the Jews returned to their homeland and waged a war of independence. A group of Jews with no government, no sophisticated military training and equipment put to shame the armies of the Arab countries. They were recognized by the United Nations on May 14, 1948, as the independent state of Israel, in fulfilment of God's Word.

Jesus also spoke of widespread deception that would come. He said that many would be coming in His name. He also talked of commotions, wars and rumours of wars. Today, the entire modern world is threatened by terrorism. The threat of a third world war is constantly in the air. Earthquakes causing tsunamis are frequently experienced, volcanoes erupting, floods submerging large plains, incurable diseases emerging everywhere. The end is near!

THOUGHT: Do I believe the 100% truthfulness of prophecies?

PRAYER: Lord, give me a heart to believe all Thy words!

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21

LUKE 21:25-38

ZECHARIAH 14:17-18

“...all the families of the earth
unto Jerusalem to worship the King...”

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Jesus prophesied the sufferings of the Jews before His millennial reign. He continued to tell them of the scene before He returns bodily to earth. There will be strange sights in heaven. Men's hearts will become discouraged with sighs and fainting. The sight will be too fearful causing many to be exceedingly perplexed not knowing what to do. People were “*failing*,” has the meaning of “*dying*,” choosing rather to die because of the great fear. This was prophesied by Jeremiah as “*Jacob's trouble*” (Jer 30:7).

The end of these perplexities is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in a cloud. This will be a spectacular event for He will come with power and great glory. Read Zechariah 14:4.

Jesus exhorted His disciples to observe the signs of the times. If they could judge with much certainty and assurance the approach of summer by the budding forth of the trees, and if the sign of the fig tree with shoots was a sign that it was already spring and summer would surely follow, they should take His words all the more seriously. Jesus warned the people to be watchful and not to be caught by the world's trap of inordinately pursuing material things and to keep their hearts from being overcharged by the cares of this life. “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15).

Jesus encouraged the people to pray always. Prayer is the breath of the Christian. As man cannot live without breathing, so a genuine Christian cannot live without prayer. Christians must hear the words of Christ to make sure of their salvation from the coming wrath of God.

THOUGHT: Am I looking forward to the return of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, let me pray and prepare myself to meet Jesus in the air before He judges this world.

THURSDAY, MARCH 22

LUKE 22:1-38

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

*“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers...”*

THE BETRAYAL

The religious leaders, the chief priests and scribes were the active instruments in the betrayal of Jesus. They hated Him so much that they wanted to kill Him. However, the fear of the people prevented them, so they looked for someone to connive with them. The main conspirator of course was Satan. His plan was to eliminate the Son of God, and he made use of Judas. Judas' love for money drove him to exchange Jesus for the promised thirty silver pieces. Judas was with Jesus for more than three years and yet he was never converted.

The Passover meal recalls God's passing over the Hebrews to slay the firstborn of Egypt (Exod 12:12). This foreshadowed the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world. Jesus commemorated the eating of the Passover with His disciples. He instituted the Lord's Supper as an ordinance for His children throughout all generations. The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup is done to remember His death on the cross for our sins and His coming again to take us up with Him.

Jesus knew all that would happen, yet He chose Judas to be one of His apostles. Judas, however, was not a passive participant for he was a thief since the beginning. Jesus cautioned that the primary cause of betrayals is pride. With pride comes self-confidence, as Peter believed he had courage to follow Jesus even unto death. But for the grace of God, no man can withstand the wiles of the devil.

Jesus cautioned them not to be overly concerned beyond what God has provided. He told them to buy a sword to teach them that Christians are on earth to fight and not for comfortable living. *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph 6:12).

THOUGHT: Am I a believer or an unregenerate betrayer?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the heart to follow and to fight for Thee.

FRIDAY, MARCH 23

LUKE 22:39-46

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

“...and became obedient unto death,
even the death of the cross.”

THE AGONY

Jesus took His inner circle of disciples to the Mount of Olives after their last supper in the upper room. The mount was about a mile from Jerusalem. At the side of the mount was a garden called Gethsemane which had many olive trees. Before He withdrew to pray, Jesus exhorted the disciples to pray but they were too tired and sorrowful to pray. The disciples failed to overcome their physical and emotional distress. Physical bodies will suffer tiredness and discouragement.

