

# Search The Scriptures

**VOLUME 58-61**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Region/Group: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT PASTOR W.F. KUMUYI

Pastor (Dr.) William Folorunso Kumuyi, previously a professor of mathematics at the University of Lagos, is the founding pastor of the Deeper Life Bible Church and General Superintendent of Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Worldwide. The Church with its headquarters in Lagos officially began on November 7, 1982 with a simple message: **“Jesus transforms lives - bringing not only healing but a complete and fully formed Christian character.”** By 1988, the Conference of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches worldwide recognized Deeper Life Bible Church as the single largest church in Africa, and the third largest single congregation in the world.

The phenomenal growth of the church tends to overshadow its small beginning. With 15 adult members in 1973, Kumuyi began an interdenominational weekly Bible study in Lagos. By 1975, this fledgling group quickly grew to 1500 people who assembled faithfully every Monday to hear the systematic, expository and rich teaching of the scriptures with practical application that is immediately helpful and relevant to listeners. Less than a decade later, the Bible Study group became what is now the Deeper Life Bible Church and grew to 350,000 members at the Lagos headquarters church with mission work in 42 countries of the world. The church has since sustained an unprecedented growth trajectory leading to worldwide membership strength in the millions. Pastor Kumuyi, from the beginning of his ministry, has been blessed with divine success because of his commitment to teaching sound doctrine, a stellar and pristine character, unparalleled commitment to leadership development and divine giftedness.

A humble and outstanding teacher and preacher, Pastor Kumuyi exemplifies servant leadership. He commits himself tirelessly and selflessly to achieve divinely ordained goals. He has a colossal grasp of the scriptures coupled with uncanny ability to dissect scriptural truths. Preaching between two worlds, bridging the context and the content of the biblical text to meet the realities and the needs of present day led many listeners to conclude that he **“teaches the Bible as if he was there when it was written”**. The Bible serves as the proof text for his teaching and preaching.

With a thematic approach, he gives a wide range of Bible passages supporting, clarifying and expanding his main point. A typical Kumuyi teaching is a beauty to behold. He brightens and deepens delivery with laborious scholarship and stylistic deployment of a vast range of figurative, alliterative devices. Kumuyi's message is music to the ears and balm to the spirit. It comes across with crystal clarity free from the din and distractions of fleeting hysterics and unnecessary drama. It is not uncommon to see on a typical Sunday service, princes, paupers, professors and priests sit side by side reaching for the cross and surrendering to the Lord in response to a heart-rending sermon. This emphasis on the primacy of preaching and the exaltation of the Word is one of Kumuyi's great legacies to the body of Christ.

Much of the church's cohesion and shared sense of community have been driven by the inspiring and exemplary leadership of Pastor Kumuyi. His infectious passion for evangelism is undiminished. He is passionate about leadership training and equipping pastors, teachers, evangelists and Christian workers. As his congregation blossomed throughout Africa, the Deeper Christian Life Ministry has also extended its missionary exploits to Western Europe, Russia, Asia, India and North America. Kumuyi credits God for the success recorded so far by the church: **"The bottom line is that God in His own wisdom and power raised up the church and has given us divine support. The only reason Deeper Life has grown is because God Himself has given the growth."**



## **CONTENTS**

| <u><b>LESSON</b></u>                |   | <u><b>PAGE</b></u> |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| <u><b>OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES</b></u> |   |                    |
| 742                                 | David Defeats Goliath                     | 5                  |
| 743                                 | Saul Envies David                         | 12                 |
| 744                                 | Saul Plots to Kill David                  | 18                 |
| 745                                 | Jonathan Delivers David From Death        | 23                 |
| 746                                 | David Flees to Gath                       | 28                 |
| <u><b>NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES</b></u> |   |                    |
| 747                                 | Exhortation to Steadfast Christian Living | 34                 |
| 748                                 | Christ-like Love, Unity and Humility.     | 40                 |
| 749                                 | The Pursuit of True Believers             | 45                 |
| 750                                 | Believers' Joy and Confidence in Christ   | 52                 |
| 751                                 | The Transforming Power of The Gospel      | 57                 |
| <u><b>SPECIAL STUDIES</b></u>       |   |                    |
| 752                                 | The Surrendered Consecrated Life          | 63                 |
| 753                                 | Serving One Another In Love               | 71                 |
| 754                                 | Christ's Millennial Reign                 | 76                 |
| <u><b>OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES</b></u> |   |                    |
| 755                                 | Saul Slays the Priests at Nob             | 80                 |
| 756                                 | Saul Pursues David                        | 86                 |
| 757                                 | David Spares Saul's Life.                 | 92                 |
| 758                                 | The Foolishness of Nabal                  | 98                 |
| 759                                 | David's Deception and Rejection.          | 105                |
| <u><b>NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES</b></u> |   |                    |
| 760                                 | Redemption Through Christ ...             | 110                |
| 761                                 | Call and Commitment to Perfection...      | 114                |

| <b><u>LESSON</u></b>                                     | <b><u>PAGE</u></b> |
|--|--------------------|
| 762     Warning Against False Teaching and<br>Worship    | 120                |
| 763     The Believer's Risen Life                        | 125                |
| 764     Admonition to Prayer and Good Conduct            | 129                |
| <b><u>SPECIAL STUDIES</u></b>                            |                    |
| 765     Contemporary Social Vices:<br>The Christian View | 134                |
| 766     Earnestly Contending for The Faith               | 141                |
| 767     The Great White Throne Judgment                  | 146                |
| <b><u>OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES</u></b>                      |                    |
| 768     Saul Consults A Witch at Endor                   | 153                |
| 769     David's Victory Over the Amalekites              | 160                |
| 770     The Tragic Death of Saul                         | 166                |
| 771     David Mourns the Death of Saul<br>And Jonathan   | 171                |
| 772     David Reigns Over Judah And Israel               | 177                |
| <b><u>NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES</u></b>                      |                    |
| 768     Testimonial of The Power of The Gospel           | 184                |
| 774     Exemplary Christian Leadership                   | 188                |
| 775     Concern for Believers' Spiritual Growth          | 194                |
| 776     Call to Holiness                                 | 200                |
| 777     Rapture of the Saints                            | 206                |
| <b><u>SPECIAL STUDIES</u></b>                            |                    |
| 778     Love and Unity in The Church                     | 212                |
| 779     Serving One Another In Love                      | 219                |
| 780     The New Heaven and The New Earth.                | 224                |

**LESSON****PAGE****OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES**

|     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 781 | David Brings Back the Ark to Jerusalem | 229 |
| 782 | God's Covenant with David              | 235 |
| 783 | David Expands His Kingdom              | 241 |
| 784 | David's Kindness to Mephibosheth       | 246 |
| 785 | David Commits Adultery                 | 251 |

**NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES**

|     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 786 | Precepts for Christian Living                                   | 257 |
| 787 | Commendation of The Believer And<br>Condemnation of The Ungodly | 263 |
| 788 | Warning Against Deception in The Last Days                      | 268 |
| 789 | Admonition Against Idleness                                     | 274 |
| 790 | Charge Against False Doctrine                                   | 278 |

**SPECIAL STUDIES**

|     |                              |     |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|
| 791 | The New Birth                | 283 |
| 792 | Hell: The Destiny of Sinners | 289 |
| 793 | The Urgency of Our Task      | 293 |

## DAVID DEFEATS GOLIATH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David**” (1 Samuel 17:50).

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 17:1-58**

**W**e recall that David, the son of Jesse, was secretly anointed by Samuel as king in Israel in the previous chapter because Saul had been rejected due to his disobedience to God’s command. By providence, David was chosen to play the harp to relieve Saul of his affliction and torment by an evil spirit. David’s anointing marked the confirmation of God’s hand upon him for greater exploits, and “**...the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward...**” (1 Samuel 16:13).

This study focuses on the war between Israel and the Philistines, a recurrent problem between the two nations. The Philistines had gathered at Shochoh, a territory of Judah, to fight against the people of God. For forty days, their champion, who goes by the name Goliath, taunted the army of Israel with crass vituperation, outright disdain and hate, and there was none to challenge him or call his bluff. By providence, however, David appeared on the scene of battle and through sheer courage and faith in God, took up the gauntlet to confront him. God gave him the victory and he defeated Goliath and brought resounding victory to Israel.

The defeat of Goliath underscores the importance of faith and dependence on God: that believers should not trust in the arm of flesh for victory in the battles of life but in the living God. “**Thus, saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD**” (Jeremiah 17:5).

**Question 1: *What can believers learn from the defeat of Goliath?***

**GOLIATH’S CHALLENGE AND DISDAIN FOR ISRAEL’S ARMY** (1 Samuel 17:1-11; 14:1-22; 2 Kings 18:17-35;

Exodus 23:20-23; Deuteronomy 20:1-4; Isaiah 41:10-16; 49:24-26; Exodus 14:13,14)

The Philistines who fled before Israel not long ago, gathered again at Shochoh to fight against them. **“And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines”** (1 Samuel 17:2). The boldness of the Philistines might have been prompted by their possible awareness that Saul had fallen out of favour with God, thus losing divine support. They supposed that Israel would be an easy prey since their leader no longer enjoyed God’s protection. This probably emboldened them to confront the Israelites. This should serve as warning to believers to maintain constant relationship with God because their adversaries are constantly watching to see that they fall out of the favour and protection of God (1 Peter 5:8). Obedience to and steadfast walk with God will ensure divine protection and security; otherwise, disobedience to His commands will bring loss of divine presence, favour, peace and answer to prayers. It will expose the believer to satanic attacks and divine judgment.

***Question 2: What were the consequences of Saul’s loss of fellowship with God?***

Goliath subjected the Israelites’ army to great bashing, ridicule and disdain. As a strategy, he employed derisive propaganda with boasting to weaken their army. **“And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us”** (1 Samuel 17:8,9). Then he capped his vituperation and said, **“I defy the armies of Israel this day”**. Goliath’s strategy worked because, **“When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid”**.

Besides, Goliath seemed to be very confident of his kitting – the physical armour – the helmet of brass, coat of mail, greaves of brass, staff of spear, shield, etc. He was very sure that the Israelites would not find a man to match his



military status. Meanwhile, Saul's loss of fellowship with the Lord led to his loss of faith in the promises of God. Consequently, great fear gripped him and the entire nation. Their fear showed that Israel's search for security in a human king instead of absolute trust in God had failed.

On the basis of God's covenant, the Israelites were never to fear their enemies but trust in the Lord who promised to defend them whenever they were confronted by their enemies. He said, **"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"** (Deuteronomy 20:1). In the same vein, believers are not to fear Satan and his agents but trust in the living God wholeheartedly. **"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"** (1 John 4:4).

**DAVID'S PEDIGREE AND GRACIOUS CHARACTER:** (1 Samuel 17:12-31; 16:12,18; Psalm 37:23; 115:2-11)

While Goliath was still parading himself as the champion of the Philistines and boasting of his ability to defeat anyone, David appeared on the battlefield.

**"Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul"** (1 Samuel 17:12). He hailed from a family of eight sons and was the youngest. Jesse had sent him to check on the welfare of his three elder brothers – Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah – who were in the army. But his appearance at the war scene could not be said to be a coincidence but divinely arranged (Psalm 37:23).

David was described as having a lovely personality, a man of valor and courage. **"Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him"** (1 Samuel 16:18). While the army of Israel was down with fear, David volunteered to confront the champion of

the Philistines. On noticing his courage to fight Goliath, Eliab, his eldest brother, became angry and accused him of pride and naughtiness. But he bore the provocation with admirable temper; he only asked: “...**What have I now done? Is there not a cause?**” He humbly discountenanced his brother’s provocation, discouragement and accusation and turned to others that he might understand the problem. He was determined to fight the Philistine. The ill-will of his brothers would not deter him because the glory of God and of his nation was at stake. He must have thought within himself, “**Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?**” (Psalm 115:2). Christians also should be determined to accomplish their God-given tasks despite oppositions or provocations. In addition, we should handle provocations with grace and calmness. “**And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them**” (1 Samuel 17:23). Unlike other Israelites, what David heard stirred up faith in him instead of fear; it led to decision and determination in place of discouragement and despair. He rose to the challenge for the glory of God and the territorial integrity of his nation. Believers should not allow negative statements to remove their confidence in God and His promises.

**COURAGE AND THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH** (1 Samuel 17:32-58; Numbers 13:30; 14:6-9; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Romans 10:10; 2 Timothy 4:1-5)

In spite of Goliath’s intimidating features, stature and military prowess, David displayed boldness, courage and extraordinary faith in the God of Israel. He acted selflessly to defend the glory of God and reversed the national reproach. “**And David said to Saul, Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine**” (1 Samuel 17:32).

**Question 3: *Why was David bold and courageous to confront Goliath?***

Drawing from his past experience, David testified to God’s strength and faithfulness when he was confronted with danger. He recalled that, as a shepherd boy, he killed a lion which took a lamb out of his father’s flock. He did the same

thing to a bear. He was confident that God who enabled him to kill a lion and a bear would do the same to the uncircumcised Philistine who had defied the armies of the living God. **“David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine...”** (1 Samuel 17:37).

With faith and assurance in his heart, David confessed what the Lord would do. **“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands”** (1 Samuel 17:45-47). There is always a link between what we believe and what we confess; out of the abundance of the heart the mouth always speaks. **“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Romans 10:10).

Apparently, David’s confession and audacity infuriated Goliath and he rose to attack him. But David ran quickly, reached for a stone in his shepherd’s bag and launched an offensive from his sling against the champion of the Philistines. The stone hit and sunk into his forehead, **“and he fell upon his face to the earth”**. Thus, David killed Goliath; the champion of the Philistines was brought down without much fight.

The story and defeat of Goliath is legendary. It was an event that left in its trail a lot of lessons for humanity. First, it cautions us against pride and boasting. Surely, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). Goliath had boasted of his ability even before the battle began, but his proud heart destroyed him. Second, God can use seemingly insignificant vessels to

wrought victory for His people: David was an insignificant figure in comparison to Goliath's person, power and position. Moreover, a stone launched with a sling would do less damage to a man armed like Goliath. But these seemingly insignificant vessels – youthful David and a small stone – brought down a giant. Still, we recall that God is a Specialist in the use of little things to accomplish big purposes. Consider that a rod in Moses' hand, the jaw-bone of an ass, a mustard seed, five barley loaves and two small fishes, etc. were all used to accomplish great purposes. Third, Goliath's defeat shows the futility of carnal weapons in the battle of life. Fourth, we must never disparage or look down on individuals. God can use anyone to fulfil His program. Saul and David's elder brothers discouraged him from confronting Goliath because they felt he was not qualified by all standards to do so, but they were wrong.

On the other hand, there is a lot to learn from David. First, he never forgot God's past mercies and gracious dealings with him: that the same God who delivered the lion and the bear into his hand could do the same against an uncircumcised Philistine. It was this knowledge that inspired faith in him to confront the present challenge. Second, he was humble. He knew without God, he could not do anything; therefore, he relied on his God-given ability. Third, he was concerned for the glory of God and would not mind putting his life on the line to defend it. Fourth, he had no personal ambition to be popular or prominent.

#### **Question 4: *What can believers learn from David's victory over Goliath?***

As David triumphed over Goliath, so did Christ over Satan and the hosts of hell when He went to the Cross (Colossians 2:14,15), and has transferred this victory to His followers. Believers can exercise power over Satan and all adversaries with courage and confidence in God. We should not be afraid to confront any opposition as we preach the gospel because God has said, **"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness"** (Isaiah 41:10).

In conclusion, we should note the following: one, God

resists the proud and pours contempt on those who defy Him. Two, like Goliath, no one ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Three, we should enlist in the battle against Satan and his agents to defend God's honour and Word. Like David, believers should confront every battle of life by putting on the whole armour of God, believing that no power of darkness will prevail against them. Finally, believers should note that **"...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; That no flesh should glory in his presence"** (1 Corinthians 1:27,29).

## SAUL ENVIES DAVID

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward” (1 Samuel 18:8,9).

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 18:1-30**

**T**he victory of Israel’s army over the Philistines in the previous chapter was memorable. David, the lad-warrior brought down Goliath, the head of the army of the Philistines, and won the much-needed victory for a shivering king and army of Israel. It was this victory that brought David to limelight in Israel and endeared him to King Saul, his son and servants, and the generality of the people. Jonathan, the king’s son loved David so much that he gave him his royal robe, garments, sword, bow and girdle as the duo entered a lifelong friendship. But the growing popularity of David among the people which was amplified by the customary victory songs of the women, bruised the king’s ego and drew his ire. He began to nurse hatred and envy against David and made attempts to eliminate him. When that did not succeed, he threw up some ensnaring devices to destroy him and his growing popularity, albeit to no avail.

**DAVID’S FRIENDSHIP WITH JONATHAN AND APPOINTMENT BY THE KING** (1 Samuel 18:1-5; Proverbs 18:24; 17:17; John 15:13-15; 1 John 3:16; Romans 5:7,8; Luke 22:20; Ephesians 4:7,8,11-13)

The victory of David over Goliath brought with it higher responsibility, national esteem and general affection of the people. Following the slaughter of Goliath, Abner brought David to Saul “...**with the head of the Philistine in his hand**” (1 Samuel 17:57,58). It was during the interaction of Saul with David that Jonathan’s heart was drawn towards him and the most intimate friendship commenced between them. The two swore to be friends and there was no love lost between them thereafter.

This friendship was providential as nothing could break it. Even when Jonathan came under the threat of being killed by his own father for helping David to escape, he staked his life for his friend. The prudence, modesty, piety, bravery and faith of David might have been the points of affection that endeared him to Jonathan. These virtues might have rubbed off on him as he also did set upon the Philistine army with faith and bravery with which David conquered the Philistine giant. They were so united in their spirits that they seemed but one soul in two bodies.

Ordinarily, the likes of Jonathan who lived in the royal court would not descend to befriend a David who just came to town from following sheep. Though their social classes were wide apart - a common shepherd boy and a crowned prince - their soul tie could not be broken or separated. Jonathan demonstrated his love for David with generous presents of his royal robe, garments, sword, bow and girdle. If there was a friend who stuck closer to David than his own brother, it was Jonathan (Proverbs 18:24). The bond was so strong that after the death of Jonathan, David lamented bitterly that: **“I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women”** (2 Samuel 1:26).

**Question 1: *What are the similarities between Jonathan’s friendship with David and that of Jesus with believers?***

Full of love, Jesus Christ the Prince of peace also descended from the courts of heaven to initiate and seal an everlasting friendship with humanity. He stripped Himself of heavenly glory, incarnated through the virgin birth, demonstrated supreme love through His death and resurrection to provide robes of righteousness for everyone. More than Jonathan, He became poor so that we can be enriched with divine blessings. Jonathan did not die for David, but Christ died for us. **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13). Jonathan made a verbal covenant with David, but Christ made an everlasting covenant with His blood for as many as would respond to His love by turning away from sin. Jonathan gave to David his sword, bow and girdle but the Lord has



given believers a comprehensive package of the whole armour of God, the sword of the Spirit and the girdle of truth.

## **Question 2: *Why was David accepted by all Israel?***

David had been anointed to replace Saul as the next king of Israel. By divine arrangement, it was his victory that connected him to the royal family. Saul accepted David and employed him in the affairs of government as a head over the men of war. Thus, he became a resident of the royal court. David's presence at the royal court was to prepare him ahead of the higher calling of the Lord. David showed himself a dutiful servant as he **"...went out whithersoever Saul sent him..."** (1 Samuel 18:5). He was obedient and courageous, the qualities which earned him acceptance **"in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants"**.

**RELENTLESS PLOT AGAINST AN ACCEPTED COMMANDER** (1 Samuel 18:6-11; 2 Corinthians 10:12; Proverbs 6:16,19; 1 Peter 5:8; Titus 3:3; Acts 7:9; Matthew 27:18; Acts 13:45; 17:5; Job 1:9,10; Ecclesiastes 10:8; 1 John 5:18)

The defeat of Goliath and the Philistines did not only bring joy but also pain to David. Saul felt threatened by the growing popularity of David as expressed in the slanted victory and congratulatory songs of the women. The content of the song ascribed **"ten thousands"** casualties to David and only **"thousands"** to Saul. He could not bear to hear the women magnifying his servant above him. He was angry and greatly displeased that the women could express the truth of the victory over the Philistines in songs that reproached him. Saul's skewed suspicion flashed on an assumed plan to take the kingdom from him and terminate his dynasty as previously declared by Samuel. **"And Saul was very wroth... and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward"** (verses 8,9). Seeing David as his possible successor to the throne, he labored to eliminate him. Thus, the triumph and jubilation soon turned to trouble as Saul determined to get rid of David.



However, believers must avoid comparing one with another and sowing seeds of discord through testimonies they share among the people of God. Note also that it is futile to try to reverse God's judgment on the disobedient by any other means than heartfelt repentance. Saul's hatred, envy and plot to eliminate David showed that he loved the praise of men and his kingship more than the word and glory of God.

The Scripture affirms that envy and hatred are marks of the unregenerate. Prior to his conversion, Paul the apostle recalled that **"we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another"** (Titus 3:3). It was for envy Joseph was sold into slavery, Christ was delivered to be crucified and the Jews persecuted Paul the apostle (Acts 7:9; Matthew 27:18; Acts 13:45; 17:5). So, envy is not a virtue but a vice which believers must guard against.

To execute his murderous intention and take David unaware, the opportunity Saul sought for came when David played his harp to refresh him from the torment of an evil spirit. He wasted no time as he cast a javelin to pin him to the wall. By divine help, David escaped two attempts on his life by Saul.

### ***Question 3: What do we learn from Saul's move to kill David?***

In Saul, we see the mission of the adversary who **"...as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"**. The exhortation for the heaven-bound believer is to be sober and vigilant, with a readiness to resist the adversary.

The phrase: **"the evil spirit from God"** in the text means "the evil spirit permitted by God".

### ***Question 4: Why was Saul afflicted by an evil spirit?***

It is obvious God builds a hedge around every true child of His but **"whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him"** (Job 1:9,10; Ecclesiastes 10:8). So, when Saul was in fellowship with God, there was a hedge around him. But when he sinned and did not truly repent, the hedge was broken, and the evil spirit was allowed to afflict him. There

is, therefore, no eternal and permanent security for any believer who is saved but does not abide in Christ. God's promise clearly states that: **"he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not"** (1 John 5:18). It is as believers keep themselves in the love of God and abide in fellowship of the saints, prayer and regular intake of the Word that they are kept by the power of God. The abiding believer has a measure of the Holy Spirit in him that shields him from being possessed by an evil spirit (John 14:17).

**Question 5: *What should be the believer's attitude towards persecutors?***

Believers today should learn from David to put their entire faith in God to fight their battles and defeat the purposes of their enemies. Instead of confronting the enemy physically, they are expected to prayerfully handover the battle to God. Besides, David was calm and collected. He did not fight back but remained focused and available even for higher assignments. Though he had both strength and courage enough to retaliate, he did no more than secure himself by getting out of it. This was anchored on his absolute faith and confidence in God. The believer in Christ must never give in to revenge (Romans 12:19). When we live in holiness and fear of God, our persecutors will be afraid of us: **"For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him..."** (Mark 6:20).

**REPEATED FEAR OF THE APOSTATE AND CRUEL KING** (1 Samuel 18:12-30; Proverbs 29:25; 1 John 4:18; Mark 6:20; Romans 12:19,20; Isaiah 41:10,13,14; 54:17)

Saul was a proud and self-willed leader who would rather seek the honour of men than the approval of God. These traits led him to a point of backsliding and apostasy. His lust for honour and recognition of men brought him to the state of perpetual fear. For fear of men, he failed in the divine appointment with Samuel, transgressed the commandment of the Lord and was finally rejected.

Saul's fear in the text was based on his discovery that the divine presence which he lost was with David. **"And Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him and was departed from Saul"** (1 Samuel 18:12). He knew that

David could not have escaped the points of javelin without the help of God. Besides, it was baffling that he tried unsuccessfully to convince Jonathan to work against David. Added to this was David's prudent behavior.