Gethsemane is the Hebrew word for oil press, a stone hewn to crush the olive fruits. The fruits including the very hard seeds which are actually the major source of the oil are crushed to produce oil for the temple and household use. This crushing pictures the suffering which the Lord Jesus had to go through.

Gethsemane garden was a part of the Mount of Olives. Jesus often resorted here with His disciples. It was here that He spent a part of the night after the last Passover. He was here in intense agony in preparation for the next day when He would drink the cup of the wrath of God for sins which He would bear. Jesus was crushed by the heaviness of the prospect of the wrath of God upon Him. In His great agony, He sweated as it were “*great drops of blood*.” This was an instance of the great condescension of our Lord Jesus that He needed the assistance of an angel.

Jesus showed us by His example that even though His human will desired to avoid the coming persecution, He was willing to suffer and submitted to the will of the Father. The “*cup*” Jesus referred to was the wrath of God upon the sins of all people (Phil 2:7-8; 1 John 2:2). He chose to suffer that we may live forever. His agony was done for you and for me.

THOUGHT: Do I really understand the gravity of my Lord’s agony?

PRAYER: Father, Thou hast loved us with a perfect love.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24

LUKE 22:47-53

PROVERBS 27:1-6

*“Faithful are the wounds of a friend;
but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”*

JUDAS

Jesus was betrayed by His own apostle, an account that is included in the records of all the four evangelists (Matt 26:47-49; Mark 14:43-45; Luke 22:47-48; John 18:2-5). Judas brought with him a multitude to capture Jesus. He kissed his Master to identify Him from the rest of the disciples. A kiss is a greeting, a sign of friendship, it is supposed to be a sign of love and tenderness, but Judas used this to betray Jesus. It was a cruel method of betrayal by a man who professed to be a follower and a friend. As a compassionate Lord, Jesus still called Judas a friend (Matt 26:50). *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful”* (Prov 27:6). The enemies and the world will try to befriend us and we may give in thinking they are for us but be careful for they are actually the enemies of Christ.

Peter did try to resist the captors but Jesus prevented him from going further. Jesus told Peter, *“Suffer ye thus far”* for it is not by violence that we do the will of God but by meek endurance. In another narrative, Jesus told Peter that He could pray to the Father to give Him more than twelve legions of angels (a legion is a division of more than 6,000 men). Yet, He did not do so because of His great love for all men. Jesus instead healed and restored the man's ear. Jesus' love can never be measured nor be compared with any man's.

Jesus knew what would happen and also the perfect timing of the betrayal. The time came when He should be delivered up into the hands of wicked men and devils. Satan would not have power to triumph over Jesus for a season if the Father did not allow it. It was the moment God had permitted to effect the power of darkness. Read John 10:17-18. May none of us be driven to betray our Lord!

THOUGHT: Do I really love my Lord Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, may I live a life abiding with Thee and let me not be caused in any way to betray Thee.

LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 25

LUKE 22:54-62

PSALM 51:1-6

*"Have mercy upon me, O God,
...blot out my transgressions."*

THE DENIAL

Earlier, Peter was so courageous, even ready to fight for Christ, but afterwards he distanced himself from Jesus. He followed his Lord from afar. He failed to keep his promise of going with his Master even to prison. It was a sign of Peter's spiritual frailty, his fear of the Jews was greater than his faith.

Keeping his distance brought him into the company of the high priest's servants. He should have been with his Master. He sat down with the enemies of his Lord. His compromising association led to his denial of his Lord three times before the cock crew. Cock-crow is the Jewish timing of the third watch of the night from twelve midnight to three am. Peter denied that Jesus was his master. The first denial, "*I know him not*" was a negation of his knowledge of Christ or of having any acquaintance with him. Did he not say he would die with Him, rather than deny Him? The second time Peter said, "*I am not*" he denied that Christ was his master or that he was a disciple of His. The third time he said, "*Man, I know not what thou sayest,*" suggests that he denied knowing anything, or at least could not understand what was said as if he had not even heard of the name of Jesus and was a total stranger to him.

Peter did not remain close to Jesus. When a Christian walks away from his God, he is actually in the company of the devil, and he becomes vulnerable to the devil's traps. No one can be in a neutral position, he is either with God or with the devil.