**Question 6: What are the similarities between the devices Saul used to eliminate David and ones the devil uses against believers?**

When Saul brought David close to him, his motive at first was not known, given that he had a broken relationship with God. Later, it became clear that: one, it was to ensure that attention was not shifted to David after his defeat of Goliath; two, to monitor and keep his movements in check; three, he was scared of losing his throne; and four, he needed to entrap him through deceptive favour of luring David to marry his daughter. Saul's motive for requesting for one hundred foreskins of the Philistines as bride price was an envious plot to destroy David in the process.

The strategies that Satan uses today are similar. He can use promotion and favour as baits to lure believers into compromise. He and his agents show feigned love to people in order to pollute or initiate them. The devil also uses marriages to entangle careless believers. But God is always faithful in preserving his children at all times, especially those who put their trust in Him. The wisdom He gave David to prevail over Saul's cunning and crafty devices is still available to us.

God preserved David from all the attempts Saul made against him. Also, David was very cautious and circumspect in everything he said and did: he **"...behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by"** (verse 30). Therefore, a believer who walks in the wisdom of God as David is assured that, **"no weapon that is formed against [him] shall prosper"** (Isaiah 54:17).

## SAUL PLOTS TO KILL DAVID

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself” (1 Samuel 19:2).

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 19:1-24

**T**he preceding chapter details Saul’s unsuccessful attempts to eliminate David after his victory over Goliath. The relationship between the two further deteriorated in this lesson. In fact, Saul’s hatred, envy and fear of David became full-blown to the extent that he openly campaigned and enlisted his household in the manhunt for him. His frustration worsened as Jonathan, his son and Michal, his daughter declined from collaborating with him to eliminate David. The basic lesson here is that the wicked may hunt believers and Christian servants but the Lord “**preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked**” (Psalm 97:10).

**UNGODLY DIRECTIVE TO KILL DAVID** (1 Samuel 19:1; Exodus 20:13; Psalm 37:12,13; Proverbs 6:14; Psalms 86:14; 94:21,22; Isaiah 10:1)

**“And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David”** (1 Samuel 19:1). It was awful for Saul to enlist his household in the murderous plot against David. His instruction has far-reaching domestic and national implications. One, by attempting to drag Jonathan and his servants into the murderous plot, Saul tried to infect his household with malice for David. It is ungodly for church leaders to nurse hatred against any worker or member, let alone influence their household to hate, antagonize or even hurt their target. As Christians, we should guard against the tendency to sow seeds of discord and hatred in our children, family members or colleagues in our workplaces. The Bible commands us to “**Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**” (Hebrews 12:14).

Two, the instruction to kill David had the capacity to

generate inter-generational enmity and war between the two families and tribes. Three, the instruction to eliminate the innocent young man was a flagrant disregard for God's word not to kill (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 19:18). Today, believers are warned to desist from getting involved in any form of murder, including abortion (Romans 13:9; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 3:15). Four, Saul's directive revealed his questionable character. He failed to lead an exemplary godly life for his household and subjects. Believers are enjoined to emulate the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and godly Christian leaders (1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 4:16).

**Question 1: *What are the implications of Saul's instruction to Jonathan and his servants to kill David?***

**SELFLESS DEMONSTRATION OF KINDNESS TO DAVID**  
(1 Samuel 19:2-7; Romans 12:9,10; 13:10; 1 Corinthians 13:4,5)

**“But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself”** (1 Samuel 19:2). Here, Jonathan demonstrated unusual love and kindness to David. Indeed, his love for him was a kind providence as God used him to shield David from harm. Jonathan's love for David was pure as he refused to imbibe his father's hatred and murderous intention towards him. The Scripture admonishes that believers should **“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil...”** (Romans 12:9,10). Love amongst brethren should be characterized by sincerity, kindness, purity, patience and gentleness (1 Corinthians 13:4,5). It is important to underscore here that godly children should refrain from running sinful errands for their parents.

**Question 2: *Describe the nature of love that should exist among brethren in the church.***

**“And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-**

**ward very good**" (1 Samuel 19:4). Jonathan played the role of an advocate and intercessor. His intercession for David was very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of meekness and wisdom; and he showed himself faithful to his friend by speaking good of him, even when faced with the danger of incurring his father's displeasure. He pleaded convincingly and made his father see why David should not be killed (1 Samuel 19:4,5). Saul's hands were weakened at Jonathan's words because he had no justifiable reason for his action. As God's children, we have nothing to fear because we have an Advocate and Intercessor before our heavenly Father (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Besides, our righteous life will speak for us in times of adversity, persecution and unjustifiable attacks from the enemy (Proverbs 11:6; 1 Peter 3:13). In view of this, we should use our tongues positively at all times to build up and not to destroy (Proverbs 25:11; Ecclesiastes 10:12; 12:11). Christ teaches that believers should be peacemakers who cement relationships in line with the Scriptures (Matthew 5:9).

**Question 3: *What can believers learn from Jonathan's mediation?***

Having succeeded in his peace initiative, Jonathan brought David to Saul and he resumed his duties in the palace (1 Samuel 19:7). Nothing suggests that David was fearful, vengeful or half-hearted in his service to the king on resumption of duty. He still loved Saul irrespective of the persecution and plots to eliminate him. The Bible declares that **"there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear..."** (1 John 4:18). The life of David as an obedient and faithful servant is a lesson to contemporary believers. We are therefore admonished to **"be subject to [our] masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward"** (1 Peter 2:18).

**Question 4: *What can we learn from David's attitude after resumption of duty in Saul's palace?***

**SUSTAINED DESPERATION TO KILL DAVID** (1 Samuel 19:8-24; Jeremiah 17:9; John 15:18; Galatians 4:29; 2 Timothy 3:13)

On re-assumption of duty, David took on the Philistines in battle and **"slew them with a great slaughter; and they**

**fled from him**" (1 Samuel 19:8). David's winning streak in different battles over the Philistines unsettled Saul. How David remained unconquerable and unscathed from different attempts at getting rid of him remained a hard nut for him to crack. Rather than getting killed by the Philistines which Saul so much desired, David defeated them over and over. This latest victory increased Saul's frustration and renewed his desperation to kill him. Harboring such a murderous intention would not allow him to commend or reward David for his patriotic zeal and feat. Saul's action confirms the fact that hatred and malice blind the eyes of the unregenerate and backsliders from seeing good things in others. The Jews never saw anything good in our Lord Jesus Christ because of their religious blindness occasioned by hatred for the truth (John 9:39-41). Meanwhile, David's doggedness teaches us that persecution and challenges of life should not restrain us from putting in our best into God's service. As a combination of hatred and plot to kill brewed in Saul, the evil spirit that had been previously exorcised returned to afflict him. As usual, David was more than ready to use his musical prowess to bring relief to the tormented king. But Saul saw this as another opportunity to get rid of him at once. **"And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night"** (verse 10). From this point on, Saul began the hot chase to hunt him down. He quickly dispatched his hatchet men to his house to eliminate him. This plot was aborted by Michal, Saul's daughter whom he married. She did not only provide David with the intelligence about the looming danger but personally smuggled him out of the house through a window. In this age of security concerns, we must not ignore reports of intelligence in our communities and circulating same to the brethren. After David's escape, facilitated by Michal, she tested her father's resolve to kill David by saying that he was sick and could not report to the king as directed. But the king insisted that his messengers should bring his sick body from the bed that **"I may slay him"**. This is the height of wickedness to seek to snuff life out of David, even if he was sick.

**"So, David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to**



**Ramah... he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth**" (verse 18). By running to Samuel, David made God his refuge. As a prophet of God, Samuel was in the best position to counsel him on what to do at such a time.

David's flight did not assuage Saul's frustration. As far as he was concerned, he would stop at nothing but the termination of his life. Having obtained intelligence report that David went to Naioth with Samuel, he dispatched some messengers to capture and bring him. Lacking respect for God and His prophets headed by Samuel, the three batches of Saul's messengers entered the assembly to carry out their evil assignment but were all arrested and detained by the Spirit of God. Unwilling to accept any disgrace arising from a failed plot, **"he went thither to Naioth"** and was also overpowered by God's Spirit.

It is unfortunate that Saul who prophesied shortly before his coronation causing people to ask: **"Is Saul also among the prophets?"** has lost all grace and every vestige of godliness and is left to chase a servant in his kingdom. How quickly has his loss of the Spirit turned him into a monster without regard for human lives! Those who manifest gifts without grace, and charisma without character will be turned back at the pearly gate of heaven (Matthew 7:22,23).

**Question 5: What can believers learn from Saul's unsuccessful attempts to kill David?**

Saul with his messengers failed to realize that God's presence with David was the secret of his protection. Though the devil seeks to devour God's people and servants, the Lord is always committed to their preservation (2 Timothy 4:18; Psalm 91). He preserved Joseph, the three Hebrew children, Daniel, David, the apostles and Christ from being killed prematurely (Genesis 50:15-21; Daniel 3:16,17,24,25; 6:18-23). And irrespective of what you are going through, **"The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore"** (Psalm 121:7,8).



## JONATHAN DELIVERS DAVID FROM DEATH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father” (1 Samuel 20:13).

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 20:1-24

**D**avid’s travail with Saul began after he defeated Goliath of Gath and the women ascribed greater popularity to him than to the king. Saul became envious and jealous. “**And Saul was very wroth... and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?**” (1 Samuel 18:8). From that time, the king made several attempts to assassinate the young warrior of Israel, but God delivered him from all the evil plots.

Our present lesson is a continuation of David’s nightmare and flight from danger to consult with Jonathan, the son of Saul, who had pledged loyalty to and friendship with him. Their covenant of friendship was renewed, and Jonathan faithfully promised to provide David with intelligence report for his safety. From this study, we learn among others, that unlike Saul, leaders should be free from narrow-mindedness, suspicion and envy of their subordinates who may be more favored, gifted and successful (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Again, like David, if we cannot vindicate our reputation before men, we should commit it to God (Psalms 37:5,6; 139:1-4). Also, like Jonathan, we should strive to show genuine sympathy to those whose godly characters are being defamed (Psalm 119:63; Hebrews 13:3). Above all, we should strive to live righteously at all times so as to find acceptance with the holy, all- seeing God.

**Question 1:** *Mention some lessons from the lives of the major characters in our text.*

**DAVID CONSULTS WITH JONATHAN** (1 Samuel 20:1- 8; Proverbs 11:14; 17:17; 15:22; 18:24; 20:18; Matthew 2:13; 4:12; 12:14,15; 10:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 4:18)

**“And David fled from Naiioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?”** (1 Samuel 20:1).

On several occasions, David fled for his life as a result of threats by King Saul. In particular, twelve attempts were made on his life: thrice, a javelin was thrown at him; twice, he was set up through marriage arrangement so that he would fall into the hands of the Philistines; six times, soldiers were sent after him, and once, Saul went after him in Ramah (1 Samuel 18:11; 18:17-30; 19:1,10,11-24; 23:15; 26:2). This was why David exclaimed, **“...there is but a step between me and death”**. He therefore appealed to Jonathan concerning his innocence; obviously, with a readiness to humble himself and seek pardon if indeed he had done any wrong against Saul.

The Lord will always provide means for His people to escape in times of danger (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Peter 2:9). Hence, in the course of obedience to the great commission, we should be wise to discern that when our lives are under threat, we should, if necessary, relocate to continue the work (Luke 4:29-31; John 7:1; 10:39-42). The Scripture says, **“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished”** (Proverbs 27:12). In handling threats to life, we should be prudent enough to learn from our Lord Jesus Christ, Apostles Paul and Peter, and others.

**Question 2: Outline some qualities of true friendship exhibited by Jonathan.**

It is comforting and reassuring that David could find a friend in Jonathan at a time he had such an enemy on the throne. Jonathan was no doubt, one of the noblest characters in the Scriptures. He was **“...a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”** (Proverbs 18:24) and one who **“...loveth at all times...”** (Proverbs 17:17). He loved David in times of triumph and distress (1 Samuel 18:1; 20:1,2). He was selfless and sacrificial. His knowledge of David's coming greatness did not make him feel threatened or jealous. Rather, he loved his friend as his own soul and was willing to see him crowned and exalted to the throne. Such quality of love is required of believers when someone

else is advanced into a leadership position or becomes more gifted than themselves (Romans 12:10). Similar traits were exhibited by John the Baptist (John 3:26-33); Jehu's colleagues (2 Kings 9:5,11-13); the apostles (Galatians 2:9); and Peter (2 Peter 3:15,16).

Jonathan also exhibited loyalty, the greatest evidence of genuine friendship by being available to help in times of distress or personal struggles. Too many people are fair-weather friends who stick around only when the friendship profits them but leave as soon as the relationship requires commitment and sacrificial love. In Jonathan, we also see purity of life. He was very principled and there was no inclination to do evil (Exodus 23:2; Isaiah 5:20). He was readily available to give David counsel when he needed it most (Proverbs 11:14). It is worth mentioning here that believers should always seek counsel from mature leaders when in doubt or danger.

**DAVID AND JONATHAN RENEW THEIR COVENANT** (1 Samuel 20:9-17; 18:3; 2 Samuel 9:1-10; Genesis 21:27; 1 Kings 5:12)

**“And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also, thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever...”** (1 Samuel 20:14,15).

Motivated by pure love and regard for his friend David, Jonathan renewed their covenant of friendship (1 Samuel 18:3; 20:16,17). The reasons are obvious: he wanted to assure him of his unwavering love. He feared that David might have reasons to fear that his father's influence, and his own interest in the throne, should make his love grow cold. He then invited David to **“Come and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field”** (1 Samuel 20:11), not to fight but talk the matter over and consolidate their friendship. Once they got to the field, Jonathan vowed and swore to remain faithful, even appealing to God as both witness and judge. **“The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father”** (1 Samuel 20:13).

The conditions of the covenant are in two parts, namely, David was to preserve the life of Jonathan on ascension to the throne, **“And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not”** (1 Samuel 20:14). Secondly, he was to show kindness continually to the house of Jonathan: **“But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever...”** (1 Samuel 20:15). It was in remembrance of this covenant that David showed kindness to Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan (2 Samuel 9:7; 21:7).

**Question 3: What was the content of the covenant between David and Jonathan?**

Faithfulness demands that we keep the terms of godly, righteous and legitimate covenants (2 Timothy 3:3; Ecclesiastes 5:4; Malachi 2:16). It is an act of ungodliness to violate our commitments in form of business contracts, marriage vows or land agreements.

All parties to such agreements are expected to keep their part of the deal. The Scripture enjoins us to fulfil our promises, covenants and vows (Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21). **“Covenant breakers”** are regarded as evil doers worthy of divine judgment (Romans 1:31,32).

**Question 4: What can believers learn from Jonathan and David regarding faithfulness and trust in fellowship?**

Jonathan’s prayer in his oath **“...and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father”** (1 Samuel 20:13) was prophetic. It showed that he had already concluded that David would definitely become king in his father’s stead and would not be killed by his father, Saul. We observe that Jonathan was faithful in keeping to the terms of his covenant with David just as David also trusted him.

**JONATHAN’S TOKEN TO DAVID** (1 Samuel 20:18-24; Joshua 8:12-19).

In response to Jonathan’s readiness to assist, David proposed a simple strategy to ascertain Saul’s disposition towards him. In two days, Saul was to hold a feast during the new moon when sacrifices would be offered (Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15). At this solemn feast, Saul probably would

have all his children and officers to sit with him, with David as one of them. David therefore knew that Saul would expect him at the feast. Meanwhile, he had resolved to be absent from the feast as a safety strategy. Should Saul overlook or excuse his absence, he would conclude that Saul had reneged on his plot to kill him. But if the king regarded his absence with strong displeasure and discontent, it would be easy to conclude that mischief was determined by the king against him. For, he reasoned that since it was certain that the king did not love him as to desire his presence for any other end than he might have an opportunity to kill him. Here, they both settled on the signs and tokens to adopt to know Saul's mood towards David.

**“And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth”** (1 Samuel 20:20,21). The sign was that Jonathan would shoot three arrows on the side of the rock, Ezel. If he told a lad, the arrows were on this side of the rock it would mean that David could come home as no harm was intended; **“but if he says the arrows are beyond thee...”** then David was to go his way for Saul intended to kill him.

***Question 5: What are the duties of believers to those in danger of hell?***

Based on the agreed arrangement, Jonathan saved the life of David, Israel's future king, from being cut short prematurely. In like manner, believers should labour to rescue sinners and backsliders who are in danger of going to hell. **“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”** (Proverbs 24:11,12). We should device scriptural evangelistic strategies to reach all categories of sinners and backsliders before it is too late.

## DAVID FLEES TO GATH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath” (1 Samuel 21:10).

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 21:1-15

**D**avid had fallen out of favour with Saul and he wanted him dead by all means. His life was under constant threat causing him to move from one place to another for safety. He reminisced his travail during this period in one of the psalms. **“They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love”** (Psalm 109:3-5). David, being chased by a furious and determined enemy, decided to relocate across the border for his safety. The need for him to seek asylum in a strange land was because Saul had recorded several humiliating misses and was not going to give up until he was assassinated. Also, Jonathan his friend had confirmed that Saul meant to get rid of him and Michal had recently aided his escape. Believers need not forget that the devil is always trailing and seeking to devour the careless ones. Even Christ was not spared. Satan is always seeking to abort the plan of God for His people. Christians must be prayerful and watchful when they are victorious, successful or exalted because every open door attracts many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9,13).

**Question 1:** *What can believers learn from Saul’s different attempts to get rid of David?*

**DAVID FLEES TO NOB** (1 Samuel 21:1-6; Psalms 46:1; 9:9; 37:39; Matthew 12:3,4; Mark 2:25-27)

The text focuses on David’s wanderings after parting ways with Jonathan, his bosom friend. It began with his flight to Nob where he had an encounter with Ahimelech, the priest. Nob, a city probably of the tribe of Benjamin was where the tabernacle of the Lord was pitched at that time after the desertion or abandonment of Shiloh.

David had to run away from Saul's fury for his dear life because neither Samuel the prophet nor Jonathan the king's son could protect him. Little wonder that the Scripture concludes: **"Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man"** (Psalm 60:11). Since our help comes from the Lord, we are to look up to Him at all times and under all circumstances.

**Question 2: *What do believers learn from David's meeting with Ahimelech in the sanctuary?***

David's decision to visit the house of God before going to Gath is instructive to believers. As his custom, David fled first to God's prophet and priest before his flight to Gath (1 Samuel 21:1-9; 19:18-24; 22:9,10). Here, we learn that we should always resort to spiritual resources such as the house or presence of God, the word of God and men of God (counsellors) before undertaking important tasks or while suffering persecution. The assurance that God is always ready and available to intervene on our behalf takes away fear, unbelief and discouragement.

Ahimelech was a priest in God's house. On sighting David, he enquired why he was alone, probably before he saw the young men who accompanied him. David's reply that: **"The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know anything of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place"** (1 Samuel 21:2) was not true. The king who sought to kill him could not have sent him on an errand. Here, he just wanted to obtain his requests under pretense. David got bread for himself and his men. Ahimelech consented to his request for the hallowed bread judging by status and past reputation of David. Since Ahimelech was a true priest of God, he could still have granted David's request if he heard the truth about his plight and flight from danger. So, there was no reason for him to tell lies. Believers cannot point to David's example as reason to lie; Christ is our perfect Example in everything.

One basic condition the priest gave for acceding to the request was that the young men must have separated themselves from women before partaking of the hallowed bread. This bread was not the common one; it was the



shewbread. Its handling bears some semblance with the unleavened bread which the Scripture enjoins New Testament believers to use in observing the Lord's Supper. Ahimelech gave David the shewbread which was not lawful for him to eat. Our Lord Jesus referred to this event without condemning the action of the priest to teach us that the value of saving life was above ceremonial laws.

In response to the Pharisees' allegation that Christ's disciples who were hungry plucked and ate ears of corn on the Sabbath day, **"he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?"** (Matthew 12:3,4; Mark 2:25-27; Luke 6:4). Also, Christ's reference to this incident in the Old Testament attests to the veracity of Scripture as the word of God.

**DOEG: A SERVING STRANGER IN ISRAEL** (1 Samuel 21:7-9; 22:9,10; Proverbs 22:3; Matthew 10:23; 23:34)

**"Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdsmen that belonged to Saul"** (1 Samuel 21:7-9).

While David and Ahimelech exchanged pleasantries, Doeg, a proselyte to the Jewish religion watched. As the chief of Saul's herdsmen, he appeared responsible and harmless but deadly. Though he came to the house of God to either pay some vows or avail himself of some rites of purification, he found an opportunity to report proceedings to Saul whom he knew had been hunting David (1 Samuel 22:9,10). His report that stoked the fire of Saul's hatred of David was not surprising judging by his pedigree as an Edomite. Edom (Esau) was an avowed enemy of the united nation of Israel. Now in the employ of a senior citizen in Israel, he found an occasion to fuel the enmity between two key leaders in Israel because of the perpetual hatred of the Edomites for the Israelites (Ezekiel 35:3-5).

**Question 3: *Why should believers be careful in engaging sinners in their household duties?***



Believers should be careful on who they engage in their secular endeavor or domestic affairs. There is need to always seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit in all decisions, including employment of staff for household and sensitive duties. Besides, there is need for proper and effective information management by all Christians at the home front and in workplaces to avoid suffering incalculable damage. We must be wise to relate with people around us based on proper understanding of their personality, antecedents and loyalty. Doeg's report made Saul to destroy the city of Nob and kill eighty-five priests. In this age of security concerns, believers must be prayerful and watchful to detect and appropriately handle every friendly foe and pretentious Doegs. Also, it is unwise to dish out sensitive personal information and movement on social media platforms as these are now being used by rapists and kidnappers.

Aside eating bread for sustenance, David realized that he needed a spear or sword especially as he would be crossing the border of Israel in order to escape from Saul. **"And David said unto Ahimelech and is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste."** Armed with bread and sword, David fled to Gath. Believers need to put on the whole armour of God to be successful in their service and pilgrimage to heaven.

David's flight from perceived danger was in order. The Scripture states that, **"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished"** (Proverbs 22:3). Jesus also teaches that believers should endure persecution. But in life-threatening situations, He said, **"when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come"** (Matthew 10:23; 23:34).

**DAVID'S FLIGHT TO GATH** (1 Samuel 21:10-15; 1 Kings 8:56; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Deuteronomy 8:3; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Romans 8:28)

While in the court of Achish, David who was already traumatized by fear deduced from the unfolding events that

his life was not safe there. Without thinking of the divine presence, he resorted to self-management and feigned madness in order to escape death. This deception worked for him as he was thereafter taken for a mad man, ignored and rejected. There is no need for self- management and the use of sinful shortcuts for self- preservation or the execution of our divinely ordained programs and projects because God knows how to secure our lives.

**Question 4: *From the text, mention some blunders David made that believers must avoid.***

David made many blunders while suffering. He told a lie and dramatized deceit out of fear to have his way (1 Samuel 21:2,8,12,13). This is quite unlike Christ who was without any fault or blemish during His trials (Hebrews 5:8,9). The failure, backsliding and blemishes of any Bible character must never be copied by any heaven-minded believer. Christ our Lord, the Author and Finisher of our faith, is our Model. **“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”** (1 Peter 2:21-23). From the way and manner David conducted himself, we observe that no matter how spiritual a believer may be, he can fall from the grace of God if he is not prayerful and watchful.

**Question 5: *How does one retain his integrity in times of distress?***

It is possible to retain one's integrity even in extremely difficult situations. The reason is, **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”** (1 Corinthians 10:13). To always overcome, every heaven-bound believer needs determination, courage, watchfulness, regular self- examination, prayer, patience and personal faith in God in times of tribulations.

In David's trying times, we see the king-elect now on exile;

heir who will be possessor of vast treasures begging for bread; and a valiant warrior in need of a sword. In His sovereignty, God sometimes permits contrary circumstances to come the believer's way for the purpose of testing his faith and faithfulness as well as to bring glory to His name. It is certain that obstacles and difficulties cannot hinder the word and purpose of God. He allows them to prove and train His servants for higher responsibilities and grow their faith to depend on Him and obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 8:3). Joseph, Daniel, the three Hebrew children and the apostles suffered for righteousness' sake and came out stronger. David would learn from his trials that his one-time victory over the Philistines was an insufficient credential that would make him ascend the throne of Israel. He would have to depend absolutely on God to occupy the throne. In spite of our present challenges as believers, **“we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28). God is our overall Moderator and He will balance up everything for us as we closely walk with and faithfully serve Him.