The Lord from a distance fixed His eyes on Peter and immediately he was convicted. A true believer's heart melts on seeing his Lord. Peter immediately repented and wept bitterly. David prayed, "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions*" (Ps 51:1).

THOUGHT: Am I seeking God's help not to deny Him as my Lord?

PRAYER: Father, may I not succumb to the wiles of the Devil to deny my Lord!

LORD'S DAY EVENING, MARCH 25

LUKE 22:63-71

ISAIAH 53:7-12

“...as a lamb to the slaughter,
...so he openeth not his mouth.”

BEFORE THE RELIGIOUS COURT

After Jesus was arrested on Thursday at about midnight, He was brought into the custody of the Jews. They scorned Him with contempt, scourged Him, and He was blindfolded. This was before the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jewish religion, but they exacted upon Jesus vile insults and horrid abuses. He was innocent but officers and servants rudely spat on His face, and ridiculed Him by blindfolding Him, smiting Him with their hands, and in contempt asked Him to prophesy who it was that smote Him. The word used here for “smote” and “struck” has the sense of hard blows causing wounds. They used sticks or human fists to inflict pain.

The cruel beatings were made even before Jesus was put on trial. No doubt these leaders had heard a lot about Jesus, but they pretended to be ignorant. They did not question Him in order to believe but to find fault with Him. Jesus' answer was straightforward. The Sanhedrin understood very well. Jesus declared Himself to be the Son of God. They were their own witnesses against Jesus for His words were plain declarations of His divinity. When they asked, “*Art thou then the Son of God?*” Jesus told them, “*Ye say that I am,*” acknowledging Himself to be the Son of God, as if to say “*I am, as ye say.*” They rejected Him as the Son of God or God Himself, and accused Him of blasphemy. Blasphemy in those days was punishable by stoning to death. But since they were afraid of the people they wanted the orders to kill Jesus to be from the Roman authorities.

They heard Him professing to be the Son of God, and they declared Him guilty of blasphemy. They labelled Him an impious pretender for He claimed to be of divine origin. So they proceeded to condemn Him unto death without any fair trial.

So too today, there are many who are inquiring much about Jesus but never believing in Him.

THOUGHT: Am I ready to be tried for Jesus' sake?

PRAYER: Father, preserve me!

MONDAY, MARCH 26

LUKE 23:1-25

EXODUS 12:3-14

*“Your lamb shall be
without blemish...”*

BEFORE THE SECULAR COURT

Pilate was the sixth Roman procurator, specially sent from Rome to manage the affairs of Judea. The Jewish leaders and the whole multitude led Jesus to Pilate. These multitudes were probably the same people who welcomed Him during the triumphal entry. The leaders falsely accused Jesus of perverting the nation and of forbidding giving tribute to Caesar. “*Pervert*” implied that Jesus had changed the laws and turned the people from the Jews’ traditions.

Pilate, an experienced judge, found no fault with Jesus. By these declarations, Pilate confirmed the prophecy of the Messiah as the perfect Lamb of God to be sacrificed for our sins (Exod 12:5).

As was his practice to release a prisoner every Passover, Pilate chose to release Jesus. The people instead asked for Barabbas’ release. He was imprisoned for rebellion and murder, and had fought for the Jews’ independence from the Romans. Their hope in Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom to liberate them from the Roman oppression vanished and their disappointment turned to hatred. Pilate gave in to the people’s voice. He desired to release Jesus but, to please the Jews, he delivered Him to their will.

In between the two interrogations in Pilate’s court, Jesus, being a Galilean, was sent to Herod Antipas, the one who beheaded John the Baptist. Herod was the governor of the region of Galilee. He was in Jerusalem because of the important feast. He had long desired to see Jesus and to witness His miracles.

He questioned Jesus but He did not answer a word for He knew his heart. Herod’s unanswered questions led to mocking. The soldiers put a kingly robe on Jesus to make fun of Him that He was nothing but a self-declared king. They shouted loudly with false cheering. It was one of the most humiliating acts done to the Lord of the universe.

THOUGHT: Am I ready to face secular trials because of my faith?

PRAYER: Father, help me to prepare myself for whatever testing.