## **EXHORTATION TO STEADFAST CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

**TEXT:** **Philippians 1:1-30**

**T**his study focuses on one of the prison epistles of Paul when he was in confinement in Rome. Aside from Philippians, others are the epistle to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Philippi was a chief city in the western part of Macedonia. Paul’s Macedonian call in Troas during his second missionary journey led to the founding of the church in Philippi with the conversion of Lydia, the Philippian jailor and others (Acts 16:1-40).

Paul’s particular fatherly affection, kindness and tender care for the Philippian church which he was instrumental in planting was quite remarkable and understandable. Aside the extraordinary way he was directed by the Lord to preach the gospel there (Acts 16:9), it was at Philippi that he was scourged and imprisoned (Acts 16:23,24; 1 Thessalonians 2:2). Also, the brethren there were so loving and kind that they regularly sent presents to him even when other churches did not show much care (Philippians 4:15-18; 1:7). Paul was particularly impressed by the rapid growth of this church from its small beginning to a flourishing church of godly, loving, dynamic, steadfast and eminent saints with bishops and deacons among them.

**Question 1:** *What is the central theme of Paul’s epistle to the Philippians?*

The central theme of Paul’s epistle to the Philippians is joy. It teaches us that Christians can be joyful even in the midst of hardship and suffering because of their faith in Christ. He wrote the epistle to reveal the fact that his imprisonment had not impeded but hastened the spread of the gospel. As Christians, we should understand that our suffering and

persecution on account of our faith is a testimony of our steadfastness and identification with Christ (Acts 5:41,42; 1 Peter 2:21- 23). In this epistle, he mentioned steadfastness, humility, submission, love, unity, etc. as some of the essential virtues concerning the Christian life.

### **CHRIST-LIKE JOY AND AFFECTION FOR SAINTS:**

(Philippians 1:1-8; Colossians 1:3,4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10; 3:6-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3,4; 2 John 4; 3 John 3-6)

Though Paul alone was divinely inspired to write the epistle, he joined Timothy as co-author. This expresses his humility and regard for others. We also observe that in spite of the high office he occupied as an apostle, he simply identified himself and his associate as **“the servants of Jesus Christ”**.

### **Question 2: Why did Paul address himself as a servant of Christ?**

A minister is essentially a servant who labors in prayer, preaching, counselling and exhortation to perfect the saints and edify the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). As a servant of Christ, Paul appreciated the dignity of service. He counted it a great privilege to be involved in the royal service of the supreme Master. His humble description of himself as a servant and bondman of Christ is a challenge to those who see it as a mean thing to serve Christ. By his humble acceptance of the position of a servant, he indicts those who feel too great, exalted and reputable to offer divine service. Without any doubt, Paul was one of the greatest of men, but he still answered the call of Christ and worked as a servant. Every minister who is called and commissioned by Christ must have the qualities of a servant. First, a servant of God must be faithful – he neither adds to nor subtracts from the message of his Master (Numbers 12:7). Of Timothy, Paul wrote: **“...Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord...”** (1 Corinthians 4:17). Second, those who serve the Lord must be **“fervent in Spirit”** (Romans 12:11). Third, a servant must be fearless (Acts 4:20).

It is significant also to note that the Christians here were addressed as saints while they were still alive, not after they had died. Saints are those whose sins have been forgiven

and their lives transformed, washed and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb and made pure to live a life of practical holiness. Nobody becomes a saint outside Christ or after death.

Paul the apostle proceeded to give thanks to God for the saints at Philippi. Though they were out of sight and despite the scourging, imprisonment and other forms of maltreatment he suffered to preach the gospel to them; he remembered Philippi with joy. Also, he remembered them in prayer: **“Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy”** (Philippians 1:4). Paul was always concerned for the converts whom he continuously prayed for. He further exhorted them to remain steadfast in all situations, whether in his presence or absence until Christ comes. Thanksgiving is an important aspect of believers’ prayer. Therefore, in whatever situation we find ourselves, we should learn to give thanks to God.

### ***Question 3: Why did Paul give thanks to God for the Philippian believers?***

Paul thanked God for their consistent fellowship in the gospel (Philippians 1:5). It is comforting to ministers when those who sincerely receive and embrace the gospel abide in the faith. He also thanked God for the confidence he had concerning the genuineness and enduring quality of their spiritual experiences (Philippians 1:6). His thanksgiving was equally for their companionship and communion with him in the suffering, defence and communication of the gospel. They were partakers of his affliction by sympathy, concern and readiness to assist him (Philippians 1:7). Church members ought to be a constant source of joy and thanksgiving to their leaders so that they will be able to discharge their onerous duties effectively and profitably (Hebrews 13:17).

**INTERCESSION FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF BELIEVERS** (Philippians 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:16-19; 3:14-19; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Peter 3:18; 1Corinthians 5:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2:17; Galatians 5:22,23)

Full of joy that the Philippian Christians were abiding in the faith, Paul the apostle prayed that “[their] **love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;**

**That [they] may approve things that are excellent; that [they] may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God** (Philippians 1:9-11).

**Question 4: *What definite requests did Paul make for the Philippians and what can we learn from him?***

First, he prayed that their love should grow “**more and more**”. The greatest and new commandment of Christ to all believers is to love God, fellow believers and all men. God is love and any professing believer who does not have this virtue does not know or have Him. And since the grace of God is boundless, believers should understand that divine love can be so shed abroad to overflowing in their hearts than what they presently have.

Second, he prayed that they may approve the things which are excellent (verse 10). It is childish to just love and approve all things indiscriminately as right and scriptural. Such simplicity would make them to be gullible and easy prey for enemies of the gospel.

Three, he prayed that they might be honest, sincere and upright-hearted people. Deceit, hypocrisy and double-dealing are not attributes of a true Christian. Openness, transparency and “**the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth**” mark the life of a true Christian.

Four, he prayed that they might be inoffensive people. We are to live in all good conscience before God and exercise ourselves to always have a conscience void of offence towards God and men (Acts 23:1; 24:16). Five, that they will remain blameless till the end (Ephesians 5:27; Jude 24). The reason is that no one will be able to see the Lord who is not living a consistent holy life (Hebrews 12:14). Six, that they might bring forth the fruit of righteousness in abundance (Philippians 1:11). It is instructive that Paul’s prayer for his converts, both in Philippi and other places, centered on spiritual things rather than mundane matters.

**CHRISTIANS’ TRIUMPH IN SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL** (Philippians 1:12-19; Matthew 26:36; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Corinthians 4:8; 6:3; 11:23)



Paul's suffering emanated from two sources. First, he suffered imprisonment from the avowed enemies of the faith who intended to destroy him and prevent the spread of the gospel. Second, he suffered from false friends who preached Christ out of contention and envy. The preaching of the gospel usually encounters oppositions because Satan and his cohorts want to hinder the salvation of men, discourage preachers of the gospel, encourage the spread of falsehood and prevent the accomplishment of God's will on earth. When God's people obey the Great Commission, Satan and his cohorts always instigate opposition against them. Believers should, therefore, not be surprised at Satan-inspired anti-gospel rules and regulations, mockery, persecution, etc. from religious groups, heretics, backsliders, pseudo-Christian groups, and merchant men and women whose unwholesome means of livelihood are threatened by the mass conversion of their patrons, supporters and followers (Acts 16:19).

Paul affirms that his suffering had a paradoxical outcome: **"...the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel"** (verse 12). It afforded him the opportunity of preaching the gospel to kings and judges in palaces where he stood trial and to inmates in prison. This has also challenged many brethren to be bold and fearless in preaching Christ. While some were sincere in preaching the gospel, others were doing so out of pretense. He rejoices that whichever way, **"Christ is preached"** (verses 12-19).

Like Paul the apostle, suffering believers and ministers should know that since God will never change, all things will work together for their good and for the realization of God's purpose and glory. So, a true child of God should not resort to self-pity, regret, despair, murmuring, grumbling and despondency during opposition and persecution. Rather, he should turn opposition to opportunity in order to demonstrate godly disposition (Genesis 41:14; Daniel 3:27; 6:22; Jeremiah 38:10; Acts 12:7; 16:26).

**Question 5: What should a believer's disposition be in the face of opposition?**

**CHRISTIANS' CONSECRATION AND STEADFASTNESS**  
(Philippians 1:20-30; 2:14-16; Galatians 5:1; Job 11:14, 15;

27:5,6; 17:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58)

The “**earnest expectation**” and “**hope**” of Paul the apostle was not to be ashamed in anything. He constantly desires that Christ would be magnified in and through him both in life and death. His consecration is, “**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain**” (verse 21). While he passionately desires to continue to minister to the Philippians, he had a greater passion and pull to “**depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**”. The blessedness of living with Christ in an unending union, joy and rest is always far better for genuine Christians. This is the reason Apostle Peter did not want to return from the mount of transfiguration. And Paul, having been to the third heavens and seen its resplendent beauty, cannot but conclude that the final home-going for the righteous and holy is always “**far better**”.

While he lives on earth, he would do Christ’s bidding to continue to feed His flock. “**...I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ...**”. It is expected that every born-again Christian be as consecrated and heaven-conscious as Paul by laying all on the altar and becoming committed to God, the church and to the progress of the gospel (2 Chronicles 29:5; Psalm 118:27).

The Apostle concludes the chapter with exhortation on Christian conduct that befits Christ’s gospel. They are exhorted to “**stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel**” (verse 27). Attributes of steadfastness, unity and courage are required of Christians so as not to cringe, be cowered or terrified by the adversary. One basic truth for every Christian either in the Philippian or present-day church is: “**For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake**” (verse 29). The Apostle affirms that he had past and current experience of suffering for Christ which the Philippian believers knew. And if he was not terrified and discouraged, every believer should maintain firm conviction of godly principles amidst trials, oppositions and sufferings till the end.

## CHRIST-LIKE LOVE, UNITY AND HUMILITY

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:2,3).

**TEXT:** Philippians 2:1-30

In continuation of his exhortation to the Philippians, Paul the apostle expatiates on the characteristics of Christ-like love and unity among the brethren, and humility as exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ. Having experienced and exhibited this true love himself, he admonishes others on the practical demonstration of it. He describes Christ-like love as unifying and self-sacrificing. Where this love exists, believers identify with one another both in moments of joy or pain. Genuine love also stimulates caring and sharing, unity of purpose and lowliness of mind.

The apostle goes further to set forth the unparalleled humility demonstrated by Christ in subjecting Himself to death on the Cross at Calvary in order to atone for the sins of mankind and liberate us from captivity of sin and its consequences. Paul and his faithful companions displayed their commitment in following the footsteps of the Lord by their willingness not only to endure pain but to lay down their lives in ministering to the saints.

**Question 1:** *How can ministers of the gospel demonstrate commitment to following the footsteps of Christ?*

**CHRIST-LIKE EXAMPLE OF LOVE AND HUMILITY:**  
(Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 11:29; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21; John 13:34,35)

In setting a standard for Christian virtues, Apostle Paul had no other measure than that of Christ. He typifies all that is desirable in godliness and exemplifies the perfect state of the fruits of the Spirit. In Him, we have the highest level of love – *agape* – manifested and He is our perfect Example and pattern to follow. He went to the Cross and gave His life for humanity so that we can be saved; died so that we can

live; became poor to enrich us; His life was cut short so that we can inherit everlasting life (2 Corinthians 8:9).

There can be no greater love than that a man should give his life for his friends (John 15:13). We are therefore called on to **“be likeminded, having the same love...”** (Philippians 2:2). True children of God must reflect the life of Christ through genuine love to others – within and outside the church. Our daily lifestyle should be spent in service for Christ and humanity. One of the best ways to do this is to show others the way of salvation and escape from eternal damnation. When we preach the gospel to others, we are showing love. **“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but indeed, and in truth”** (1 John 3:18).

We are also to emulate Christ who was eminently humble. One, He left His heavenly throne and the magnificence of His glory to walk the dusty roads of Jerusalem in search of lost souls (John 17:5). Two, He made Himself of no reputation. He did, for a while, hide His heavenly fame in an earthly frame, even though he retained every single attribute of deity. While on earth, He surrendered the independent exercise of those divine characteristics to the Holy Spirit (John 5:30). Three, He took on humanity and was made in the likeness of men so as to identify with us (John 1:14, Hebrews 2:14). Four, He took upon Himself the form of a servant. **“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28). Five, He humbled Himself; that is, He submitted to authority (1 Peter 2:21-24). Six, He became obedient unto death (Matthew 26:39; John 10:18, Hebrews 5:8). Seven, His suffering was unparalleled. He suffered the worst kind of death on the Cross (Galatians 3:13, Psalm 22:1-20).

**“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name”** (Philippians 2:9). As a result of His love, humility, obedience and sacrifice, He has been highly exalted by God and given a name, position and place of authority above all other names. He will be universally acknowledged as Lord of all.

**Question 2: Mention some characteristics of Christ-like love.**

## CHRISTIANS AS LIGHTS IN A PERVERSE WORLD

(Philippians 2:12-18; 1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 5:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 2:19,20; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:8,9)

The Apostle continues his exhortation to love, oneness and humility with a call on believers to ensure they secure their salvation experience with all diligence and determination. They must not be careless or frivolous and allow their adversary take advantage of them. He says, **“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”** (verse 12). This is to say that believers must be careful and conscious of the possibility of losing salvation; hence, they need to work at ensuring that it is intact. This godly kind of fear is said to be a great guard and preservative from evil. Believers must conduct their Christian profession with great care and circumspection (Hebrews 4:1).

Next is the appeal to exhibit proper behavior and temperament. The Apostle enjoined them to be cheerful in obedience and not to do things with **“murmurings and disputings”** which negate their profession of faith in Christ. His appeal was based on the confidence he had in the Philippian brethren that they would comply.

**“As you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence...”** (Philippians 2:12). This is a testimonial to the Philippian believers and a challenge to present-day Christians to shun eye-service. There must be a willingness to comply with every discovery of the will of God in private as well as in the open.

Though God’s grace and faithfulness abound, a believer nevertheless has a responsibility to keep himself unspotted in this polluted world, and build up himself through constant prayer, study and meditation on God’s word. Christians are to adorn themselves with gracious character through cheerful obedience to God’s commandment, doing all things without murmurings and by a peaceable, blameless conversation towards all men.

### **Question 3: *How should believers live as lights in the world?***

Believers with sound and current salvation experience are lights in the world and must remain so at all times. **“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God,**

**without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”** (Philippians 2:15). The world has been darkened by acts of evil, wickedness and sin. Its whole substance and essence lack any form of uprightness and truth. Thus, the inhabitants grope in darkness and do not know the way of life. But believers in Christ have been enlightened by the knowledge of the truth and made to be lights that will illuminate the world. **“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid”** (Matthew 5:14). As light, we brighten the corners of the world where we are placed so that people sitting in the shadows and regions of darkness can see the salvation of God.

Believers are to hold fast and hold forth the word of life for their own benefit and of others. Strict obedience to this will bring joy to the heart of the Chief Shepherd and also to the under-shepherds. **“That I may rejoice in the day of Christ...”** (Philippians 2:16). Our steadfastness and usefulness in God’s kingdom is what fulfils and gladdens Christian leaders who labour tirelessly to build up believers.

**COMMENDATION AND COMMITMENT OF FELLOW LABOURERS** (Philippians 2:19-30; Acts 16:3; 17:14,15; 19:22; Matthew 24:45-47)

Paul takes particular notice of two committed ministers – Timothy and Epaphroditus. Though he himself was a great apostle who labored more abundantly than they all, he still spared time to speak with respect of those who were less endowed than he.

**Question 4: *What motivations can Christian workers receive from the commendable lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus?***

Timothy had a long contact with the church in Philippi. Concerning the Philippian church, he was a shepherd **“...who will naturally care for your state”** (Philippians 2:20). In relation to the Apostle Paul, he was a son, but concerning the gospel, he was a servant, willing and committed to laboring and ministering to others (verse 22). The Apostle promised to send him as a faithful representative to know their spiritual state and be

comforted.

Apostle Paul referred to Epaphroditus as his brother, companion in labour and fellow soldier to whom he bore a tender affection. Epaphroditus, which means “charming”, was a Gentile believer from Philippi who had been sent by the Philippian church to minister to Paul and bring him their offering. The Apostle commented on his service, sickness and the sorrow his ill-health would have caused (verses 25-27). He had decided to send him back to the brethren at Philippi. A Bible scholar aptly summarizes his life as being balanced and burdened (Philippians 2:25-30).

**Question 5: What can Christian leaders learn from Paul’s commendation of Timothy and Epaphroditus?**

The lives of these men furnish present-day Christians with lessons in service and ministry. Leadership is about service, sacrifice and self-denial. As Christ came to minister and not to be ministered unto, so must His servants do. It is unfortunate that some Christian leaders serve without sacrifice; they seek recognition from men, make their belly their God, fleece the sheep and live in opulence. Such cannot be said to be true servants of Christ. As leaders, if we are going to receive commendations from Christ and be rewarded on the last day, we must obey His teaching on leadership with faithfulness in service. **“Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing...”** (Matthew 24:46-47).

Genuine believers should however hold in reputation faithful Christ-like ministers of the gospel who make great sacrifices for the flock of Christ. Such ministers who preach Jesus as the only Saviour, repentance and faith in the atoning blood of Christ as the only means of reconciliation with God, holiness before God and men as requirement for entry into heaven; ministers who endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ, deny self and lift up Christ constantly to **“...present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”** (Colossians 1:28) should be **“...counted worthy of double honour”** (1 Timothy 5:17). May the Lord find us faithful till the end.



## THE PURSUIT OF TRUE BELIEVERS

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13,14).

**TEXT: Philippians 3:1-21**

**M**oving from the subjects of Christ-like love, unity and humility that are the hallmarks of Christians in the previous chapter, Paul the apostle here exhorts believers to holy living and pursuit of higher spiritual attainments. Attaining holier aspirations requires that believers renounce the flesh and carnality. This is the reason the Apostle reiterates his earlier warning against imbibing the false teachings of Judaizers who trust in the flesh. He clarifies that all the privileges of physical birth and observance of rites of circumcision the Judaizers pride themselves in cannot afford the salvation of God. He therefore exhorts believers to “**rejoice in the Lord**” who alone is the Author of salvation, righteousness and the hope of eternal life. Apart from obtaining present salvation by grace alone through faith, every believer should make eternal salvation and hope of eternal prize their pursuit.

**Question 1: *Why should believers rejoice in the Lord?***

**PAUL’S PEDIGREE AND WARNING AGAINST JUDAIZERS**  
(Philippians 3:1-6; Acts 21:37-39; 22:1-5; Galatians 1:13-18; 3:1-11; 1 Timothy 1:12-16)

The text begins with Paul the apostle’s admonition to “**brethren**” to “**rejoice in the Lord**”. As believers, we should rejoice that the Lord has rescued us from eternal damnation. Without the Lord’s intervention, we would still remain in bondage to sin, Satan, the flesh, self and the world. We would pine in life and burn in hell forever had He not incarnated and offered His life to make atonement for our sins. The privilege of being born into a rich, religious or godly family will not be cause for real joy without His mediation that reconciles and brings us into fellowship with God. Paul’s repeated emphases on this truth of salvation by

faith was necessary to counter the false teaching of Judaizers who claimed that circumcision was required to be saved.

Having partaken of the salvation of God by faith, the Apostle warns the Philippian Christians to **“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision”**. He calls the Judaizers by different names to describe the potential dangers they pose to the Christian faith. As **“dogs”**, they are shameless, corrupt and contentious. As **“evil workers”**, they are mischievous and seek to destroy the faith of the Philippian believers. Calling them the **“concision”**, for instance, refers to mutilation or cutting of the flesh or those who believe in the act of circumcision. Their insistence on the literal act of circumcision by believers showed they were ignorant of the fact that the practice only foreshadowed a New Testament spiritual experience of sanctification of the heart (1 Thessalonians 4:3,7,8; 5:22-24). Even in the experience of heart circumcision, faith is required from consecrated, praying and thirsty believers to obtain it.

Understandably, Paul declares: **“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh”**. Here, he describes true believers who were Jews by birth and observed the rite of circumcision but obtained salvation by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 2:11). Thus saved, they worship God in spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus who alone is their Saviour and hope of eternal reward (John 4:23,24).

**Question 2: State the erroneous teaching of the Judaizers and how Paul proved them to be false.**

Paul the apostle highlights that if salvation were to be obtained by privilege of birth, education, religious zeal and conformity to the law, he was more qualified than any other Jew by all standards. One, he was **“circumcised the eighth day”** in accordance with the letter of the law (Genesis 17:12) unlike the proselyte who was circumcised in adulthood. Two, he was **“of the stock of Israel”**, the covenant name of God’s people. Three, he hailed from **“the tribe of Benjamin”**, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Four, he was **“an Hebrew of the Hebrews”** and a *bona fide* Jew

with both parents possibly Jews, tainted with no Gentile admixture. Five, **“as touching the law a Pharisee”**, he belonged to the sect that was the most orthodox defender, observer and expounder of the Old Testament and was a student of the learned and great teacher, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Six, he was, **“concerning zeal, persecuting the church”** and was vehement in his efforts to stamp out Christianity. Seven, **“touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”**, though not sinless.

It is obvious from the foregoing that earthly achievements, cultural background, Christian parentage, human accomplishment, reputation, works, religious affiliation, rites and zeal, no matter how impressive, cannot earn a person eternal life with God. Salvation comes through genuine repentance and absolute faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice. Believers must not remain indifferent while present-day religious zealots continue to spread their untruth (Ecclesiastics 9:10; Romans 12:11; John 2:17).

**PASSIONATE PURSUIT OF SINGLE- MINDED BELIEVERS**  
(Philippians 3:7-14; Matthew 5:29,30; Galatians 2:18; Luke 9:62; Psalm 57:7; Matthew 13:44-46)

Paul's single-minded and steadfast pursuit of spiritual goal began with his salvation and renunciation of all personal achievements. He decided to get rid of all things, including legitimate ones, which would hinder its attainment. He overwrote the aforementioned things that had been gain to him with a single word: Christ. He discovered his entire earthly achievements would amount to nothing when compared with the treasures he had found in Christ. Counting all privileges his natural birth and education afforded him as **“dung”**, he consecrated and committed himself to a lifelong walk with the Lord. **“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”** Paul speaks of a voluntary action and attitude of foregoing legitimate rights and privileges, preferring to suffer the consequences of losing them.

Moses also damned the consequences of losing earthly royal privileges for greater spiritual riches and reward (Hebrews 11:24-27). No true believer ever holds to the mundane and

ephemeral at the expense of the spiritual and eternal.

Believers today must emulate Paul's example by identifying whatever human achievements, privileges, possessions, power, positions, partnerships or profits that pose a hindrance to their consecration, spiritual growth, pilgrimage to heaven and hope of eternal reward, and deal with them appropriately (Matthew 5:29,30). **"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"** (Mark 8:35,36).

Christ illustrated believers' expected consecration to Him and the gospel in two parables (Matthew 13:44- 46). In the parable of the hid treasure in the field that a man found, and that of the merchant man who discovered a priceless pearl, both men had to make great sacrifices to the point of disposing some of their valued possessions to obtain the invaluable treasure they have found. Applicably, the earnestness, diligence, promptness, perseverance, watchfulness and care with which believers seek Christ should be higher than those of unbelievers in search of silver and gold (Proverbs 2:4,5).

Paul's statement in the present tense, **"that I may win Christ"**, does not mean he needed salvation experience as he had been saved and written the epistle as an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ (1:1). But he expresses the great desire of his heart which is that Christ may be his gain, not gold, or silver or religious reputation. He had his eyes fixed at the end and climax of his Christian race; hence the need to remain steadfast and watchful so as not to be cast away after preaching and writing great epistles to other people.

Appearing at the marriage supper of the Lamb without a wedding gown or robe of righteousness obtained and preserved by faith alone would be risking eternal damnation. Self-righteousness which is like a filthy rag in the sight of God was all that the Judaizers had (Romans 10:1-3). Paul knew and greatly desired to **"be found in him, not having mine own righteousness... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"**. Faith is vital to obtaining and

maintaining the righteousness of God. With this spiritual summit and eternal goal in mind, the Apostle sought to know Christ more intimately and experience Him in a most sublime way. **“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”** (verse 10,11). He sought to know more about the Person of Christ. This is possible through unbroken communion with Him in prayer, reading, studying, meditating on His word and obeying His commands. He sought to know the power of His resurrection: the power that raised the Lord from the dead (Ephesians 1:19,20). Since Christ first died before He was raised to life, the believer must be crucified and dead to self to experience this quickening power (John 12:24; Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:11).

**Question 3: *From Paul’s example, state some specific spiritual blessings believers should passionately seek to obtain in life and in eternity.***

Paul also desired to know **“the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”**. It was part of his commission which he had also taught: that every believer must suffer for Christ (Acts 9:16; 26:15-17; Philippians 1:29). Fellowship means communion, companionship, partnership and sharing. Though Christ calls us to share in His suffering, He does not abandon His people in suffering. He appeared in the furnace of fire with the three Hebrew children and sent His angels to deliver Peter and Paul with Silas from prison. He granted John the beloved timeless revelations while on the island of Patmos where he was banished for his faith. Conformity to Christ must be in life as well as in death. He lived and died in righteousness, so must every believer who seeks to reign with Him.

Believers who die in Christ will be resurrected to life at rapture to live with Him forever. Death loses its sting, pain and power over everyone who is saved by grace and lives a holy life. This is why the doctrine of resurrection of the dead is pivotal to our faith and eternal joy.

Paul did not count himself to have arrived as some people profess today. The secret of his unrelenting and passionate

pursuit is singular: **“But this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before”** (verse 13). Relishing past successes or bemoaning past failures will incapacitate and rob us of any initiative for spiritual progress. Like Paul, we must always bear in mind that there are greater challenges, battles and tasks ahead.

**Question 4: *What is the secret of Paul’s untiring spiritual pursuit which believers need to imbibe?***

Like an athlete, Paul the apostle says, **“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”**. He had a clear vision and knowledge of the prize he was striving to win. It was the **“...crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”** (2 Timothy 4:8). This hope of eternal reward should be the anchor of the believer’s spiritual pursuit.

**PRIORITY OF EXEMPLARY LIFE WHILE WAITING FOR THE RAPTURE:** Philippians 3:15-21; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 13:7,17; Malachi 3:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Having proposed himself as an example worthy of emulation, he urges the Philippian believers who can also discern spiritual things to follow suit. **“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”** Paul realizes that not all will agree with him in adopting such a hardline conviction. But he expresses the confidence that if any person is really willing and sincere to know the truth, God would give him understanding. Irrespective of different levels of spiritual attainment, he admonishes that believers should **“... walk by the same rule”, “mind the same thing”** (verse 16) and emulate those who live like Christ. Paul once admonished Timothy to be a Christ-like example among believers while Peter the apostle also exhorted Christian wives to win their husbands by exemplary lifestyle (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 3:1).

**Question 5: *How should believers live with eternity in view?***

When a professing believer lives contrary to Christ and His word, he becomes a bad example that leads others astray and thus become an enemy of the cross of Christ. Incidentally, Paul tearfully affirms that in the Philippian church, there were many of such hypocrites who pretended to be spiritual but “**mind earthly things**”. They were bereft of the fruits of righteousness that qualify for admission into heaven.

The Apostle was always heaven-conscious. “**For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...**”. True believers live and serve in expectation of the imminent return of the Lord to take His redeemed people to heaven. Now that we live on the fringe of time, soon to be translated from earth to heaven, everyone must forsake religion without righteousness, obtain salvation by faith, avoid imbibing and peddling erroneous teachings, maintain a holy, exemplary life and conviction, and remain fervent in spiritual service and pursuit of heavenly rewards.



## BELIEVERS' JOY AND CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again, I say, Rejoice**” (Philippians 4:4).

**TEXT:** Philippians 4:1-23

**T**he last chapter ended with a passionate exhortation of Apostle Paul to the Philippian brethren to beware of the invading shameless and carnal ministers whose mission was to destroy the message of the cross of Christ. He counselled them to follow his pattern of godliness and live in earnest expectation of the glorious translation that awaits them at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In continuation of his call to steadfastness, the Apostle gave a detailed exposition of what he had described as fruits of righteousness expected of them as believers. He also admonished the brethren on the need for singleness of purpose required for a successful ministry as exemplified by his life. He concluded the epistle to the Philippians with an affectionate salutation and benediction.

**Question 1:** *In what ways is the joy and confidence of Apostle Paul expressed in our text?*

The joy of the Apostle is palpable. He expressed it in the salvation of the brethren and in their gracious care for his needs. He exhorted them to “**Rejoice in the Lord alway...**” (verse 4). Paul’s confidence in our text was firmly based on: one, his hope of eternal reward (verse 1); two, the visible evidence of genuine spiritual experiences of his fellow labourers (verse 3); three, the ability of God to supply all the needs of His praying and faithful saints and to give them incomprehensible peace in a precarious and failing economy (verse 6); four, the acceptability of the sacrifice of his life and ministry to God, which he recommended to the brethren as a pattern (verse 9); five, inner spiritual strength from Christ to serve God in all circumstances and overcome the temptations concomitant with poverty or prosperity (verses 11-13).

## **GRACIOUS ATTRIBUTES OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST:** (Philippians 4:1-9; 1:9-11; Galatians 5:22,23; 2 Peter 1:5-10)

As an effective minister, Paul understood the importance of unity or working together to achieve a common purpose. Therefore, he enjoined the Philippian believers to **“...be of the same mind in the Lord...”** and **“...help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life”**. He exhorted them to make the Lord the great object of their affections, bury all their petty differences and show consideration for his fellow labourers. As believers, we should support those who labour sacrificially among us and are faithful to the gospel.

### ***Question 2: What are the essential gracious attributes of believers in Christ?***

**“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (verses 5,6). Again, the Apostle emphasized the indispensability of a watchful, moderate, worry-free, peaceful, prayerful, thankful and godly life in everything. According to a Bible commentator, the word ‘moderation’ refers to restraint of passions, sober living and freedom from all excesses. Used as synonyms of propriety, gentleness, mildness, it means that which is fit or suitable. The Apostle admonished them not to indulge in excess of passion, dressing, eating or drinking. They were to govern their appetites and restrain their tempers so to be examples of what was proper for men in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear. The imminent return of Christ calls for moderation in the way believers live.

People worry and are anxious over small as well as big issues of life. Food, clothing, shelter and safety are some of the basic concerns people worry about. Worriers think and see problems, Satan, impossibilities, impending doom, death, etc. But Paul the apostle says it is unreasonable for a child of God to get so preoccupied with challenges of life which will always be there. If anyone had any cause to worry, Paul should as he wrote the epistle from his prison

ward. In spite of problems and challenges, the proper conduct of anyone who believes in God is to **“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (verse 6).

Before and after prayer and thanksgiving, believers need to **“gird up the loins of [their] mind...”** (1 Peter 1:13) to filter out worry-induced thoughts and darts of the wicked aimed at weakening or discouraging them. The Apostle enjoined the Philippian believers to program their minds with thoughts that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, good, virtuous and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). This means that believers are required to have the mind of Christ and walk as He also walked. To have the mind of Christ and think wholesome thoughts that translate into Christ-like conduct, **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”** (Colossians 3:16). This way, we will be able to live impactful lives to the glory of God.

**GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF A SINGLE-MINDED MINISTER** (Philippians 4:10-19; 2 Corinthians 11:9; 2 Samuel 9:3,7; 2 Kings 4:8-17)

Paul was a single-minded minister who did the will of God at great costs. He was a model in Christian service and did not abuse the privilege of his apostleship. He labored more abundantly and suffered most for the gospel of Christ than all the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 11:25-27). He toiled relentlessly to win souls and mature them in the Lord for no pecuniary benefits. When opportunity allowed, he labored with his hands to provide his own physical needs (Acts 20:34).

Although he had taught the truth that **“...they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel”** (1 Corinthians 9:14), he bore no grudges for failure of some of the churches to meet his physical needs. The reason is, **“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to**

**suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me**" (verses 11- 13). Though he is unmoved by lack or plenty, the generosity of the Philippian church was an encouragement to him. He said, **"...I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity"**.

**Question 3: *What can believers learn from the charity of the Philippian church and Paul's response?***

Paul's appreciation of the kind gesture of the Philippian church teaches us some vital lessons. One, Christian ministers should appreciate and commend the kind deeds of their members. Two, the best of God's children will experience the vicissitudes of life. He should therefore, display godliness and contentment in whatever state he finds himself. Three, the Philippian church was committed and generous in giving. Even when the Apostle was not in their midst, they remembered to support his ministry. Four, giving is an investment into the kingdom of God. It is laying up for ourselves, **"...treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"** (Matthew 6:20). The believer who gives cheerfully, faithfully, consistently and bountifully is making a sure investment in the Kingdom. It is, however, pertinent to note that those who give to God as sinners or backsliders will reap no eternal profit. Five, giving of our precious substance, money and time to cater to the needs of fellow believers is a spiritual service to God (Matthew 10:40-42; 25:37-40). Apostle Paul described it as **"...an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God"**. Six, leaders should earnestly pray for members of the church who graciously give their substance, time, money and entire lives for the propagation of the gospel. In response to their generosity, the Apostle prayed that **"my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"** (verse 19).

**APOSTOLIC FAREWELL AND BENEDICTION:** (Philippians 4:20-23; Leviticus 9:22; Numbers 6:23-27; Acts 20:32; Jude 24,25; Colossians 4:12)

**"Salute every saint in Christ Jesus...The grace of our**

**Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**” Paul concluded this epistle by acknowledging the supporting role of his companions and conveying their greetings to the brethren. He also showered apostolic blessings and good wishes upon them. Salutation or greetings is a sign of courtesy or respect. Believers should learn to appreciate and commend ministerial companions. **“...The brethren which are with me greet you.”** This reveals another sterling quality of leadership of the Apostle: he was a master team builder.

***Question 4: What challenge does Paul’s style of leadership pose to contemporary Christian leaders?***

Apart from the brethren which were with him, Apostle Paul also sent the greetings of **“All the saints...”**. However, in sending the saints’ greetings, he made particular mention of **“...they that are of Caesar’s household”**. History tells us that the Apostle was at this time under imprisonment in Rome when Nero was the Emperor. It was said that he became acquainted with the emperor’s family and turned his house to a church. This confirms Paul’s testimony that, although he was bound by men, the word of God could not be bound (2 Timothy 2:9). This is indeed a great marvel of the grace of our loving Lord and a challenge to those of us who are free and have, at our disposal, the benefits of modern technology to fully reach out to sinners everywhere with the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:19).

***Question 5: Why is the grace of God vital in the believer’s walk with the Lord?***

Having declared that the grace of God was the secret of his unquenchable passion, uncompromising stand and great ministerial success (1 Corinthians 15:10), the Apostle ended this epistle with an apostolic benediction: **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”** (verse 23). The importance of the believer’s prayer for a daily dose of divine grace cannot be overemphasized. This is because he is saved, sanctified, Spirit-filled and sustained by the grace of God. He can only serve the Lord acceptably and secure his eternal inheritance by His grace (Hebrews 12:28).

## **THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek**” (Romans 1:16).

**TEXT: Colossians 1:1-11**

**T**he epistle of Paul to the Colossians was written during his confinement in a Roman prison. Colosse was a city of Phrygia in Asia Minor, having Laodicea and Hierapolis as its immediate neighbors. The city, located on the east of Ephesus, was noted for its idolatrous worship. The church in Colosse was established most probably through the evangelistic ministry of Epaphras with his fellow natives of Colosse such as Philemon, Archippus and Apphia who became converted during Paul’s gospel outreach at Ephesus. Paul’s missionary work there had such a profound and far-reaching impact that “**all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks**” (Acts 19:10,26). These converts, properly followed-up by Paul (Acts 18:23), headed for their native land to preach the gospel and plant the church there. It is clear from this epistle that the Apostle had not been there (Colossians 2:1).

Soon after the Colossian church was established with remarkable evidence of transformation through the gospel, false teachers infiltrated the church to teach that commitment to Jesus Christ and adherence to the apostolic gospel was inadequate for full redemption. They opined erroneously that a mix of human philosophy, tradition, asceticism, worship of angels as intermediaries between God and man, observances of certain Jewish rites with the gospel was the acceptable religion (Colossians 2:8,16,18,21-23). This hybrid religion they peddled contradicted the basic Bible truths and was calculated to undermine the pre-eminence of Christ as the Saviour of mankind and the completeness of believers in Him.

**Question 1: What was Paul’s motive in writing the**

## ***epistle to the Colossians?***

So, Paul wrote to refute these erroneous teachings as well as establish the truth of the gospel that Christ is the only Saviour of the world, the Head of the Church and the Lord of the universe/creation. He further stated that redemption in Christ alone is complete and believers who are thus redeemed are **“complete in him”** (Colossians 2:10). Intermediaries are, therefore, unnecessary and unscriptural. The text focuses on the Apostle’s salutation and thanksgiving to God on behalf of the Colossian Christians for the grace of God received through the gospel, acknowledgement of the impact of the gospel in their lives and his heart-felt prayer for their spiritual growth and fruitfulness in the gospel.

**PAUL’S ADDRESS AND SALUTATION TO THE CHURCH** (Colossians 1:1,2; Romans 1:7; Galatians 1:3-5; Ephesians 1:1-3; Philippians 1:1,2; 1 Timothy 1:1,2; 2 Timothy 1:1,2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1-3)

Paul begins this epistle by introducing himself as **“an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”**. Here, he attributes his apostleship to divine will and grace, not to his own merit, strength or will. He was saved by the grace of God through faith. No one can be addressed as an apostle or a servant of Christ who had not received the grace of God that brings salvation to all men; the grace that teaches us that, **“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”** (Titus 2:12). As grace was a gift, so was his apostleship to preach the gospel. Every true minister of Christ derives his commission or office not by his own strength or schemes, nor by men’s nomination but by divine appointment (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28). It was, therefore, expedient for him to explain his call, commission and apostleship in relation to the gospel so as to give this epistle authenticity, authority and acceptance among the Colossian believers. Besides, he revealed that God is the Source of the gospel; that it had been promised and prophesied in Scriptures by the prophets and that the central subject is Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:4).

**Question 2: *Why were believers called saints in the early church?***



**“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.”** In the New Testament dispensation, the word **“saint”** is used for all genuine Christians whose lives have been transformed by the power in the blood of Jesus. The call to salvation is also a call to be saints. This phrase marks them as holy people, chosen and set apart for God. They are made saints by their divine calling and character (Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:15,16 ); through the blood of atonement (Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:14; 10:12); by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13); by the sanctifying power of the word of truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13; John 17:17) and by their separated, blameless, spotless moral life and inward purity (Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). The saints of God live above reproach and for the glory of God. All saints are brethren who love and fellowship one with another. As brethren, all rancor, bitterness, fighting, malice, unforgiving spirit and all vices that would erect a wall of partition are removed. Unfaithfulness is a mark of the unregenerate; all true saints and brethren will be faithful to God, to their calling and to the gospel.

Paul’s characteristic introductory greeting which is found in most of his epistles is also conveyed to the Colossian church. **“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”** (Colossians 1:2). Grace is the unmerited favour God freely bestows on the morally weak but repentant sinner by saving him from sin. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”** (Ephesians 2:8). Peace is the effect of grace obtained from God within the soul (Colossians 1:14; Romans 5:1). Grace is the outpouring of the Father’s love toward the repentant sinner or backslider and peace is the divine rest and tranquility in the heart that attests to the reality of cancelled sin and entry into God’s family (Ephesians 2:18,19).

**PAUL’S THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR THE COLOSSIAN CHRISTIANS** (Colossians 1:3-8; Romans 1:8; Ephesians 1:15,16; Philippians 1:3-7; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Psalm 118:1-4)

Paul’s expression of thanksgiving to God on behalf of the Colossian church was in recognition and appreciation of the influence and transforming power of the gospel on the

believers. This was in keeping with his manner and practice in his epistles to other churches in which he gave thanks to God for their reception of the gospel and its tangible fruits on them. Faith in Christ and love toward all the saints were sufficient proofs of their conversion for which he gave thanks to God. These godly attributes they manifested were anchored on the hope of rewards in heaven that was preached to them. The inference here is that everyone who has heard the gospel, believed and have the hope of reward in heaven will strive to live the Christ-like lifestyle here on earth. The gospel is universal and able to produce the same kind of fruits in the lives of recipients irrespective of their locale. Paul affirms that **“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth** (Colossians 1:4-6). The fruit Paul mentioned here are that of the Christian character.

Every sinner is expected to repent of sin and bear fruits of repentance. After salvation, the professing believer will not continue to live in sin. The fruit of the Christian character that show genuine conversion are **“...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”** (Galatians 5:22,23).

### ***Question 3: What can Christians learn from Epaphras' ministry in Colosse despite threats by false teachers?***

The truth of the transforming power of the gospel and hope of its recipients was preached to them by Epaphras whom Paul referred to as **“our dear fellow servant”** and **“faithful minister of Christ”**. The Apostle here reveals the bond of affection between them and his testimony of Epaphras. He was happy that Epaphras was faithful in preaching the true gospel to them which, as a corollary, bore spiritual fruit; that if he was not preaching, he was teaching them the Word to help them grow in faith or laboring in prayers for them to be steadfast, mature and perfect in God's will (Colossians 4:12,13). He loved the brethren and wanted to

protect them from false doctrines that would destroy their fellowship and hinder their spiritual development. This attitude is worthy of emulation by all Christian leaders. Where the gospel is faithfully preached and taught with unceasing intercession, there would be testimony of transformation such as Epaphras shared with Paul. He testified of their **“love in the Spirit”**. He balanced this testimony with the report of the threat and challenge from peddlers of false teachings which informed the writing of this epistle by the Apostle.

#### **Question 4: *What should believers thank God for?***

Like Paul, believers should show gratitude for what God is doing in the lives of others, since we are all members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12- 14). Believers are to give thanks to God for His mercies, kindness, goodness, love, grace, provision and protection. Like Epaphras and Paul, praise to God and testimony should precede prayer while commendation should precede correction. At this time, Paul was in a Roman prison and Epaphras was facing the greatest challenge in ministry, but they were not downcast. So, whatever challenges, persecution and pressures we face in life and ministry, we must not give room for worry, anxiety or fear; we must pray with faith and thanksgiving, knowing that God is faithful to perform all that He has promised (Colossians 4:2; Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 10:23).

**PAUL’S PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF THE CHURCH** (Colossians 1:9-11; Romans 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:15-19; 3:14-19; Philippians 1:9-11; Philemon 4,5; John 17:20-24)

**“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”** (Colossians 1:9). Paul’s prayer for the Colossian church bears striking semblance with his prayer in other prison letters (Ephesians 3:14-19; Philippians 1:9-11). From his prayers, we learn a great deal on how to pray scripturally, fervently and effectively to God for the church.

The essential ingredients of Paul’s prayer which should

form our requests are that believers should be enabled as well as have spiritual fullness, knowledge of God's will, wisdom, spiritual understanding, pleasing lifestyle of worthy walk with Him, fruitfulness in good works, growing spiritual knowledge, renewed spiritual strength, power, patience, longsuffering and knowledge. With these requests answered, he believed believers in Colosse would be able to live according to the truth they had been taught without being deceived into error. From these requests, believers should learn to prioritize on spiritual blessings, not material or physical matters, especially where erroneous teachings threaten to erode the truth. Though it is not wrong to pray about physical or material needs, priority should be given to spiritual needs.

**Question 5: *Why does a believer need spiritual strength?***

Believers need spiritual knowledge, understanding, wisdom and strength to overcome temptations and the tempter; endure hardship, suffering, persecution, deprivations and trials of faith; remain steadfast, immovable and abound in grace and good works; live by faith and proclaim the truth constantly, resolutely and tirelessly; fight the good fight of faith, and serve God faithfully till the end.

If the benefits and blessings of the gospel are to be fully realized in our lives and church, we must constantly uphold its truth and be always ready to defend its purity against falsehood and false teachers. Our usefulness and fruitfulness would be enhanced as we pray for the church leaders and members to be filled with spiritual blessings, live holy lifestyle and continue to persevere in the faith in readiness for the Lord's return and for the hope of reward in heaven.

## THE SURRENDERED CONSECRATED LIFE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD**” (Numbers 6:8).

**TEXT:** Romans 12:1,2; Colossians 3:5-10; Num. 6:1-8

**T**he subject of consecration is central to the Christian life and walk. It determines to what extent a believer will go in his relationship and fellowship with God. Whether or not he would attain the status of a “friend of God” like Abraham or “a man after my own heart” like David is predicated on the level of his consecration and surrender to the Lord. Abraham did not earn this title only because God loves him but also because he demonstrated uncommon surrender, obedience and consecration (Genesis 22:1-18). Moses had the privilege of leading Israel out of a bondage of 400 years, not because he was the most educated, but perhaps because he chose “**rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt...**” (Hebrews 11:25,26). Paul got revelations and visions, reached the third heavens because of his relationship and devotion to God (Philippians 3:7-15).

Many believers manage to tread the periphery of the ocean of God’s grace, power and revelation because they are unwilling to go the extra mile with Him. Yet, the purpose of our call is that we “**may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God**” (Ephesians 3:18,19). Many believers scarcely know “**what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power**” (Ephesians 1:18,19).

**Question 1:** *Why are some believers not effective in their ministries?*

Consecration lifts believers from the realm of the ordinary to the sublime. It releases us from the spoils of pleasure

and sets us apart for God's use and service. A believer who is set apart for God attains greater heights and deeper depths.

Consecration begins as an act of separating from a common to a sacred use, or of devoting and dedicating a person or thing to the service and worship of God. Consecration does not necessarily make a person or a thing holy, but makes him/it to be set apart, and devoted to God or to divine service like the consecration of the priests among the Israelites and of the vessels used in the temple (Exodus 29:9; Leviticus 8:12; Numbers 3:3; Joshua 6:19; Acts 6:6; 13:3).

### **CALL TO CONSECRATION AND TOTAL SURRENDER**

(Romans 12:1; Colossians 3:1-5; Exodus 32:29; Numbers 32:12; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 15:15)

**“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). Paul here calls the children of God to the supreme act of surrender, consecration and devotion to the Lord. This he does with the tenderness of a father and consciousness of a fellow heir. He admonishes, implores and pleads, rather than command believers, to yield wholly to the Lord. Paul's plea is against the background of the foundational stones of teachings he had laid in the preceding chapters on the grace of God, propitiation for sin, justification by faith, possibility of reconciliation, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the covenant of God with the children of Israel.

The thought of the Apostle here zeros in on two things: the fact that we are called brethren implies that before dedication and consecration can be meaningful, the new birth must have occurred; and since we have received the mercies of God, the only logical consequence of our gratitude is that we will now give our bodies unto the Lord as a living sacrifice.

### **Question 2: *Who are those called to offer themselves as living sacrifices?***

The Apostle opines that there are those who are cleansed and had become children of God. It is this bracket of people

who have come into a dynamic living relationship with Jesus that are called to offer themselves unto God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him. And this is God's demand on everyone who professes the new birth. Those who are dead to sins and trespasses and the rudiments of this world are called to set their affections on heavenly things (Colossians 3:1-5).

When God called Abraham, He summoned him to a higher, more perfect walk (Genesis 17:1). To Solomon, He said, **"if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days"** (1 Kings 3:14). Again, He challenged Israel as a nation to separate from sin and idolatry. **"For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord... that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day"** (Exodus 32:29). God does not accept a half-hearted service, nor does He demand any relationship that falls short of entire consecration. Those who must know and receive of His best must be willing to lay themselves on the altar of sacrifice.