TUESDAY, MARCH 27

LUKE 23:26-33

PSALM 22:1-15

*“My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
...thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”*

THE WAY TO THE CROSS

After Pilate delivered Jesus to the people's will, the soldiers immediately led Jesus to Calvary. Jesus carried the cross He was to be hanged on. The blessed and holy Jesus, the Lamb of God was led as a lamb to the slaughter, to be the sacrifice for your sins and for mine. The physical exhaustion due to the cruel beatings and lashings already exhausted Him that He did not have the human strength to carry the cross. (Read Psalm 22:15.)

Simon, a Cyrenian who happened to pass by, was compelled to carry the cross for Jesus. What a great privilege for Simon to relieve the burden of Jesus. Simon carried the cross on behalf of Jesus; Jesus carried the cross on behalf of the world.

There were many people who followed Jesus, including women who mourned and lamented over Jesus. The Lord lovingly advised them not to cry for Him but for their children. Jesus prophetically told them about the destruction of Jerusalem where pregnant women and children were to be brutally massacred by the Romans. The desolation of Jerusalem is a vivid reminder for Christians of the wrath of God upon those who put Jesus on the cross. But Jesus' death was not only for the Jews or Romans, we too are the reason He was crucified. Above all, "it was His love for me, that nailed Him to the tree, to die in agony, for all my sin; for my own guilt and blame, the great Redeemer came; willing to bear the shame of all my sin" (Clayton).

When they reached Calvary (which means skull), they nailed Jesus to the cross, where He suffered excruciating pain for six hours to pay for our sins. He was crucified with two criminals on either side in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12. May we be reminded of our sins and how Jesus took them away so that we can have eternal life and dwell with Him forever in Heaven.

THOUGHT: Am I aware of my sins that led Jesus to the cross?

PRAYER: Father, may I always remember Jesus' sacrifice for me.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28

LUKE 23:34-43

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-11

*“...willing rather to be absent from the body,
and to be present with the Lord.”*

HIS MOMENTS ON THE CROSS

It is a very cruel act to crucify an innocent man. But Jesus, the God of love, prayed to the Father in heaven to forgive those who crucified and mocked Him. Although these people did not know that it was the Son of God that they did these things, they must have known the injustice towards an innocent man. God is merciful but He is also just, all sins must be punished. When Jesus was moved with compassion to ask God to forgive His persecutors, this did not prevent Him from agreeing with the righteous judgment of God the Father. He knew the ordained condemnation for the reprobate and obstinate. Such ones can only be forgiven through faith in Jesus.

There were several kinds of people at the foot of the cross. The covetous ones took His minimal clothing and cast lots. There were those who watched Jesus with discernment probably recalling how He had done only good. The Jewish rulers and soldiers mocked Jesus, challenging Him to show His power by coming down from the cross. The two thieves also mocked Jesus, but one repented and believed.

God's grace is indeed greater than man's sins. One thief hanging on the cross was convicted of his sin and recognised that he deserved to be condemned. He then acknowledged Jesus Christ as His Lord and Saviour. This is a marvellous example of God's great mercy and grace. What a man needs is to repent and believe. No matter how great a sinner a person is, if he be truly penitent, through Christ, he will not only have his sins pardoned, but will also have a place in the paradise of God. He tells all repentant sinners that when they die they shall go to be with Him right away. *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”* (2 Cor 5:8). May every man see himself like this thief who by simple faith was snatched from the very gates of Hell into the glorious Heaven.

THOUGHT: Do I think of how much Jesus suffered on the cross?

PRAYER: Father, I will never be able to fathom Thy great love, how Thou sent Thy beloved Son to suffer for me, an unworthy sinner.

THURSDAY, MARCH 29

LUKE 23:44-56

HEBREWS 10:19-25

*“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter
into the holiest by the blood of Jesus...”*

DEATH ON THE CROSS

Jesus died a very slow and agonizing death. Crucifixion was the most cruel form of execution in those days; the man on the cross must struggle to bear his weight, with pain in his hands and feet, and has difficulty breathing. It would be hours (some were recorded to have lasted for days) before they die. The Romans purposely placed their crucifixions near the gate so people would see the horrible death to bring a grave warning against heinous criminals.

Luke described that the sun was darkened. It was not an eclipse, nor vapours or clouds that preceded an earthquake, as some liberals would suggest. Calvin commented, “the darkness was intended to arouse them to consider the astonishing design of God in the death of Christ.” The veil of the temple was rent upon His death. This rent veil is symbolic for believers that they are now given direct access to God (Heb 10:19). The Father in heaven has all the power to prevent the suffering, but if He did that we would all end up in hell. Jesus is our substitute so we can be forgiven and enter heaven.