Further examples abound of individuals and groups of people who entirely served the Lord and reaped the reward of obedience. Caleb and Joshua were singled out for special blessing because they went beyond the run-of-the mill devotion to carve a niche in God's heart. While thousands of their colleagues died in the wilderness, **"Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: [were spared] for they have wholly followed the LORD"** (Numbers 32:12). They determined to go the extra mile with God when others settled for the easy walk. In like manner, Judah (at different times) under Josiah and Asa, covenanted to serve the Lord with their whole heart all their life (2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 15:15).

The highest example of consecration and absolute surrender is found in our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His all for the redemption of the world. Love drove Him from the bliss of heaven, the praises of angels and the fellowship of His Father, to trudge the poor Neighbourhoods of Jerusalem in search of the lost.



## REASONS FOR THE BELIEVER'S CONSECRATION

(Romans 12:1; Nehemiah 9:19-21; Psalm 103:1-5; Micah 7:18; Ephesians 2:4,5; Titus 3:5; Psalm 116:12; Philemon 8-10)

God's call to consecration is not without basis. He has been gracious to mankind. His love to us is without measure knowing that none of His creatures enjoys as much benevolence as man that is created in His own image. He causes His sun to rise on the just and unjust and sends His rain upon the grass to give us our meal. More importantly, the believer owes God a greater debt of gratitude, first, for His saving grace that delivered us from sin and power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His Dear Son (Colossians 1:13). Now we are called "**brethren**" – people washed in the blood of Jesus, justified and adopted into His Kingdom. We were brought from the depth of sin to sit with Christ in heavenly places and have been made heirs of the grace of God.

Second, we must be grateful to God for His manifold mercies. No one qualifies for the mercy of God based on his own merit; it is His free gift to us. His bowels yearn for the care and welfare of His creatures. Prophet Jeremiah captures it this way: "**It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not**" (Lamentations 3:22). A personal voluntary presentation of the believer to the Lord as a sacrifice follows the manifold grace and blessing he has received from God. This is the response that articulates our gratitude for the showers of blessing God has poured upon us.

Israel on the other hand, did a lot to provoke the Lord to anger both in the wilderness and in Canaan. "**Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go**" (Nehemiah 9:19). The manifold mercies of God guarantee His presence in our lives. Reconciliation, the breaking down of the wall of partition between us and God, is by His mercies. The leading of the Spirit of God in the life and ministry of a believer is also a manifestation of the mercies of God (Romans 8:14). The

psalmist also shows how God manifested His mercy towards him (Psalm 103:1-5). In response, he asked: **“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”** (Psalm 116:12). With the psalmist then and all the redeemed of the Lord today, it is **“the multitude of thy tender mercies”** that blot out our sins and gives us life more abundantly.

### ***Question 3: What can the believer render unto the Lord for all His benefits?***

Having enjoyed such mercies, Apostle Paul says affirmatively that the only reasonable service we can offer to the Lord is to present ourselves unto Him, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. This is the only acceptable sacrifice that could express our gratitude for the mercies the Lord made manifest in our life through salvation, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism, healing, deliverance, provision, grace and the promise of heaven. Another reason for presenting **“our bodies a living sacrifice”** to God is hinged on the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing equals the price He paid for us at Calvary. He suffered like no other to bear our grief and carry our sorrows.

Finally, the benefit of total consecration compels us to throw our lives unreservedly to the Lord. When we do, we shall become vessels of honour reserved for the Master’s use (2 Timothy 2:21) and He will reveal secrets and mysteries of the Kingdom to us (Genesis 18:17).

**THE REASONABLE SERVICE OF SURRENDERED BELIEVERS** (Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 8:3-5; Proverbs 23:26; Romans 6:12,13,19; 1 Corinthians 6:13,19,20; 1 Peter 3:10; Psalm 24:3, 4)

**“...That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). To “present” is to yield and surrender or give as offering. And what we are to present, surrender or give to God as offering here is our body. The heart is the most important of all the parts of our body. It is the first thing we give to God. God makes a special demand of it. **“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways”** (Proverbs 23:26). When our hearts are given to the Lord, we are cleansed and purged. Without this,

consecration will be worthless and unprofitable.

Also, all members of the believer's body must be daily and continually presented to the Lord in a definite act of consecration. Members of our body include the eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, etc. We should not employ our eyes to gaze upon objects of temptation. Rather, we are to concentrate on things that sponsor and promote holiness in our thoughts and actions. **"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"** (Job 31:1). Here, Job consecrated his eyes for the glory of God and the promotion of holiness in his life. Also, we should not use our mouths or lips to crack indecent jokes or give our ears to hearing things that can inflame our thoughts. If we consecrate members of our body to the Lord, we will do things that please Him.

**OUR HOLY AND EXALTED PRIESTHOOD** (Numbers 6:1-8; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Philippians 2:17; Luke 9:23)

In the Old Testament, priests were commissioned to offer daily, continual sacrifices unto the Lord. Nobody was a priest who did not offer sacrifice to the Lord. These people were commanded to sanctify themselves by virtue of their hallowed service. They were to distinguish themselves from others and separate from every form of defilements because they were persons that draw nigh to God in the performance of religious duties. And as long as they officiated in this capacity, they were required to be consecrated.

The Nazarites (Jews who professed extraordinary purity of life and devotion) of the Old Testament dispensation were expected to abstain from everything that defiles as long as the vow of separation was upon them (Numbers 6:1-8). Such were obliged to strict and close devotion to the Lord than others. They will rather be held in derision by others than break their vows to be separate to the Lord.

In the same vein, all true members of the body of Christ today, as priests, are to individually on a daily, continual basis **"offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"** (1 Peter 2:5). We are not to bring animal sacrifice to the Lord any more but to present our bodies a living sacrifice. A sacrifice is something you dedicate to the

Lord. A Christian therefore, hands his life to God unconditionally, unreservedly and wholeheartedly. He presents himself to God to do His will only. **“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God”** (Hebrews 10:7).

***Question 4: How can the members of a believer’s body be offered as sacrifice to the Lord?***

Strictly, the sacrifice we offer to the Lord must include our time, talents, resources and endowments. For instance, Dorcas spent her time and resources making dresses and giving to the poor. It might even be our voice employed in singing and ministering. The feet might be presented to the Lord in going from one place to another witnessing for Christ.

Paul the apostle spoke of the sacrificial giving of the churches in Macedonia for the cause of the gospel. They dug into the very sustenance of life and almost gave their very blood. But before they did that, they first gave themselves unto the Lord. Our souls must first experience God’s love and receive His mercy before we can present ourselves to the Lord.

***Question 5: How can a Christian bear his cross daily?***

Again, as a sacrifice, the believer must daily bear his cross and deny self. The sacrifice of Christ led Him to bear the cross. When we patiently bear reproach, ridicule and persecution for Christ’s sake, it is part of the sacrificial life. **“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”** (Luke 9:23).

**THE CHRISTIAN’S NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD**  
(Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:4 6:14; James 1:27; 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 John 2:15).

Our service to God cannot be acceptable if we are still unequally yoked together with the world. The true believer is wholly given to God so that he will not be conformed to the spirit of this age. The spirit of the age manifests itself in pride, ego, sinful entertainment or sensual pleasure. Worldliness pervades the society through devilish music, movies, fashion, inordinate ambition and ungodly pursuits.

The believer is delivered from the present evil world never to be friendly with or conformed to it. **“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”** (Galatians 6:14). We must of necessity keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

**Question 6:** *What is the Christian’s position in relation to the world?*

## **SERVING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

**TEXT:** Romans 12:9-13; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

**P**aul’s discourse on the essential teaching of Christian living glides from vital Christian service and ministry within the body of Christ to daily practical Christian relationship that underscores Christian brotherhood. These teachings are put forth with an obligatory tone leaving no place for excuses or exemptions. This body of teaching zeros in on the life of love and its full- blossomed fruits. Unfeigned love produces selfless, unpretentious and excited service one to another in the Church. Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts being exercised in the present-day church. Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle-working power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. This is the hub of Christian life and relationship. If we have all things and lack love, we have nothing. All ministry activities we engage in will be unprofitable if the love of God is not at its foundation. Although people have different gifts, love is required of everyone.

**CHRISTIAN LOVE: THE BASIS OF SERVICE** (Romans 12:9,10; John 13:34,35; Philippians 1:9; Romans 13:10; Hebrews 13:1)

The Lord took extra pain to teach and show His disciples the new commandment – love. This is the only virtue that could help them to reach the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the propelling quality that could fire our zeal. The desire to serve one another is fulfilled when the heart is rich in love. We cannot give any excuse of being too busy or too occupied so much as not to be concerned about the physical and spiritual needs of our brethren. God, who looks at our disposition, thoughts and hearts, who protects and keeps will know; “**and shall not he render to every man according to his works?**” (Proverbs 24:12).

**“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one**

**another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”** (John 13:34,35).

**Question 1: *What is the place of love in Christian service?***

What articulates and loudly declares our relationship with the Lord is not our preaching, ushering or singing in the choir. It is our life of love that tells the world that we are disciples of Christ. The measure of our love should be the measure of the love of Jesus for us. The strange thing amongst believers is that Christian activities seem to drown the love of God in our hearts. The more activities we get engaged in, the less of love we have for the brethren. True fellowship always dies where love ceases to exist. This is the reason many fellowship centres are witnessing low turnout.

But here, Paul the apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, admonishes that our love must be pure and unfeigned. It is disheartening that most of us have learned how to pretend to love others – how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them. Some are even skilled in pretending to be moved with compassion when they hear of others’ needs, or to become indignant when they learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness. Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. Because of the prevalence of feigned love among believers, Peter the apostle had this to say: **“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently”** (1 Peter 1:22).

**Question 2: *How is love best expressed?***

Our society today confuses love and lust. Unlike lust, God’s kind of love is directed outward toward others, not inward toward ourselves. It is utterly unselfish. This kind of love goes against our natural inclinations. It is possible to practice this love only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so that we can show love while expecting nothing in return. Thus, the more we become like



Christ, the more love we will show to others in the body of Christ. Our love must not be smiles covered with bitterness and hatred; it must be devoid of lust. It must not be one that loves the opposite gender and excludes his gender from his deeds of love. Covetousness must be stripped off our life of love. We should not love because of what we stand to gain or enjoy from the relationship.

Again, our love must be impartial – free and full; love for all without discrimination or ulterior motive. Our love must be one that is fervent, not passive or disinterested. Some say: ‘I love people, but I don’t know how to show it’. But they err. Love is expressed in actions of affection, kindness, consideration and empathy.

**“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”** (Ephesians 4:32). Love overlooks the mistakes of others, forgives others very readily even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. When we do this, we are really following God (Ephesians 5:1). The Lord wants us to manifest love in our actions and relationships with one another. In fact, this is the very basis and foundation of our activity in the Church and ministry in the body of Christ.

Our love must not approve of sin. We must eschew or run away from any act or conduct that has the stain of sin. Gossips, backbiting, negative criticism must be abhorred. We must not be party to anything that would discourage or put down a brother or a sister. On the contrary, we should cleave to that which is good.

Remember the golden rule always and live by it. **“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”** (Matthew 7:12). If you want people to love you, you should love them first. If you want people to forgive you, appreciate you and speak well of you, do the same to them. If you want your mistakes and oversights to be overlooked, do the same to others too. If you do not want false stories about you to be peddled, do not do that to others too. This is the foundation of our service.

**COMMITMENT AND ZEAL IN GOD’S SERVICE** (Romans 12:11,12; Acts 18:25; Psalm 69:9)

**“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer”** (Romans 12:11,12).

**Question 3: *Mention six things that should characterize our Christian service.***

Six things are noted in these two verses as characteristics of our Christian service. First, not slothful in business; second, fervent in Spirit; third, serving the Lord; fourth, rejoicing in hope; five, patient in tribulation; and six, continuing instant in prayer. All these must be carefully considered and cultivated if we want our service to be acceptable to the Lord.

The charge to eschew slothfulness in business applies both to our daily private pursuits and our Christian service. **“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies”** (2 Thessalonians 3:10,11). We should be diligent in the daily execution of our secular work. A true believer must provide for the need of his family members. God places a high premium on dignity of labour.

Besides, women also should not be slothful in domestic business. The home of Christian women should not be left untidy or their personal body unkempt with the excuse of a heavy load of Christian service to bear. Again, believers who are involved in different aspects of work in the church must not be slothful. The preacher in the church must create time to study and read the Bible thoroughly before ministering to God’s people. If you will be a member of the choir in your church, you must be prepared to give the hours of arduous practice required to minister in songs to the people of God.

Fervency of Spirit involves some personal internal motivation and desire to carry on a given task. This is described as zeal. It strips our service of every form of passivity. **“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me”** (Psalm 69:9).

Serving the Lord in whatever capacity – literature distribution, hospital visitation, prison outreach, etc. – must be performed with cheerfulness and zeal. **“Not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”** Our service must be **“as unto the Lord”** (Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 4:23,24).

**THE SACRIFICIAL LOVE AMONG THE BRETHREN**  
(Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 5:13)

**“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality”** (Romans 12:13).

***Question 4: How and what can we distribute to meet the needs of other believers?***

Here, we have the commandment of the Lord concerning our service. It is a responsibility for all believers. Some feel they are so poor that they have nothing to distribute. But they miss it. While we may not have something tangible or material to share, we can speak kind words to comfort the sorrowful and encourage those who are discouraged (1 Thessalonians 1:2,3). Our love should not be partial, passive or theoretical. We must show mercy to the needy and give to meet the needs of other saints. **“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 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 3:16,17).

Supreme love for God and love for our fellow men attracts divine blessings. There will be divine favour and supplies to meet our needs. God will answer our prayers and fulfil His promises in our lives and endeavors when we pray. He will make our days like **“the days of heaven upon the earth”** (Deuteronomy 11:21).

So, we must happily lay down our resources for the good of the brethren if we say we love the brotherhood. This is the New Testament commandment. It is the summary of the law and the prophets put together. We must serve one another in love.

## **CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

**TEXT:** Revelation 20:1-6; Isaiah 11:6-10; 65:25; Zechariah 14:9-20

**G**od’s word teaches that Jesus Christ will come to reign literally on earth for a thousand years. This will happen when He returns to the earth with ten thousands of His saints. At this time, He will judge the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth (Jude 14,15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). At the commencement of this reign, Christ will bind the devil and cast him into the bottomless pit till the expiration of His rule (Revelation 20:2,3). Devoid of sin and Satan’s influence, Christ’s millennial reign will be characterized by peace and blessing (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Hosea 2:18; Zechariah 14:9-20; Isaiah 2:2-4).

### ***Q1: What is the meaning of Christ’s millennial reign?***

The word ‘millennium’ is a compound derivative from Latin which simply translates into a thousand years. Thus, Christ’s millennial reign is a thousand years of the full manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is sequel to the Great Tribulation period which is a period of intense suffering for everyone on earth.

**PLACE OF CHRIST’S MILLENNIAL REIGN ON GOD’S TIME-TABLE** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:21,22; Jude 14; Revelation 19:15-21; 20:1-3; 11:15)

According to God’s revealed time-table, the Church will suddenly be taken away by Christ in a mysterious event known as the rapture. Then, a seven-year period of great suffering for sinners and careless Christians left behind will follow. This is called the Great Tribulation. At the end of the

seven-year period, Jesus will come again with the Church to establish His government (Jude 14).

**Question 2: *Highlight the events that will lead to Christ's millennial reign.***

The government of the Antichrist in the world at that time will resist His coming in an attempt to foil His predicted reign. But the Lord will overcome the armies of the Antichrist at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:15-21). In that conquest, He will bind Satan and imprison him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3). The kingdom of this world will, then, become the kingdom of our God and His Christ (Revelation 11:15).

**DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST THEOCRATIC RULE:** (Isaiah 9:6,7; Psalm 45:4; Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 72:4; Isaiah 2:3,4; 33:21,22; 42:4; Acts 3:22; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 11:10; Revelation 20:1-6; Matthew 19:28; Ephesians 5:25-27)

**Question 3: *What is the form of government Christ will establish during His millennial reign?***

Christ's millennial reign will be a time when the purposes of God will be fully realized on earth. Theocracy which is government of the state under the firm control and direction of God will be established by Jesus. He, as the divine representative of God, will at that time speak and act for God. **"For ...unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"** (Isaiah 9:6,7). He will be given a universal and glorious dominion with absolute power to govern (Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 45:4; Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 72:4). It will be the responsibility of Christ at that time to announce God's will and law (Isaiah 2:3,4; 33:21,22; 42:4; Acts 3:22).

Christ's millennial reign will be a manifestation of the promise God gave David, that his throne shall have no end. Christ, as David's "son", will thus establish a glorious

house and throne over an equally glorious kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 11:10). Divine mercy, goodness and truth will be displayed through Christ even as the glory associated with His deity, omniscience, omnipotence and righteousness will be fully made manifest. The Gentile world system (humanity without Christ) as it is at present, organized under the direct influence of Satan, will thus become an outmoded system. In its stead comes Christ's millennial reign, void of sin and all forms of unrighteousness. Satan, having been defeated and bound, will lack the power to induce people to sin (Revelation 20:1-6; Matthew 19:28; Ephesians 5:25-27).

**BLESSEDNESS OF CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN** (Isaiah 2:4; 9:3-7; Jeremiah 30:17,18,19; Ezekiel 43:7-12; Isaiah 24:23; 60:1-9; 12:1-2; 9:7; 42:1-4; 11:1-2,6-9; 41:19,20; 65:25; 33:24; Ezekiel 34:16; Joel 3:16,17; Amos 9:15; Isaiah 14:3-6; Zechariah 9:11,12)

The millennium will be the period of the full manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. His reign will be very uniquely novel in different ways. One, it will be a period of unprecedented individual and national peace. There will be a complete cessation of the scourge of wars, as the kingdoms of the world will be fused together under the reign of Christ. The ensuing peace will herald an era of economic boom and prosperity. The beauty of this age is that hitherto antagonistic and irreconcilable foes will henceforth co-habit peacefully. Two, there will be joy unspeakable. The main reason for this is that Satan who had hitherto oppressed men will have been bound (Isaiah 9:3,4; Jeremiah 30:18,19).

**Question 4: *Explain why everyone should strive to be part of Christ's millennial kingdom.***

Three, there will be holiness as the King is the Source of righteousness. Holiness will be manifested through the King and His subjects (Ezekiel 43:7-12; Isaiah 1:26,27). Four, Christ's reign will be a glorious one. **"Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously"** (Isaiah 24:23; 60:1-9). Five, it will be a time of divine mercy and comfort for God's people. The King will personally minister to every need so

that there will be fullness of comfort (Isaiah 12:1,2; Jeremiah 33:23- 25). Six, Christ will dispense justice during His millennial reign (Isaiah 9:7; 11:5; 42:1-4). Seven, citizens of the millennial kingdom will have full knowledge of God that Christ will teach them (Isaiah 11:1-2,9; 41:19,20; 54:13; Habakkuk 2:14).

Eight, the original curse placed upon creation will be removed so that there will be abundant productivity of the earth (Genesis 3:17-19; Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25). Animals will also have their nature changed so as to lose their venom and ferocity. Nine, sickness will be removed and become a thing of the past (Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 30:17; Ezekiel 34:16). And healing will be naturally available to the deformed (Isaiah 29:17-19). Ten, there shall be preservation of life (Isaiah 41:8-14; 62:8,9; Jeremiah 32:27; Ezekiel 34:27; Joel 3:16,17; Amos 9:15; Zechariah 14:10,11) and complete freedom from all forms of oppression that at present ravage mankind (Isaiah 14:3-6; 42:6,7; 49:8,9; Zechariah 9:11,12).

**SUBJECTS OF CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL KINGDOM:**  
(Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 17:1-7; Matthew 5:3; Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 25:34)

***Question 5: How can a sinner and believer witness the millennial reign of Christ?***

Christ will reign as King over His subjects through one thousand years. The Scripture describes the subjects who will witness it. These include, one, the glorious Church composed of all redeemed and righteous souls from all over the world who shall have gone with Christ at rapture (Ephesians 5:25-27). They will be returning to earth with Him to reign. The apostate church that is married to the world will be excluded (Revelation 17:1-7). Two, the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3) will be there. These are people who recognize and admit their state of spiritual poverty on earth without assurance of salvation and are willing to turn away from sin and surrender to Christ. And three, the watchful and prayerful will be accounted worthy of participating in the glorious kingdom of Christ (Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 25:34). So, to reign with Him, you must first be saved from sin, live a righteous life in spite of persecution and the reverses of life, abide in Christ and serve Him till the end.



## SAUL SLAYS THE PRIESTS AT NOB

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod” (1 Samuel 22:18).

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 22:1-23**

David had some turbulent moments on his way to the throne. He had been a victim of a cruel persecutor who would stop at nothing to eliminate him simply because God had elevated him. Saul was in a hot chase for the son of Jesse who, by the help of the Lord, wrought deliverance for Israel against the Philistines. David had also been an instrument of relief to Saul when an evil spirit tormented him. For no fault of his, he had to be in flight from one place to another for fear that Saul’s multi-pronged fang would catch up with him. However, we see God working inexorably to protect and preserve him until the day of his coronation and elevation to the throne. David’s experience with Saul underscores the possibility of persecution of the righteous without a cause, suffering for righteousness’ sake and having to endure misunderstandings, misrepresentations and hatred on the way to heaven. Truly, **“many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all”** (Psalm 34:19).

The chapter under examination exposes Saul’s degeneracy, depravity and cruel determination to destroy an innocent soul. It shows the depth to which the king of Israel had sunk morally because of jealousy and unfounded fear. King Saul’s savage elimination of an entire religious community is the height of sacrilege and cruelty.

**DAVID’S REFUGE IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM** (1 Samuel 22:1-8; Psalm 142:1-5; 57:1-11; Isaiah 40:28-31; Matthew 11:28-31; Acts 27:20-25)

Due to King Saul’s relentless pursuit and determination to kill David, it was no longer safe for him (David) to go to his house, the palace or any other place within Israel’s territory. **“David therefore departed thence, and escaped**

**to the cave of Adullam...**" The name 'Adullam' means refuge. It was located within the territory of Judah, not far from Israel's border with Philistia, but between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. David must have found safety in this place so as to escape Saul's tentacles. The location also afforded him the opportunity to rue his predicament, meditate on the ways of God and pour out his heart before Him.

It is believed that the contents of Psalms 57:1-11 and 142:1-7 were penned in this place; this affirmed that the perplexing situation drew him to seek refuge in God. He said, **"I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living"** (Psalm 142:2,4,5). The import of this is that when we appear helpless, hopeless and disappointed, we can always find refuge in God. Secondly, it shows that the situation afforded him opportunity to wait on the Lord for strength, encouragement and victory. It enabled him to meditate, reflect on his past dealings, pray and possibly repent of his sin of lying to Ahimelech. Thirdly, with much more sublime and noble exercise of humility, he was able to seek God's face, crying out, **"Be merciful unto me, O God, Be merciful unto me"** (Psalm 57:1). Finally, it was time to praise the Lord for past deliverances while trusting Him for future help (Psalm 57:5,11).

Unlike King Saul, David did not trade blames for his predicament; rather, he took time apart to exalt God's mercy and power. His attitude is a challenge to believers to put up positive attitudes when they are under persecution, to remember to praise God for His past mercies while believing Him to give them victory. Believers who are under intense persecution or immobilized by circumstances should utilize the period for sober reflection, self-examination and, if need be, confession and repentance of any known sin.

**Question 1: *What should be the believer's attitude during persecution?***

The situation in Israel at this time appeared so melancholic

under Saul to the point that **“every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him [David]; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.”** These were people negatively affected under Saul’s tyranny – those in distress due to the situation in the kingdom and those in debt due to the neglect of God’s laws. Also, they perceived that David was being unjustly hounded and decided to switch loyalty to him with hope for a better future. Dreading their fate, David’s family also fled their homes to join him. There was a general discontent in the land. The Scripture says, **“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”** (Proverbs 29:2).

The categories of people who resorted to David can be likened to the general state of humanity. Men and women without the grace of Christ are distressed, disoriented and discontented. And, like David received these people and became captain over them, giving them protection, purpose and direction in life, the Son of David is ready to receive the distressed sinning souls who He will transform, train and commission for Kingdom service. He says, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28). David’s effort to transfer his aged parents to a secure location is also worthy of mention. Our parents, the elderly and aged ones should be cared for despite our commitments and service in the Lord’s vineyard.

***Question 2: What can we learn from the categories of people that resorted to David?***

**“And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth”** (1 Samuel 22:5). Gad forewarned David to relocate from his stronghold. This counsel was definitely one of God’s ways of testing and making him exercise faith, wisdom and courage in Him in preparation for the kingdom. It was to teach David to walk by faith and not by sight. The ministry of true prophets of God is indispensable for the health, growth and safety of the flock of Christ. They are needed in the church

to teach, warn and provide direction (Ephesians 4:11,12).

**Question 3: *What would the contemporary Christian learn from the counsel of Prophet Gad to David?***

**DOEG'S REPORT ABOUT DAVID AND AHIMELECH:** (1 Samuel 22:6-10; 21:7; Exodus 23:1; Proverbs 6:18,19)

With a feeling of self-pity, Saul accused his aids of treason and disloyalty. He alleged: **"...all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"** (1 Samuel 22:8). This suggests that many of his servants were not in agreement with him in the matter of David. His persistent murderous quest for the innocent life of David did not go down well with everyone in his kingdom. They knew what David had done for their nation: how he risked his life to confront Goliath and fought many battles.

**Question 4: *Point out some of the carnal methods king Saul used to obtain information about David and Jonathan from his servants.***

Saul combined worldly wisdom, politics and tribal sentiment to get information about David and Jonathan, his own son. He asked the people if a man from Judah would favour the tribe of Benjamin with riches. **"Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards...?"** He became emotional and insinuated that the people were unfaithful for conspiring against him. **"And all of you have conspired against me... there is none of you that is sorry for me."** **"Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub"** (1 Samuel 22:9). Doeg did a dirty job and indicted Ahimelech the priest to be David's accomplice who gave him Goliath's sword to fight against Saul. His action led to the destruction of the city of priests.

Obviously, Doeg did not mean well for David and harbored the same hatred for him. Being a descendant of Edom (Esau), he carried on a generational hatred for the Israelites. It is important to be objective when making

reports about people. Reports and petitions that are meant to feather our nests of hatred and cause harm to others are not of God. **“Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness”** (Exodus 23:1). This is different from reporting sin or any evil going on in the church. Believers need to be careful and prayerful in handling such matters.

**DASTARDLY MURDER OF THE PRIESTS** (1 Samuel 22:11-23; Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21; 1 John 3:15; Ecclesiastes 9:18; 2 Samuel 21:1,2)

Upon the indictment of Ahimelech by Doeg, Saul summoned him and his entire house to answer the charges against them which included conspiracy, giving bread and sword to David, and enquiring from God for him. Ahimelech pleaded his innocence: **“for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.”** Grounds for Ahimelech’s innocence were that he believed David was one of the most faithful of all Saul’s servants; that he was only seeking to do good to Saul’s son in-law; that he was on errand for the king; and so on. He even remarked: **“Who is as faithful among all your servants as David?”**

However, backslidden and demon-inspired Saul did not care for the reasons given by Ahimelech; rather, he rashly passed a sentence of death on and his household. To their credit, Saul’s servants declined his instruction to execute Ahimelech because they feared the Lord who said in His word, **“Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm”** (1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15). However, Doeg, willing to please his master at any cost, carried out the king’s order and murdered eighty-five priests of the Lord. The vengeful king, not satisfied with this, went ahead to treat the innocent city of Nob as an enemy territory. **“And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword”** (1 Samuel 22:19). Only Abiathar, Ahimelech’s son, escaped the massacre.

Saul’s order was cruel and barbaric, to say the least. Children of God should never, for fear of the consequences, bear false witness against anyone or carry out an ungodly decree. The Lord had said, thou shalt not kill, but Doeg,

under instruction from Saul, broke this commandment.

**Question 5: *From the example of Saul's servants, what should be the believer's attitude to ungodly edicts?***

David lamented the death of all persons in the priestly lineage of Ahimelech. **“And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house”** (1 Samuel 22:22). This could be implied in two ways: David's presence with Ahimelech made him (Ahimelech) guilty before Saul. Secondly, his lie to Ahimelech that he was on errand for the king made the priest to offer him needed support. These, however, would neither expiate Saul's guilt nor reduce Doeg's punishment for the blood of the priests and inhabitants of Nob. Everyone involved in this evil deed or any other shall surely be judged. The Scripture says, **“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished...”** (Proverbs 11:21). The only option of escape for all sinners and wicked persons is genuine repentance and turning away from evil; else, God's fiery judgment will surely be visited upon them. **“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”** (Isaiah 55:7).

## SAUL PURSUES DAVID

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men” (1 Samuel 23:8).

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 23:1-29

The preceding chapter reveals the flight of David into the cave of Adullam where the distressed and discontented resorted to him for protection and succor. His stay in this cave, occasioned by Saul’s unrelenting chase, afforded him some thoughtful moments for reminiscences, realization and confession of past misdeeds which led to the deadly massacre of eighty- five priests and the inhabitants of Nob by Saul based on Doeg’s malicious report. David’s conduct in this study bears evidence of spiritual restoration which also attracted continued divine deliverance from Saul’s relentless chase. Saul’s murderous act was intended to be punitive as well as serve as a deterrent to the inhabitants of all cities in Israel to refrain from sympathizing, associating with or helping David escape being caught. So, it was suicidal for anyone or city to stand in Saul’s way as he continued to hunt David. God, who is always faithful in preserving His children from the wrath of their enemies, preserved David’s life. Therefore, believers should daily live and serve Him with the assurance that “**He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous...**” (Job 36:7) but watches over them.

**SELFLESS CONCERN AND WATCHFULNESS IN DOING GOD’S WILL** (1 Samuel 23:1-15; Psalm 25:9; John 11:7,8; Proverbs 3:5,6; Joshua 2:1-16; Psalm 118:8,9; Proverbs 18:10)

While still hiding in the cave of Adullam, David was informed of the Philistines’ invasion of Keilah. He took time to enquire from God whether to intervene and deliver them or not. He was not presumptuous here by relying on his past victory over Goliath or embarking on an ego trip for popularity. He humbly allowed the Spirit of God to lead him. Children of God should always ask for divine guidance before taking any major step in life. The Scripture says, “**as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons**



**of God**" (Romans 8:14). God gave His nod for the rescue of the inhabitants of Keilah and David mobilized his foot soldiers for the battle.

**Question 1: *What should believers do before taking important steps in life?***

However, the news that **"the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors"** terrified David's men who drew his attention to the risk of confronting such a well-organized army. Undeterred by their fear, David went to God again for further clarification. Believers need to avoid fear-induced counsels when making critical decisions in life. They should instead resort to importunate praying to obtain the grace to obey God. Complacency, delay and procrastination after knowing the will of God under the guise of waiting for confirmation is deadly. If David had delayed further, the people of Keilah would have been destroyed. Believers do not need to wait for another prophecy or revelation before obeying clearly revealed will of God in Scripture. Subjects like repentance, restitution, water baptism, evangelism, tithe, etc. do not require praying to ascertain whether they are the will of God or not. We are just to obey.

Even in this context, God acceded to David's planned rescue of the inhabitants of Keilah to teach us the importance of rescuing perishing souls. His irretrievable command is, **"... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"** (Mark 16:15,16). Delaying to obey may lead to the perishing of souls and their blood will be required from us. With compassion, prompt obedience and selfless sacrifice, **"David saved the inhabitants of Keilah"** (1 Samuel 23:5).

It was after this victory that Abiathar, son of Ahimelech the priest who was the only known survivor of Saul's massacre, came with an ephod to meet David at Keilah. The ephod was a sacred vestment worn by priests and used as a means of knowing the mind of God (Exodus 28:6-14,31-35; 25:7; 1 Samuel 23:9,12; 30:7,8). As New Testament believers, we do not resort to consulting any ephod or casting lots to know God's mind as we now have the Spirit

and Word of God to guide us. Like Abiathar, believers who are suffering any form of persecution should abide in fellowship with God and fellow believers.

**Question 2: *What can believers learn from David's rescue mission to the people of Keilah?***

David was watchful while doing God's will. Though he delivered the inhabitants of Keilah from being overrun by the Philistines, he did not put his trust in them to shield him from being captured by Saul. If he cast a javelin at Jonathan in an attempt to kill him and actually killed the priests whom his servants feared to touch, he would definitely not spare the people of Keilah for harboring David. In fact, Saul was already celebrating David's entry into a walled city that **"God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars"** (verse 7). It was the intelligence report that Saul was preparing to overrun the city of Keilah that drove him to use the ephod to pray to God. **"Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant"** (verses 10-12). In answer to his enquiries, God told him Saul would come to seek him and the men would deliver him up. Rather than facilitate his escape with the fear and love of God in their hearts like Rahab did to the two spies sent to Jericho, the men of Keilah were ready to prove their loyalty to the king by delivering David, their benefactor into the hand of Saul. That is why the Bible admonishes that, **"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes"** (Psalm 118:8,9). Christians should be watchful at all times and not depend even on their own understanding. **"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"** (Proverbs 3:5,6).

**Question 3: *What challenge does David's inquiry from God pose to believers today?***

David and his men left Keilah for the wilderness of Ziph

where they hid in strongholds. While they were there, Saul sought David every day but **“God delivered him not into his hand”**. As he did his part by abiding in strongholds, God also faithfully preserved him. **“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished”** (Proverbs 22:3; 27:1). Thus, Saul could not succeed in his wicked plot against David.

We need to be wise, watchful and careful as we walk daily in the will of God, bearing in mind that the name of Christ is our strong tower. We must run away from sin and abide in Christ always to continue to enjoy divine protection.

**SACRIFICIAL COURAGE AND LOVE DURING TRIALS AND PERSECUTION** (1 Samuel 23:16-19; Proverbs 18:24; Job 4:4; Joshua 1:6,7,9; Isaiah 35:3,4; Hebrews 12:12,13)

Jonathan’s visit to David at his trying time speaks volumes about genuine love amount the brethren. This visit was not to accuse or condemn David like Job’s friends did but to strengthen him, even when such gesture could endanger his own life. **“And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth”** (1 Samuel 23:17). The words we speak to brethren at their trying times matter a lot. Jonathan spoke words that will dissolved doubts and allayed David’s fears; and words of affirmation of divine purpose for David and Israel. In order to **“lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees”**, the Scripture teaches that we should **“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you”** (Hebrews 12:12; Isaiah 35:4).

Though it was obvious that Jonathan could not stop his father, he did not take sides with him. He knew the truth that David would become king over Israel and he selflessly submitted to this will of God. Resisting, working and fighting against His will attracts troubles, demonic torment, sleepless nights and eventual destruction such as Saul suffered. Jonathan’s love and humble submission to the will of God are proofs of a sanctified heart which every believer needs. Jesus prayed and sacrificed His life for the sanctification of heaven-bound believers.

**Question 4: *What can we learn from the way Jonathan visited David at his most trying time?***

**CONNIVANCE AND DELIVERANCE IN TRIALS AND PERSECUTION** (1 Samuel 23:19-29; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 4:12,13)

**“Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand”.** The Ziphites who were of the same tribe of Judah with David were supposed to protect and assist him in time of his travail, but they betrayed him. With this unsolicited intelligence report on the hideout of David, Saul commended as well as commissioned the Ziphites to get more details about his movement. **“And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah”** (1 Samuel 23:21,23).

It was a hard time for David to have the king of Israel pursue him, and this time, intending to comb the land to terminate his life. It was ironical that instead of being celebrated, he was being chased; instead of recognition, he faced relegation; instead of reward, he suffered reproach; and for his love and kindness, he was betrayed even by his kinsmen. Trials and persecutions are part of the Christian’s experiences. God has promised that He would never leave nor forsake but will deliver us in times of trouble. It was in the expectation of deliverance after the Ziphites’ betrayal that David prayed in Psalm 54:1-7: **“Save me, O God, by thy name... Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah. Behold, God is mine helper... I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble...”**. Believers

need to imbibe these godly attitudes of praying, praising and trusting God for deliverance in times of betrayal.

**Question 5: *What should be our attitude during trials and persecutions?***

It is instructive that David did not leave his suffering to an imagined fate but was also working on intelligence reports he received about Saul's plots. Before the Ziphite betrayers could return, David had relocated from the stronghold in the hill of Hachilah to a rock in the wilderness of Maon. Prayer is good, but it is not an escape from responsibility of taking precautionary measures for self-protection.

It was in this wilderness of Maon that Saul came close to capturing David. **“And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David...”** (1 Samuel 23:26-28). God, in His providence, delivered David by allowing Saul to hear news of invasion of the Philistines. He suspended the manhunt abruptly when it was almost the end of the road for the son of Jesse. God's hands are indeed not short to deliver His people from trouble (Isaiah 59:1). Thus, David's prayer in Psalm 54 above was fully answered and serves as an encouragement to believers in distressful situations to pray and expect divine intervention. He says, **“call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”** (Psalm 50:15). God will always make a way out of every difficult situation for His children at the right time. He is never late!

## DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD” (1 Samuel 24:6)

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 24:1-22; 26:1-25

**B**elievers have the responsibility to manifest God’s love to all people, whether the beneficiaries are willing to reciprocate the gesture or not. This lesson was properly captured in the preceding chapter where David fled Keilah because he was told by the Lord that the people, whom he rescued from being overrun by their enemies, would deliver him to Saul. Their revealed action of betrayal is similar to what our Lord Jesus suffered in the hands of the Jews. Despite His love for them, they still rejected Him.

Having enjoyed God’s undeserved love, mercies and deliverances, David continued to manifest the same virtue in this study by sparing Saul’s life, not minding that he had been constantly on the brink of death.

**Question 1:** *Mention some of Saul’s attempts to take David’s life.*

**DAVID’S TENDER RESPONSE TO SAUL’S PERSECUTION**  
(1 Samuel 24:1-7; 26:1-12; Romans 12:17-20; Mathew 5:43-48)

Saul’s uncontrollable obsession to kill David manifested in expeditions to the wilderness of Engedi and Ziph. “**And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David**

**in the wilderness of Ziph**” (1 Samuel 24:1,2; 26:1,2). The cruel massacre of the priests and the inhabitants of Nob by Saul instilled fear of a similar punishment in people all over Israel and made them willing volunteers of information about the movement of David. It was however unfortunate that there were not the likes of Amram and Jochebed, Rahab, Obadiah and Ebedmelech who risked their lives by faith to preserve Moses, the spies, the prophets, and Jeremiah respectively (Exodus 6:20; Hebrews 11:23; Joshua 2:1-16; 1 Kings 18:3,4; Jeremiah 38:7-13).

**Question 2: *List the ungodly traits of Saul that should not be seen among believers.***

In his bid to get rid of David, Saul assembled three thousand soldiers to search for him and his men upon the rocks in the wilderness of Engedi, and later Ziph. But as Saul and his men were in deep sleep in a cave, David and his men came and stood on the other side. Highly elated that the battle was over, his servants reminded him of the Lord’s promise to deliver his enemy into his hands (1 Samuel 24:4). Also, Abishai pleaded with him to allow him smite Saul with the spear (1 Samuel 26:8-11). Though God had delivered his arch-enemy into his hands, David declined to raise his hand against the Lord’s anointed. Instead, he cut a piece of the king’s skirt and took his spear and cruse of water to make Saul realize the absence of divine presence with him. It was to prove to the king that if he was wicked and carnal like him, he would have killed him.

The lives of the duo present us with a number of striking differences. One, Saul’s heart was obstinate, but David’s heart was tender. Two, David feared God, but Saul was driven by the fear of man. Three, David manifested a forgiving spirit but Saul harbored hatred (1 Samuel 24:19; Matthew 6:12-15; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; Romans 12:21). So, the virtues of love, mercy and kindness which were truly demonstrated by David were lacking in Saul.

**Question 3: *Highlight some dissimilarities between David and Saul.***

David’s life should serve as a challenge to contemporary believers. He fulfilled the New Testament obligations that



require all believers to forgive their enemies, pray for them and overcome evil with good. He understood well the teaching of non-retaliation. God is not a murderer. His desire is for all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Therefore, prayers and pronouncements of disaster and death on persecutors and perceived enemies are contrary to the teachings of the Scripture. Christ was emphatic when He said: **"...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"** (Matthew 5:44-46).

**DAVID REPROVES AND COUNSELS SAUL** (1 Samuel 24:8-15; 26:13-20; Hebrews 1:9; Isaiah 54:17)

It is clear from the Scriptures that Saul's insistence on getting rid of David was baseless. However, David had to prove his innocence because he was falsely accused of seeking to hurt the king. In doing this, like a passionate preacher, he spoke to his conscience and reasoned deeply with him in the hope that it might lead him to repentance. **"David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?"** (1 Samuel 24:8,9; 26:18). The two separate encounters of David with Saul provide us with some vital lessons. First, David used the occasion to prove to Saul that he was neither after his life nor his throne as people might have made him believe. Two, though he had been anointed king, he was still humble and respectful to Saul (1 Samuel 24:11; Romans 12:10; 13:7). Three, he was bold in telling Saul the truth. Four, he pointed out Saul's faults and counselled him to repent and submit to God (1 Samuel 26:19,20). Five, he made him see the futility of fighting against God's will. Though he had

opportunity to deliver himself, he patiently waited for God's time (Romans 12:17-21). Six, David was bold to declare his righteous lifestyle. If we want God to fight for us, we must eschew evil and live to please Him (Hebrews 1:9). Lastly, he affirmed his faith and trust in God to deliver him from the king. Persecution, trials and afflictions should not make us to descend to the valley of despondency. Like David, we should face every challenging situation with faith and confidence in God.

**Question 4: *What can we learn from David's encounters with Saul in the wilderness?***

**“And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord”** (1 Samuel 26:15). Although Saul went after David with three thousand-foot soldiers led by Abner, they could not overrun him and his men. Believers should not be afraid of Satan or his agents. Promises that affirm God's sure victory and security for His children abound in the Scriptures. **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD”** (Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 54:17).

By scolding Abner, David proved to Saul and his army that it is only God who can provide adequate and unfailing security. It was also an opportunity to make the king see reasons for his failure: he had been cut off from the Source of his strength and refuge (Psalm 127:1). We are to put our trust in God and demonstrate unshakable faith in His unfailing promises. In moments of crises, we should maintain a resilient posture knowing full well that **“...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...”** (Daniel 3:17).

**THE TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL** (1 Samuel 24:16-22; 26:21-25; Psalm 37:1-7,9-15; James 5:10,11)

**“And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice**

**and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil**" (verses 16,17). David's speech had a profound effect on Saul. The king realized that he would have been dead but for David's kindness. He was, therefore, embarrassed by his personal vindictiveness towards David. Unfortunately, his remorse was short-lived as he proceeded to still pursue David after being incited by the Ziphites (1 Samuel 26:1,2).

**Question 5: State the differences between genuine and false repentance.**

Saul eventually discovered that his efforts to kill David were underpinned by folly. A similar scenario played out in the wilderness of Ziph with the same outcome.

**"Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly"** (1 Samuel 26:21). But his confession fell short of genuine repentance because it was borne out of shame. He never confessed his sins to God. Under the New Testament dispensation, genuine repentance encompasses **"...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21).

**Question 6: List the scriptural requirements for eternity with God.**

When it became apparent that God was with David, Saul was forced to abandon his manhunt for him. Believers are commanded to **"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men... live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath... Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good"** (Romans 12:17- 21). Through his godly attitude, David broke the heart of Saul who confessed: **"thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil... wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day... I know**

**well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand...Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail**" (1 Samuel 24:17-20; 26:25).

When it dawned on him that he could endanger his posterity with his vindictive attitude, he said, **"Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house"** (1 Samuel 24:21). At the time both men parted, it was clear to David that he could not achieve the will of God by human strength and to Saul that it is futile to fight against the will of God. He conceded defeat by affirming that David would become king. God is always a winner (Psalm 33:11; Acts 5:39).

## THE FOOLISHNESS OF NABAL

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send” (1 Samuel 25:25).

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 25:1-44**

**D**avid was still in flight to escape Saul’s dragnet and determination to kill him. He then moved to the wilderness of Paran, a few miles from the city of Carmel. There, he encountered shepherds tending the flocks of Nabal, a wealthy but an insolent and contentious man. Nabal lived in Maon but had his business in Carmel and was of the house of Caleb. David heard that he was shearing his sheep and sent ten of his young men to request him to “...**give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David**” (1 Samuel 25:8). Nabal refused this appeal bluntly even though David and his men had protected his flock from rustlers. This response infuriated David who mobilized his men swiftly for a revenge mission. The result would have been bloody, but for Abigail’s quick intervention.

Nabal’s attitude was deemed foolish, arrogant and uncharitable. Accounts of what followed his action, how the situation was managed and Nabal’s end, form the focus of this text.

**DAVID’ S REQUEST AND NABAL’S FOOLISH RESPONSE**  
(1 Samuel 25:1-11; Psalm 118:8,9; Hebrews 13:1-3; Proverbs 18:23; Luke 12:16-21; 1 Kings 12:1-16; Proverbs 14:1-3)

Our text opens with the death and burial of Samuel and Israel’s lamentation over him. Not much was said about Samuel’s death here probably because it is the inevitable end of all men. Sooner or later, all men must pay this debt, but the most important question is how and where it meets us. Every wise person must prepare for this last journey by way of turning away from sin unto Christ the Saviour of mankind. The Scripture says, “**it is appointed unto men**

**once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27).

**“And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel”** (1 Samuel 25:2). The man introduced here was Nabal (verse 3), a Calebite with a large herd of sheep and livestock. He was said to have possessed part of the estate of Caleb and was wealthy but was not wise; he lacked the virtues for which patriarch Caleb was renowned. He was simply of a churlish, mean and stingy disposition.

Sheep shearing was an elaborate gathering marked by entertainment and festivity, and very common among wealthy individuals in the nation. It was a time of open-handed hospitality among flock-masters. The character of the occasion is evident in Absalom’s case when he invited the king’s sons to his sheep-shearing in Baal- Hazor in order to deal with Amnon while his heart was **“merry with wine”** (2 Samuel 13:23).

Under normal circumstances, David’s request came at the most auspicious time as sheep shearing afforded the hosts opportunity to share and care. Secondly, David and his men had performed a valuable service to Nabal, protecting his flock from Philistine raiders and rustlers. Thirdly, David’s request was polite and courteous. He sent the request with greetings of peace, warmth and kindness so that Nabal would not feel intimidated. **“And thus, shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast”** (1 Samuel 25:6). Fourthly, Nabal could not plead paucity of resources because the occasion would not support it. Lastly, going by the culture at that time, refusing hospitality to a traveler was an insult. It was therefore absurd for Nabal to respond the way he did.

**Question 1: What informed David’s request from Nabal?**

Nabal turned down David’s request with utter contempt. He grumbled loudly and sent them away with insults. **“And Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many**

**servants now a days that break away every man from his master”** (1 Samuel 25:10). Who had not heard about David: a man of valor and mighty in battles; the killer of giant Goliath of Gath? Nabal deepened his insult by ascribing to David the status of a rebellious, run-away servant.

**Question 2: *What should be the attitude of people endowed with wealth, power and position?***

**REVENGE MISSION AGAINST NABAL AND ABIGAIL’ S REACTION** (1 Samuel 25:12-35; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Matthew 5:38-41; Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1-4; Proverbs 15:1; Colossians 4:6; Ecclesiastes 9:14-18)

Upon Nabal’s refusal of hospitality, David decided to take laws into his hands and wipe out his family. As uncouth, unkind and ungrateful as Nabal was, it was equally wrong for David to react the way he did. Obviously, he would not have been guiltless had he carried out his threat. First, he was hasty to react to the insult. **“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools”** (Ecclesiastes 7:9). Second, he was impulsive and yielded to temptation, which is sin. Third, he forgot the word of God on revenge or retaliation and did contrary to it. **“To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste”** (Deuteronomy 32:35). **“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”** (Romans 12:19). Fourth, God would have us bear insults with grace and love, returning people’s evils with good (Matthew 5:38,39). Fifth, David did not show Nabal the same kindness and longsuffering which he showed to Saul. He had spared the latter’s life when he had opportunity to kill him. Sixth, he was not mindful of soiling his hands with the blood of an entire household (1 Samuel 25:21,22).