After Jesus commended His Spirit to the Father, He died physically. Not only the Jews but the Romans also witnessed His death. Some of the Jews smote their breast for sorrow over the death of a good man whom they did not realise was their Messiah. One Roman centurion who knew Jesus well affirmed that truly He was the Son of God.

Joseph of Arimathea, a believer of Jesus, asked for His body to bury Him for that was the custom of the Jews. Since it was on a Friday (the next day was their Sabbath), they hurriedly took Jesus and laid Him in a tomb carved inside a cave nearby. Nicodemus brought ointments for the burial and the women saw how Jesus was buried. The wages of sin is death. The sinless Jesus died on behalf of us sinners that we may live forever.

THOUGHT: Am I mindful of the great work of Christ on the cross?

PRAYER: Father, may I remember Jesus’ suffering on the cross. Stir my heart to be a zealous messenger of this great grace.

FRIDAY, MARCH 30

LUKE 24:1-43

JOHN 11:17-27

*"...I am the resurrection, and the life:
he that believeth in me... yet shall he live."*

THE RESURRECTION

Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, which is Sunday in our calendar today. This is the reason early Christians, as recorded in the book of Acts, gathered for worship on the first day of the week, also called the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7). Jesus' resurrection proved He conquered death. This is the day when worship and thanksgiving to God is done for He chose to rise on this day.

Jesus rose bodily from the grave as the angels told Mary and company. He did not rise as a spirit, but with His own body, now a glorified body. The angels declared that Jesus was living and He should not be sought among the dead. Jesus has said, *"...I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* (John 11:25-26).

Jesus showed Himself bodily to His disciples although they were not able to recognize Him. They lacked understanding because of their unbelief and fear for what had just happened to their Teacher. Jesus, however, eventually revealed Himself to them. He reproved them for not believing the things they ought to have known already. Not once only but several times did Jesus foretell His death and resurrection. Nevertheless, the disciples did not have the faith to believe these words. Jesus explained that His crucifixion, death and resurrection were necessary for man's salvation. When they took the bread, their eyes were immediately opened. Jesus did not only appear to a few but to all His disciples. He greeted them with peace, different from the peace the world offers, for His peace passes all understanding.

The Lord said that they should not be troubled for He was not a Spirit but the resurrected One who had flesh and bones.

THOUGHT: Am I looking forward to the day of resurrection?

PRAYER: Lord, I look forward to the rapture and the resurrection day when all believers shall receive their glorified bodies!

SATURDAY, MARCH 31
LUKE 24:44-53
EPHESIANS 1:15-23

*“The eyes of your understanding
being enlightened; that ye may know
what is the hope of his calling...”*

THE BLESSED HOPE

After the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself to His disciples, He commissioned them to preach the gospel. God first gave this gospel message immediately after man fell into sin (Gen 3:15). It was not an afterthought but a fulfilment of what God had decreed and written in the scriptures. This good news is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who was born in human flesh, lived a perfect life, suffered and died for man's sins, was buried and rose again the third day.

The core message of the gospel is the acknowledgment of man's sinfulness. With the admission of sin comes the acceptance of its consequences: death, judgment, everlasting condemnation. The abhorrence of sin must cause the person to change his sinful ways and turn his back to sin. This does not suggest sinless perfection but a sincere desire to do away with sin and to live a holy life for the Lord.

The necessary component of the gospel does not end with repentance of sin. Man must be directed to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sin-convicted man must realise he cannot do anything to escape the consequences of sin. He must look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2).

The inevitable outcome of faith is to be a witness. There is to be that willingness and passion to share what he has heard about the gospel. It is not a requirement for salvation but his zeal to win others for Christ is a proof that he has truly experienced salvation.

All who have experienced the salvation of the Lord surely experience great joy. If he is not joyful with his new life in Christ, then he does not fully understand that he is delivered from eternal torment. Moreover, he does not know the exceeding blessedness of being in God's Kingdom. Read Ephesians 1:17-18.

THOUGHT: Am I assured of that blessed hope in Christ?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for the blessed hope!

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