However, as soon as Abigail heard of her husband’s uncouth behavior, she took some presents and hastened to meet David. She accepted responsibility for the foolish actions of her husband, prepared victuals for David and his men and spoke softly to them. **“Then Abigail made haste,**



and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses" (1 Samuel 25:18). She also said, "...Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid" (1 Samuel 25:24). With these words, she restrained the hand of David from shedding innocent blood. Surely, **"A soft answer turneth away wrath..."** (Proverbs 15:1).

**Question 3: *What do we learn from Abigail's courage to step into the situation and make peace between the parties?***

David's action was as indefensible as it was out of character because he called his men to arms. His reaction was incompatible with the virtues for which he is associated. Christians should do nothing that will call their profession to question. **"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto me"** (Titus 3:8). Watchfulness, sobriety, vigilance, being filled with the knowledge of the Scriptures and led by the Holy Spirit are pillars to support believers to withstand temptations and remain victorious on daily basis.

There are many lessons from Abigail's handling of the offence. One, she was wise and prompt. A little delay could have been calamitous. Two, she was very humble and submissive by falling down at David's feet to pacify him. Being the wife of a rich man would have made her proud and pompous. Three, she took responsibility for Nabal's action. Four, she gave David and his men a prized gift. Five, she asked David to forgive Nabal his ill- actions. Six, she suggested that David should not carry out a slaughter that would haunt his conscience for life. Seven, she urged him not to lower himself to Nabal's level of foolishness. Eight, she was courageous, and her motive was to plead for the lives of others. Nine, her persuasion made David to repent of his evil intention and seek forgiveness from the Lord.

**Question 4: *What can we learn from the way Abigail***

*handled the situation?*

**DEATH OF NABAL AND DAVID'S MARRIAGE TO ABIGAIL** (1 Samuel 25:36-44; Psalm 37:9-13; 73:17-20; Romans 7:2)

Nabal lived up to his name – a fool. While his life was in imminent danger, he ate and drank himself to stupor. **“And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken...”** (1 Samuel 25:36). Again, Abigail displayed her characteristic wisdom by delaying to discuss the incident until the following day after the wine was gone out of him. By daybreak, she relayed how David had come within minutes of killing him and wiping out his household. The shock caused him heart attack and he fainted and **“became as a stone.”** He lingered in a coma for ten days before he finally died.

Nabal’s death is a lesson to everyone – rich or poor. A day before, he was merry with wine; and shortly after, he was mowed by providence. So is the life of all men: it springs up in the morning and by evening, it is withered away; **“For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways”** (James 1:11). This is the inevitable end of all mortal and only the wise will prepare for life beyond the grave. David blessed the Lord at the news of the death of Nabal, not because he rejoiced at it but **“that [the Lord] hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head...”** (1 Samuel 25:39). He was restrained by divine hand from avenging himself and would have been guilty. God wants us to leave the battles of our lives for Him, Who alone knows how best to avenge our wrongs (Romans 12:19). Children of God are not permitted to rejoice at the calamity or death of other people – friend or foe (Proverbs 24:17).

However, David yielded to the practice and tradition of people of those days and seized the opportunity of Nabal’s death to marry his widow, Abigail, though he was husband to other women (1 Samuel 18:27; 25:43; 2 Samuel 3:2,3). It

is true that a woman can marry another husband after her husband's death (Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7:39), but for David to have taken Abigail to be a wife negates the New Testament teaching on marriage and therefore is not a pattern for Christians today. Polygamy is forbidden for believers: **"And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"** (Matthew 19:4,5).

**Question 5: *What is God's approved standard for Christian marriage?***

Abigail certainly has a prominent place in the story of women of integrity and destiny in the Bible whom God used in extraordinary ways. Her deeds were noble, humble, godly and wise. She was a virtuous woman. Other women who also excelled in godly and gracious deeds were, Deborah (Judges 4:4-24). She was among the judges of Israel in her generation. Second, Ruth: she was a vessel unto honour and an epitome of determination, industry and chastity (Ruth 1:6-19; 4:9:11). Third, Esther was a woman of the hour who responded promptly to the call to rescue her kinsmen (Esther 4:7,8,15,16; 7:7,9,10). Fourth, Priscilla was an ideal evangelistic partner to her husband (Acts 18:26). Our Christian women can also be used of God to do exploits in their generation.

Nabal died as a foolish man. He was foolish because, one, he died without preparing for eternity. The end came to him suddenly without an assurance of spending it with his Creator (Luke 12:20). Two, though rich in the things of this world, he was not rich in good works, nor did he lay up in store for himself a **"good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life"** (1 Timothy 6:19). Three, he was high-minded and lacked understanding in responding to a distressing situation (1 Samuel 25:8-11). Four, he failed to do good when it was within his powers and had forgotten that he was a caretaker of his wealth and should use it, not only for his benefit, but also for others (Proverbs 3:27). Five, he lived in pleasures (1 Timothy 5:6). Six, he was drunk with wine

instead of being filled with wisdom from above. Seven, he forgot to number his days that he may apply his heart to wisdom and be prepared to answer the final call (Psalm 90:12).

Wisdom is a principal, necessary commodity to guard and guide men in the path of life. Without it, we are bound to make costly and fatal mistakes. Believers today can be filled with God's wisdom to lead a successful and victorious life. **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him"** (James 1:5).

## DAVID'S DECEPTION AND REJECTION

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding, the princes of the Philistines have said, he shall not go up with us to the battle” (1 Samuel 29:9).

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 27:1-12; 29:1-11

**D**avid spared Saul's life in the wilderness of Ziph in the preceding chapter in consonance with the scriptural principle of non-retaliation. It could be recalled that Saul had been relentless in hunting him. Rather than seize the opportunity to revenge by killing Saul, he decided to flee to the land of the Philistines, Israel's archenemy. He knew it was wrong and sinful to kill the king in order to ascend the throne, especially considering the fact that God chose him when he least expected it. So, he had to wait to be enthroned at the right time. By refraining from taking vengeance, he proved that he did not harbor hatred for Saul. Assassinating other people's character or life to gain promotion or privilege or remain relevant is sinful. David could only become a king over Israel if he outlived the incumbent. Any wonder then that the king would live no stone unturned to get rid of him. As the chase continued in the text, David's faith began to ebb, giving way to fear, hasty decision and deception that believers should not emulate.

**DAVID'S FEAR AND FLIGHT** (1 Samuel 27:1-7; Numbers 11:14,15; 14:1-4; 1 Kings 19:1-4; Psalm 146:3; Proverbs 29:25; Isaiah 30:1,2)

David was facing a great threat to his life from Saul. Overwhelmed with self-pity and discouragement, he could not keep hope alive through prayer for divine assistance. **“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand”** (1 Samuel 27:1).

### **Question 1: *What led to David's decision to relocate to Gath?***

Being killed by Saul would have been impossible according to God's word, for the Lord anointed him to be the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13; 24:4). Once a believer forgets God's promise of His abiding presence and protection, he will look for refuge in a wrong place. David might have forgotten the program of God for his life as the fear of premature death infiltrated his mind. His temporary loss of hope and confidence in God further led to a hasty decision to relocate and settle with Achish, the king of Gath. Similarly, the fear of uncertainty and hasty decision, borne out of prayerlessness, made Elimelech and Naomi to head downhill to Moab. Many present-day believers have suffered similar fate because decisions taken under pressure and fear do not generally glorify God (Numbers 11:14,15; 1 Kings 19:4). The best thing to do when in distress is to pray and trust God for His intervention. He frustrated all previous efforts of Saul to eliminate David and would have preserved him in the present situation. In times of hardship, need or problem, believers should pray in faith for divine intervention rather than jump into conclusion and take decisions that contradict Scripture. Any believer who puts his trust in the Lord (Proverbs 3:5-7) will have definite testimony and **"...boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"** (Hebrews 13:6).

### **Question 2: *Mention some Bible characters who took decisions in uncertainty, and the consequences.***

**"And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife"** (verses 2,3). This self-imposed exile and asylum in the Philistine territory brought reprieve as Saul **"sought no more again for him"**. On arrival, David requested a dwelling place outside the city of Gath to avoid any close monitoring and **"Achish gave him Ziklag that day"** (1 Samuel 27:2-7). Achish was magnanimous in giving him

the city during his sixteen months sojourn. Christ teaches that believers' righteousness must surpass those of unbelievers to be able to enter heaven. The Scripture commands that we should entertain strangers, shelter the distressed and homeless, albeit with wisdom.

**DECEPTION BY DAVID** (1 Samuel 27:8-12; 21:10-15; 2 Samuel 15:10-12,31; Proverbs 24:21; Jeremiah 2:36,37; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 13:9)

During his stay in Gath, **“David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites... smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish”** (verses 8,9). The annihilation of all people in those territories was to avoid any eyewitness reportage that might lead to a short-lived asylum. To Achish's enquiry on where they went, David lied by saying, **“Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites”** (verse 10). He was, here, being economical with the truth by avoiding specific mention of those cities but presented it in a way that made Achish infer that he had invaded the territories of Israel. Deluded, **“Achish believed David saying, he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore, he shall be my servant forever”** (1 Samuel 27:12). Achish continued to live in a fool's paradise without investigating the truth. And this was not the first time David would deceive him (1 Samuel 21:10-15). Deception or lying, whether it is done to escape danger, get gain, employment, admission (with false credentials), get married or whatever, can take one to hell if not repented of (Revelation 21:8,27).

**Question 3: *What is the danger of deception or lying, and how can a deceiver or a liar escape judgment?***

Apart from David, some other people like Jeroboam's wife, the Gibeonites, Ananias and Sapphira were trapped in this evil act of deception (1 Kings 14:1-6; Joshua 9:3-6; Acts 5:1-10). And they all suffered its consequences. The Scripture says that many deceivers are in the world today and believers should take heed lest they are deceived too. **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirit**



**whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”** (2 John 7,8). A Christian leader should be diligent to know the state of his flocks and try every spirit to avoid laying hands suddenly on anyone to be in the work-force (Proverbs 27:23; 1 John 4:1; 1 Timothy 5:22; Proverbs 29:18).

**Question 4: *What should be the disposition of a Christian leader in the world full of deceivers and hypocrites?***

**DISCERNMENT BY PRINCES OF THE PHILISTINES AND REJECTION OF DAVID** (1 Samuel 29:1-11; 1 Kings 14:1-10; 2 Samuel 14:12-19)

The Philistines and Israelites were sworn enemies. Another war was looming between the two as **“the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel”** (1 Samuel 29:1). The princes of the Philistines discovered during routine check of the army that David and his men were Hebrews. They were not gullible and deceived as Achish. To their question, **“What do these Hebrews here?”**, he defended by describing David as faultless. **“And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us...”** (1 Samuel 29:4). The discernment and vigilance of the princes of the Philistines is commendable. They were able to identify the presence of a personality that posed a threat to their nation and gave convincing reasons David must leave their army. In these days of global insecurity, vigilance should be our watch-word. Christian leaders should have eagle eyes to detect sinners and backsliders like Ananias and Sapphira in the workforce, people who are sabotaging soul-winning efforts like the damsel with the spirit of divination that Paul the apostle cast out, and hypocrites and compromisers like Simon, the sorcerer. This is possible through possession of gifts of the Spirit. However, caution should be taken not to confuse the Spirit of discernment with suspicion, accusation and counter accusation that is rampant in many Christian assemblies

today.

**Question 5: *How should a believer handle rejection?***

King Achish humbly conceded to the reasoning of his subordinates and dispatched David and his men. **“Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not. Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines... I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master’s servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart”** (1 Samuel 29:6,7,9,10).

Believers should display graceful attitude during rejection like Stephen and Jesus Christ. When marriage or business proposal is turned down by the other party, it is not a time to think as a believer that your world has collapsed. Staying away from fellowship or even contemplating suicide is no solution either. So, be careful how you react or respond at such a time lest Satan takes advantage of you (2 Corinthians 2:11).

## REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin” (Colossians 1:13,14).

**TEXT:** Colossians 1:11-21

**P**aul the apostle gave thanks to God in the preceding verses of this chapter for the fruits of righteousness the gospel bore in the lives of the Colossian brethren. Though he had no previous contact with them, he was endeared to them by the report of their gracious lifestyle which drew him and his fellow companions into unceasing intercession for them to be filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding. He undertook to enlighten them that the transforming power of the gospel was predicated on Christ's sacrifice and redemption through Him.

The Greek word used for ‘redeemed’ is “lytrôsis” which literally means “a ransoming, deliverance” or “a rescue.” This fits appropriately into what Jesus did by giving His life on the Cross as ransom for humanity. He shed His blood so that every sinner might be redeemed. In biblical terms, redemption means to “purchase” or “ransom”. Historically, redemption was used in reference to the purchase of a slave's freedom. A slave was “redeemed” when a price was paid for his freedom. The use of the word in the New Testament includes this same idea. Every unconverted person is a slave to sin, and it is only through cleansing in the blood of Jesus Christ that such a person can be redeemed (Hebrews 9:11- 15).

**Question 1:** *What is redemption and why does everyone need it?*

**THE BASIS AND MEANS OF OUR REDEMPTION**  
(Colossians 1:11-14; John 8:34; Romans 6:17; 7:14; 8:21)

Paul the apostle, having a clear understanding of the power of sin and its eternal consequence, was full of gratitude to God for the salvation of the Colossian brethren. He disclosed reasons for being thankful to God the Father

which are, namely, that he had qualified them to be mutual beneficiaries of the inheritance of the saints. Aside delivering believers from the power of darkness, he was grateful that God had translated them into the kingdom of His Dear Son. For these reasons, all believers ought to always rejoice and praise God. It must be underscored that all these benefits can be enjoyed only through redemption in Christ.

It needs be emphasized that God **“hath delivered us from the power of darkness... translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”**. The basis of our redemption is here revealed as enslavement to sin and Satan. The Bible states that every human being is born with the nature of sin and grows to be a captive and servant to sin (John 8:34; Romans 7:14; 8:21). It is clear also that every person needs redemption. **“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). Anyone who is not redeemed will be damned and suffer eternally. **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 6:23). It is, therefore, only through redemption that the believer can secure freedom from sin and its accompanying present and eternal punishments. **“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 3:24).

Christ's blood is the efficacious means of redemption. It occupies a central place in the redemption of man, and its significance is invaluable. **“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission”** (Hebrews 9:22). The ‘shedding of blood’, which is simply a phrase that refers to death, is critical to the redemption of man. All humans would be candidates of hell had Christ not died and shed His blood as the Lamb of God for the remission of our sins. But the good news is that Jesus has already made the provision for the penitent sinner to be redeemed with His blood and thus saved from the wrath of God. **“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him”** (Romans 5:9). Saved from wrath through repentance, forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of the Lamb, believers enter into fellowship with God and have

hope of living with Him forever. It is obvious no one can obtain the inheritance which God has prepared for His children without cleansing in Christ's blood. The Scripture affirms that the blood is His life. **"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul"** (Leviticus 17:11). This clarifies the whole concept of redemption; that Jesus **"gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father"** (Galatians 1:4).

**Question 2: Why is redemption of mankind impossible without Christ's blood?**

**THE PRE-EMINENCE OF OUR REDEEMER** (Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:1-5; 2:8-10; Genesis 3:15)

Our Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has unassailable credentials that qualified Him to redeem lost humanity. He is described as the One, **"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature... And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"** (Colossians 1:15,17,18). Paul the apostle presents Christ as unique in many ways in the text: one, He is the express image of the invisible God; two, He is the Son of God (Hebrews 1:2); three, Jesus was in existence before all things on earth and in heaven were made; four, He is the Creator of all things that are visible and invisible, and upholds all things that He has created by the word of His power; five, He is the Head of the body, the Church; six, He is the firstborn from the dead who resurrected; seven, He is pre-eminent because all the fullness of God reside in Him bodily; eight, He is the Mediator who made peace between God and man.

Jesus, as our perfect Sacrifice, fulfilled the conditions of God's justice in dealing with the sin problem (Hebrews 10:4-9; John 1:35,36). It is unarguably clear from the foregoing that no one else qualifies to be our Redeemer and Saviour. **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12).

**Question 3: *Mention some features of our Redeemer that stand Him out as preeminent.***

**THE BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST**

(Colossians 1:20; Revelation 5:9,10; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:17; Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:14-18; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Psalm 130:7,8; Luke 2:38; Acts 20:28)

**“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven”** (Colossians 1:20).

**Question 4: *Mention some benefits of redemption through Christ’s blood.***

Redemption through Christ affords sinners the privilege of reconciliation with God. Everyone should make haste to be reconciled with God to obtain forgiveness, righteousness, freedom from bondage to sin and peace with God. To be redeemed, then, is to be justified and made holy; to be set free from the power of darkness, curses and yoke of the devil and live to glorify the Lord. Believers enjoy divine protection and preservation by the blood of Christ. His atoning blood **“speaketh better things”** or blessings the believer can obtain from God (Hebrews 12:24). What with the victory we have and enjoy over satanic forces through the blood of the Lamb. **“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”** (Revelation 12:11).

Moreover, the greatest of all benefits of redemption through Christ’s blood is that it grants the redeemed access to God’s presence to commune with Him. **“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood Christ”** (Ephesians 2:13). If Christ, **“by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”** (Hebrews 9:12), it is by the same blood every believer will gain entrance into the heavenly city. But we must abide in the benefits of redemption through Christ, pray and watch till the end to get to heaven.

## CALL AND COMMITMENT TO PERFECTION

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28).

**TEXT:** Colossians 1:21-29

In the previous lesson, the issue of redemption through Christ was addressed. Through Adam’s disobedience, the principle of sin was introduced into humanity. This operating principle produced the practice and habit of sin in every offspring of our first parents (Romans 5:12). Man, in his fallen state could not save himself or pay the ransom for his redemption. But in mercy, God undertook our redemption by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place. He met the demands of the law and became the legal substitute by shedding His precious blood for us (Romans 3:24; Isaiah 53:4-8; Matthew 26:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19). All who exercise faith in His finished work at Calvary are saved from sin and its consequences.

However, the redeemed soul needs to walk by the holy principles of God’s kingdom. He is holy and all that would walk with Him must be holy. **“Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”** (1 Peter 1:16). Therefore, being holy is synonymous with Christian perfection, which is the focus of this study.

**THE CASE FOR CHRISTIAN PERFECTION** (Colossians 1:21,22,28; Luke 1:74,75; 1 Peter 2:24; Matthew 5:48; Deuteronomy 30:6; 1 John 4:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

**Question 1:** *What is the literal meaning of the word perfection?*

Perfection is defined as a state of completeness, wholesomeness and having everything that is necessary. It refers to a thing without flaw or fault (Leviticus 22:21; Matthew 5:48). Perfection also has to do with maturity (Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 6:1,2).

Christian perfection has long generated controversy in Christendom, dividing the church of Christ into camps of



those who believe that it is possible and those who think otherwise. This problem is due to either misunderstanding by the rejecters or unwillingness to accept the truth. It is necessary therefore to state from the outset what Christian perfection is not and what it is. One, it is not absolute. Only God has absolute perfection, not even the angels. Of angels, the Scripture says, **“Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly”** (Job 4:18). Two, it is not infallible, that is, incapable of making mistakes. Christians can be perfect in heart but not in the head. We observe the great Apostle Paul tendering apology after he erred in the matter of the high priest. **“I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people”** (Acts 23:5). Three, it is not knowledge perfection. Because we do not have all knowledge, we can misunderstand, misapply or misinterpret situations. Only God is perfect in knowledge.

What then is Christian perfection? The word perfection as a religious construct means the following: one, deliverance or salvation from sin to live a holy life (Luke 1:74,75; Matthew 5:48). Two, uprightness of character and disposition (Job 1:1,8; Deuteronomy 18:13). Three, it is entire sanctification or second work of grace when the heart is purged from inbred sin or adamic nature (Romans 6:6,7). Four, it is pure, unconditional or *agape* love – love for God, fellow Christians and neighbors (1 John 4:18; Deuteronomy 30:6; John 15:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-13). In essence, perfection is the purifying of our hearts to love God with all our heart, soul and mind; to love fellow believers as Christ loves them; and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Colossians 1:28). Five, it is maturity and spirituality (compare 1 Corinthians 3:1 with Hebrews 5:13,14; 6:1; Philippians 3:15 and Ephesians 4:13).

It should be noted that to be made holy, perfect or sanctified is the work of God and a Christian needs to yield his heart to Him as a patient does in an operating theatre to the surgeon for an operation to deal with the shoots and roots of sin. However, perfection or entire sanctification, though God’s work, leaves an important role for the believer. **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of**

**the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God**" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Believers must deliberately separate themselves from sin and all objects of sin – idolatry, materials related to immorality or pornography – whether in print or electronic media. Indeed, God's desire for the believer is to have a "clean heart" or "pure heart." A blameless life is one that will live with God throughout eternity because the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

**Question 2: *What do you understand by Christian perfection?***

**THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION** (Colossians 1:22-27; Genesis 17:1; Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 13:11)

Christ's work of redemption which brought salvation to the lost sinner also brought reconciliation with God. The purpose of this redemptive work is, **"...to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in his sight"** (Colossians 1:22). God wants to bring every redeemed soul to the spiritual position where He looks and finds nothing sinful or evil. The process of attaining this goal entails obedience to the call to **"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"** (Philippians 2:12). We cannot be holy and without blame if we are careless in our attitude and disposition towards worldly allurements and attractions. Christian perfection will enable us walk on a higher pedestal with God.

Abraham had been called out of his land of nativity for twenty-four years, and it was now thirteen years since Ishmael was born to him. At ninety-nine years old, God called him to be perfect in his walk with Him. **"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect"** (Genesis 17:1). By this, he was required to be upright and consistent. Between his call to salvation at age seventy-five and the call to perfection, he had manifested some signs of inconsistency with God. First, he lied out of fear about his relationship with Sarah. Secondly, through the counsel of his wife, he slept with Hagar, Sarah's maid. The Lord therefore, needed to call him to a consistently righteous walk.

The New Testament dispensation is superior to Abraham's; hence, our High Priest, Jesus Christ, calls the Church to a perfect walk with the Father. **"Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"** (Matthew 5:48). In the Epistles, believers are also called to perfection (2 Corinthians 13:9,11; Hebrews 6:1; Colossians 4:12). In order to gain this perfection, believers need to be steadfast in the faith, surrender and consecrate their lives to Christ. **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"** (1 Thessalonians 5:23,24).

### **Question 3: *Why are Christians called to perfection?***

Paul the apostle was appointed a minister to preach the gospel of salvation to the world. In the process of carrying out this commission, he went through sufferings for the sake of Christ, but he was not discouraged; rather, he rejoiced in the Lord (Colossians 1:24). He called the word of God he was given to preach, mystery, **"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations."** This mystery is the breaking down of the wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, thereby producing mutual access to the gospel of salvation and its privileges.

**COMMITMENT TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION** (Colossians 1:28,29; Philippians 3:12,22-32; 3:12-16, Colossians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 11:12)

**"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in all wisdom"** (Colossians 1:28). The work of the gospel in perfecting believers involves preaching, warning and teaching. For the Apostle Paul, he preached the full gospel of salvation from sin through the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross. Secondly, he preached deliverance from the powers of darkness and translation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God. Thirdly, he warned every man, particularly believers, night and day against sin and all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:8-10,22,23; Acts 20:32; Colossians 3:5-9). Lastly, he kept back nothing that was profitable unto them in order to qualify them for the ultimate salvation in

heaven.

Presenting “**every man perfect**”, whether from the pulpit or through individual pastoral counselling or the printed page, must be handled with care and wisdom. Like Paul, ministers of God today should be committed to preaching, warning and teaching the flock of Christ, the whole counsel of God. A minister who fails to warn his congregation against the danger of sin and imperfection is preparing them and himself for God’s final judgment.

**Question 4: *Describe the role of sound doctrine in the perfection of believers.***

Every believer must be committed to perfection, always doing things that help to deepen the experience. First, the individual has to be personally committed to perfection in order to sustain the experience. The one who has accepted the call to perfection must avoid the love of the world and keep himself pure. Second, the Christian minister, like Apostle Paul, must be commitment to living, preaching and teaching it. The Lord has raised leaders in the church to fulfil His goal of perfecting the body of Christ. **“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Third, the local church should also be united in upholding the truth and remaining steadfast. Perfection should be a constant aspiration, pursuit and experience of everyone truly devoted to God. A man of God said, “The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection-perfection in all things – in love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans and dealings with men; perfection in his prayer, and his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and consistent aim to be as perfect as God.” We should be united against worldliness, lukewarm attitude and false doctrine. Finally, God Himself is fully involved in

empowering the Church to obey His Word and make it glorious, not having spot or wrinkle (Ezekiel 36:26,27; Ephesians 5:25-27).

The blessings of our commitment to perfection are manifold. One, it helps us to be in favour with God and enjoy fellowship with Him. Enoch walked with God consistently for three hundred years (Genesis 5:22-24). That he did it implied that he lived a life of communion with God. Two, a Christian should be committed to perfection in order to be like our Father in heaven who is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Three, it would enable the believer to avoid falling into sin or backsliding from the faith (Hebrews 10:38,39).

Four, it ensures or guarantees a place in God's heaven on the last day. **"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"** (Matthew 5:8). Five, it will bring glory to God and bring others to the knowledge of the truth. **"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men"** (Titus 3:8). Finally, it must be noted that to sustain this gracious experience, the believer must be watchful and careful, read the Bible and meditate upon it daily (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2); pray without ceasing (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17); endeavor to fellowship regularly with other believers (Hebrews 10:25); resist the devil and all his cohorts in times of temptation (1 Peter 5:8,9); and remain steadfast. **"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"** (1 Peter 5:4).

## WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHING AND WORSHIP

**MEMORY VERSE:** “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words” (Colossians 2:3,4).

**TEXT: Colossians 2:1-22**

**P**aul the apostle expressed his affection for the Colossian brethren with whom he had no previous contact before writing this epistle. Having discussed the subject of redemption in Christ and commitment to perfection in the preceding chapter, he proceeded to comfort as well as exhort them to unity, love and assurance of the truth concerning Christ. He proactively presented this truth, so they would not fall prey to the deception of erroneous teachers of their day who upheld the ceremonial laws and traditions of men above the doctrines of Christ. The reason is, believers who have spiritual understanding of the personality, power and doctrines of Christ will not embrace falsehood but abide steadfast in the faith. Like the Apostle, Christian ministers have a duty to continually feed the flock of Christ with the unchanging, full-orbed truth of Scripture to shield them from straying into error that damn the soul.

**Question 1:** *Why do Christian leaders need to repeatedly emphasize the truth of Scripture to their flock?*

**REVELATION OF CHRIST’ S DIVINITY AND BELIEVERS’ EXPECTED RESPONSE** (Colossians 2:1-7,9,10; 1 Corinthians 1:24,30; John 15:4,5; Romans 11: 33-36; 1 Thessalonians 2:5)

Though Paul the apostle had not seen the Colossian brethren physically, he desired to make them come to “**full assurance of understanding of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**” (Colossians 2:2,3). Obviously, he had a spiritual goal in mind before writing this epistle. Without full assurance and proper understanding of complete redemption in Christ, they

would remain spiritual babes capable of being **“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”** (Ephesians 4:14). Aware that the Judaizers claimed superior wisdom and knowledge outside Christ that makes redemption complete and worship acceptable to God, the Apostle aptly declared the divinity of Christ, who is the embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. All the knowledge and wisdom required to be saved, righteous, serve God acceptably and enter heaven at last, can be found only in Christ who is the express image of the Father. Every other knowledge and wisdom that contradict Christ as the incarnate Son of God, Saviour, Sanctifier, Sustainer, Healer, Baptizer in the Holy Ghost, Teacher and coming King is therefore false and capable of misleading babes in Christ.

The Apostle clarifies that the purpose of this revelation is **“...lest any man should beguile you with enticing words”** (Colossians 2:4). It is unflinching commitment to preaching and emphasizing the truth that nullifies falsehood attractively wrapped and communicated with a heavy dose of flattery and fair speech. The truth is, whoever is born of God is indwelt by Christ and thus possesses the wisdom and knowledge of God. Christ declares that **“...I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”** (John 14:20; 15:4). As possessors of God’s wisdom, believers have no reason to accept teachings that discountenance the pre-eminence of Christ and redemption through Him.

God does not want any of His children to be swayed from the way of righteousness. Though the Apostle was physically absent, he declared that he abode in fellowship with them in the spirit and attested to their steadfast faith in Christ. He therefore exhorted that **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving”** (Colossians 2:6,7). To benefit from the fountain of wisdom and knowledge of the full provisions and power of God which Christ embodies, it is important that believers continue to walk with Him. Consistent walk with Christ will make the believer to be rooted, built up and established. He also urged them to abide in the truth they



had been “**taught**” with gratitude to God (Colossians 2:7). Detachment from the Saviour makes a professing believer lose the supply of grace, power and wisdom to live righteous and resist falsehood.

**Question 2:** *How can believers have and enjoy the wisdom of God which Christ embodies?*

**WARNING AGAINST TEACHINGS THAT UNDERMINE CHRIST’S PRE-EMINENCE** (Colossians 2:8-15; John 1:1-13; John 14:20; Matthew 7:15-20; 15:6-12)

Paul the apostle warns the Colossian brethren and believers of all ages against deception, tradition, human philosophy and convention. “**Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ**” (Colossians 2:8). To ‘spoil’ in the text means to corrupt, plunder or rob them of the faith and hope in Christ through philosophy. Greek philosophy thrives on speculations about the divine existence, subjective reasoning and imperfect deductions and conclusions. It thrives on mere fallacy and refers to truth as subjective. These philosophy and vain deceit are predicated on human precept and elementary knowledge of the physical, changing world.

Philosophy, human traditions, syncretism or conventions that are based on plausible variables are not compatible with God’s word. The Apostle who understood traditions and vain philosophies of these predators declared that they were not based on the teachings of Christ. Christian leaders must be abreast of prevailing philosophies and traditions of men around them that contradict the word of God and proactively warn their members of the danger of embracing them. The Apostle further emphasized the privileges a believer in Christ enjoys. He revealed that in Christ “dwelleth **all the fulness of the Godhead bodily**”; that is, in Christ resides the boundless ocean of inexhaustible blessings anyone can ever dream of, pray for and receive in life and eternity. John the Baptist admitted that “**of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace**” (John 1:14,16). The fullness of the triune God can be found in Jesus. The believer is therefore “**complete in him**” since he dwells in Christ where the fullness of the Godhead resides. By virtue of his position in Christ who is “**the head of all**

**principality and power**", he is above the forces of darkness. The Apostle further revealed that the blessing of spiritual circumcision is obtainable in Christ. And through the observance of water baptism, the believer identifies with His death and resurrection. Believers who have obtained forgiveness are **"risen with him"** after being **"quicken together with him"** by faith. They also enjoy freedom from the burden of ceremonial laws which Christ abolished, **"took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross"**. It is erroneous to uphold and carry out such **"ordinances"** which only pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Christ and have now been abolished. Above all, believers enjoy the victory of Christ who **"spoiled principalities and powers"** publicly on the Cross. These great blessings, it must be emphasized, can be lost by embracing philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men and human reasoning based on observable facts in the physical world.

**Question 3: *What should be the attitude of believers and spiritual leaders to false doctrines and preachers?***

Present-day believers and leaders must expose false teachings and teachers and maintain their commitment to teaching the wholesome truth of Scripture. We must avoid people who **"resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith"** (2 Timothy 3:8; Romans 16:17).

**EXHORTATION AGAINST FALSE WORSHIP** (Colossians 2:16-23; 1 Timothy 4:1; Titus 1:14; Isaiah 29:13,14; Mark 7:6,7)

**"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind"** (Colossians 2:16-18).

Having exposed the error and falsehood of adherents of philosophy and traditions of men, Paul the apostle proceeded to exhort believers in Colosse not to allow anyone condemn them on any matter that relates to ceremonies of

the law Christ abolished. He specifically mentioned such practices as meat or drink offering, holyday, new moon or Sabbath days which foreshadow the reality. All the ceremonies represent the shadow of the Person and sacrifice of Christ. An acceptance and practice of such amounted to saying that Christ had not come. He also cautioned them against worship of angels describing such humble submission to an ungodly practice as only a voluntary humility and not a divinely commanded one. Therefore, it is vain and unacceptable as such practice is a result of a carnal reasoning. Underneath such evil practice is pride. Even though it has a show of humility, the motive behind it is usually to gratify self, projecting oneself as wiser than others. In their worldly wisdom, they intentionally reject and dishonour Christ **“the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God”** (Colossians 2:19).

The Apostle repeatedly used the phrase ‘**let no man**’ to show that no one irrespective of gender, social or economic status or ties should be allowed to deceive them to lose their spiritual benefits and rewards here or in eternity.

**Question 4: *How did Paul the apostle describe Colossian Christians’ submission to false teaching?***

Anyone who believes and is dead with Christ is no longer subject to ordinances that were temporary and had been abolished. Believers today are cautioned never to accept any form of worship that is perverse and idolatrous. Any worship that demeans the Sonship of Christ but elevates an object or any personality above Him must be jettisoned.

There are however two ordinances Christ instituted to be observed namely, water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. While water baptism by immersion is identification with the burial and resurrection of Christ, the Lord’s Supper is perpetually observed in remembrance of His sacrifice and anticipation of His imminent return.

## THE BELIEVER'S RISEN LIFE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1)

**TEXT:** Colossians 3:1-25

**F**ollowing the warning against false teaching and worship considered in the preceding chapter, Paul the apostle emphasized the need for the Colossian and present-day believers to live the risen life. The risen life is a glorious life of triumph over sin and the works of the flesh; a life that constantly seeks higher spiritual attainments that glorify God; a life that sets affection on and is preoccupied with the spiritual above the mundane; a life of spiritual and holy service with eternity in view; and a Christ-like, rapturable life with a constantly rising hope of meeting with Lord in heaven. This is the central thought in this study.

**Question 1:** *What is the risen life?*

**SCRIPTURAL PRECEPTS FOR GODLINESS:** (Colossians 3:1-11; Phil. 3:19,20; Romans 6:2; Ephesians 4:22,29,31; 5:3,5; 2:2; Romans 1:18; 1 Cor. 7:19; Galatians 3:28)

**“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God”** (Colossians 3:1-3).

**Question 2:** *Why must believers set their affection on things above?*

Living for God's glory is the priority of every heaven-bound pilgrim. His passion and preoccupation are directed at fulfilling God's plan. Therefore, he glorifies God with his body. The resurrection power that lifted Jesus from the grave is the same power that translates the believer from darkness to light. He or she who is crucified with Christ is dead to sin, pride, the allurements and fashion of the world, worldly ambition and pursuits, sinful entertainment or sensual pleasure.

God demands absolute compliance with the divine imperative to mortify our members. We are admonished to denounce and desist from the delusion of the end- time where people trust in their religious activities and revel in unrighteousness. The Bible warns: **“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saint”** (Ephesians 5:3). Joseph lived up to this exhortation while he was in the house of Potiphar in Egypt (Genesis 39:7-10).

### **Question 3: *How can a believer mortify his member?***

To mortify is to crush, kill or destroy. Believers are to deal the death blow to the works of the flesh. As captives in a strange land, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not succumb to the corrupt tendencies in Babylon. The Lord wants us to separate from illicit practices by mortifying our body and keeping it in subjection to His Spirit. Believers who claim to be faithful in paying their tithes or engage in one activity or the other in the house of God but still indulge in fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness, idolatry, stealing, masturbation, lesbianism, etc. should remember that **“...because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience”** (Ephesians 5:6). The proof of our new nature in Christ is that we **“put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds”** (Colossians 3:8,9). The risen life shines forth as light and dispels every work of darkness that is detrimental to grace and godliness.

**SPIRITUAL GARMENT FOR THE NEW MAN:** (Colossians 3:12-17; 1:28; Philippians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22,23; Ephesians 4:2,32; 5:19,20; 1Corinthians 13:1-13; 10:31; John 14:27; Romans 10:17)

The gracious translation from darkness to light demands that the believer disengages and discontinues with the works of darkness. He must make the necessary progress by changing his spiritual apparel that befits his new faith and life. **“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another,**

**and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye"** (verses 12,13). The bowels of mercies denotes inward pity and compassion for saints in distress. This is the mind of Christ that is devoid of hypocrisy, pretense and deception. These noble virtues, captured as fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22,23, propagate grace and godliness in the body of Christ. We are to put on kindness and eschew wickedness, callousness, censorious and fault-finding spirit and pride that the devil has smuggled into many Christian assemblies today. We must forgive others the way Christ forgave us for our lives to please God. The new apparel for the new man makes for the beauty and elegance of the Christian life.

**Question 4: *Why are Christians commanded to put on charity above all things?***

Believers are exhorted to put on charity which is the bond of perfectness. Love is the hub around which all other virtues revolve. It is the hallmark of our Christian life and we are called to daily live a life of love. Christian love is undisguised, unpretentious and selfless. We are to show love without hope of anything in return. There must be a readiness and inclination to love in every child of God. In love, we prefer other brethren and give place for the fulfilment of everyone. Christ Himself declared: **"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself... By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"** (Mark 12:30,31; John 13:35). Love is the Christian virtue that distinguishes true believers from others.

As part of the risen life, Paul the apostle instructs that we should allow the inflow of the peace of God to our hearts by the way we live, be grateful for the benefits of redemption enjoyed, get committed to intake and internalizing Christ's words, teach and admonish others with the word, sing spiritual songs with graceful hearts and **"do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"** (Colossians 3:15-17).

**SOLEMN CHARGE FOR CHRISTIAN HOMES:** (Colossians

3:18-25; Ephesians 5:22-28; 6:1-4; Acts 20:32)

The Christian life is not lived in isolation. Practical demonstration of God's grace and goodness in the family is proof of true Christian profession. Charity, they say, begins at home; so, the risen life must first be reflected in the family. Irrespective of societal agitation for gender equality, Christian wives are to submit to their husbands according to Scriptures; **"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well..."** (1 Peter 3:6).

#### ***Q.5: How can believers live the risen life in the family?***

The husband's love for the wife must be selfless and sacrificial. He is here commanded not to be bitter against his wife, no matter the offence. The same applies to the wife. With the grace of God in their lives, they should be able to overlook each other's inadequacies and forgive. Children are commanded to **"obey [their] parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord"**. They are to obey in everything which is not contrary to the will or word of God. To buttress this point, a Bible commentator wrote that no parent has a right to require a child to steal, or lie, or cheat, or assist him in committing murder, or in doing any other wrong thing. No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God. Children should not be provoked by their fathers and mothers to avoid discouraging them from following the path of righteousness.

At home or in secular employment, servants or employees are commanded to obey their masters in all things. The phrase **"in all things"** does not give believers the liberty to flout God's commandments. They are to obey their masters in all things that agree with Scripture without **"...eyeservice, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God"**. We are required to be both just and diligent in whatever we do. As a faithful Judge, the Lord will reward our sincerity and faithfulness in service. Therefore, **"...whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ"** (Colossians 3:23,24). Being impartial, He will also punish those who do evil.



## ADMONITION TO PRAYER AND GOOD CONDUCT

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

**TEXT:** Colossians 4:1-18

The text opens with the basic role expected of masters towards their servants that will promote justice and equity. This is subsequent to Paul the apostle’s teaching in the preceding chapter on believers’ risen life which is also expected to show in the distinct roles of wives, husbands, children and servants. In this concluding part, the Apostle exhorts masters (employers) to be just to their servants (employees) with the consciousness that they will also give account to their heavenly Master whose authority, majesty and sovereignty supersedes theirs. **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven... forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him”** (Colossians 4:1; Ephesians 6:9). Christian employers should know that underpaying their employees, delaying or withholding their entitlements, oppressing or bullying them, compelling people to work in unsafe life-threatening places or conditions, etc. are not godly aside the negative effect on working relations, employee motivation and loyalty which, in turn, affect output and productivity.

**Question 1:** *Why is it necessary that employers should ensure fairness and equity in dealing with their workers?*

**DEMAND FOR SAINTS’ IMPORTUNATE PRAYERS:** (Colossians 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:18-20; Luke 18:1; 1Thessalonians 5:17; Isaiah 40:31)

Inspired by the Holy Ghost, Apostle Paul stressed the relevance of saints’ importunate prayers. **“Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving; pray without ceasing”** (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17), largely amplifies and echoes the necessity of prayer in the life of believers. They are not only required to pray

continually, they must also be watchful (1 Peter 5:8), fervent in prayers and with thanksgiving (Romans 12:12; Colossians 2:7). The indispensability of prayer in the life of a believer explains the reason our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ spent quality time in expounding the subject to His disciples during His earthly ministry (Luke 11:1-13; Matthew 6:9-15). Christ's teaching on prayer provides a model for believers' prayer pattern and procedure (Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4).

**Question 2: *State the reasons Christians should embark on importunate praying.***

As an ambassador of the gospel, Apostle Paul's primary concern was to win souls for the Lord. He therefore made a passionate appeal for prayers from the brethren **"that God would open unto [them] a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ..."**. His request centered on three parameters: firstly, that God would provide open doors to ministers in the ministry (Colossians 4:3). Paul's affirmation is based on his understanding that when believers ask God for open doors, He opens doors of great opportunities for them to preach and teach the word of God (1 Corinthians 16:9). Secondly, that gospel ministers would speak the mystery of Christ – God's plan of grace that was revealed on the Cross for the salvation of all men (Colossians 4:3; Ephesians 3:3,4; 6:19). Thirdly, that ministers of the gospel would be bold to speak as they ought to (Colossians 4:3). Believers who have been washed with the blood of the Lamb have an obligation to prayerfully declare the gospel to backsliders and sinners.

**Question 3: *Why should we continuously pray for the church and faithful ministers of the gospel?***

**CHRIST-LIKE CONDUCT AND THE PROFITS OF SUSTAINED CHRISTIAN CHARACTER:** (Colo. 4:5,6; Eph. 5:15,16; 1 Pet 1:14-16; Jam 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34,35; Rom. 12:18; 14:19; Heb. 12:14; 2 Peter 1:3-7)

**"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time"** (Colossians 4:5). This verse reveals the need for believers to be Christ-like in their conduct irrespective of people of diverse dispositions around them. They should conduct themselves wisely before men in the

world. Since believers are expected to communicate the gospel and influence others through their lifestyles, their daily conduct should concretely reflect the image of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ by walking “**circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise**” (Ephesians 5:15).

The Scripture clearly reveals the acceptable character of believers. “**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service... As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance...**” (Romans 12:1,2; 1 Peter 1:14-16). These expressions aptly attest to the need for a holy conduct wherever God’s children are found. So, all forms of compromise and worldliness which betray our Christian profession must be avoided like a plague (James 4:4; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:27; Ephesians 4:1). As believers, our lifestyles should “**give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in [us] with meekness and fear**” (1 Peter 3:15).

**Question 4: *How does the conduct of believers in the society influence preaching the gospel?***

Moreover, walking in “**wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time**” (Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:15,16) implies that believers should serve the Lord with zeal, commitment, consecration and devotion, devoid of procrastination and indolence. This is because the devil is busy snatching souls to eternity without Christ (1 Peter 5:8). Therefore, proper time management for God’s work remains imperative for believers. We must make the most of every opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ (Colossians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:2). This is the only way we can show appreciation to God for His manifold grace and mercies.

Paul the apostle went further to exhort believers to “**let [their] speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that [they] may know how [they] ought to answer every man**” (Colossians 4:6). This verse reveals the preservative quality of salt as a seasoning substance which also provides good taste for food. Believers are supposed to be outstanding and unique in their community, preserving it from evil and corruption. They should live blamelessly, both

in deed and words.

Nothing reveals the state or condition of one's heart more than speech. Abusive, caustic or evil words reveal the absence of the grace of gentleness, meekness and love. Christ's admonition to His disciples clearly shows that more of the salt of grace will be needed to live in peace with others. **"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another"** (Mark 9:50). As believers, our speech is expected to comfort and inspire others to serve God.

### **THE DELIVERY OF STEWARDS' SOLIDARITY AND APPRECIATION** (Colossians 4:7-18; 2 Timothy 4:12,19)

Apostle Paul concluded this epistle by acknowledging the supporting role of his companions and conveying their greetings to the brethren. He carefully presented a solidarity and appreciation message to his worthy companions and ambassadors in ministry. In a properly articulated manner, he recapped vividly some basic instructions, greetings and appreciation concerning some of his fellow-workers in the gospel. Christian ministers need to emulate this. They were faithful brethren who supported him and his ministry even while suffering incarceration. He sent **Tychicus** to the Colossian brethren as a special messenger to inform them of his state of affairs (2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12), and he was prompt in taking the letter to them. **Onesimus** was a runaway slave from the household of Philemon whom Paul had to send back to his master in the company of Tychicus. At the time the letter was written, Onesimus had been converted, and thus a brother in Christ to Philemon. **Aristarchus** was a faithful companion of Paul who followed him on the ship to Rome when he was under arrest (Acts 20:4; 27:2). He described him as a fellow-prisoner.

**Jesus**, who is called **Justus**, was one of fellow-workers who brought much comfort to Apostle Paul. He was of the circumcision. **Mark** who had left Paul during the first missionary journey was back in Rome with him (Acts 12:12,25; 15:37-39). He was useful to him at this time in the ministry. **Epaphras**, who was from Colosse and described as a servant of Christ, labored fervently in

prayers for the church to ensure their perfection and completeness in God's will (Colossians 4:12). Apostle Paul testified of his great zeal which every faithful believer and minister should emulate. His zeal for God's work motivated believers in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis to join resources together to send him to Rome.

**Luke**, the beloved physician accompanied Paul in many of his journeys. **Demas**, at this time in ministry, was with Paul in prison. However, by the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, "...**Demas hath forsaken [him], having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica...**" (2 Timothy 4:10).

**Question 5: Give reasons Christian leaders' appreciation and guidance could improve the spread of the gospel.**

It is noteworthy that Paul the apostle also extended his appreciation to the churches in various homes, especially the church in the house of Nymphas. Because of the absence of church building in Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colosse, believers assembled in the homes of members. Believers who offer their house, property or other resources for God's work will not miss their reward both in time and in eternity if they remain steadfast till the end.

Concerning **Archippus**, Paul counselled him thus: "**take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it**". This encouragement was necessary probably to stir him up to more diligence and enable him contend with false doctrines and false teachers. Leaders and members of the church who are already grounded in the faith have a responsibility to encourage others, especially new converts to continue in their walk with and service to God. Monitoring their progress in the faith will help keep them from false prophets and teachers.

The epistle ended with Apostle Paul's passionate appeal to the brethren to "**Remember [his] bond**". This was a precise request for prayer for him since he was in prison because of the gospel. His earnest desire was to be freed in order to further the cause of the gospel. There is need for sustained prayers for church leaders and members who labour sacrificially for the sake of the gospel.

## CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL VICES: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

**TEXT:** Romans 1:18-32; Philippians 4:8,9

**S**ince the Fall, Adam and all generations after him have become susceptible to evil imaginations and actions. Through the ages, mankind has elicited the evil traits in many different ways. Modern man lives in a world that invents “**evil things**”. Man, himself has a sin-generating mind. He has the capacity to create sin, sinful pastimes or entertainment. Sin, in itself, is inexhaustible. It is brewed in the depth of human heart. Man’s craving for evil is insatiable. He ever craves novelty in sin. Today, traditional sins are either weak in attraction or predictable in their nature. Thus, the contemporary man – youths, adults, boys, girls, rich, poor, educated, illiterates, invalid and deformed, restricted and free – has some newly devised set of evil and vicious values he engages in.

**Question 1:** *How did God describe the spiritual condition of men before the flood?*

Since the flood, the heart of man has always been evil. God saw the whole imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart and concluded that it was evil continually – every year, every day, every hour, every moment. He never deviated into good. Such is the authentic account of the whole race of mankind. Such were all men before God brought the flood upon the earth. And strange enough, the Scriptures do not give us a reason to think otherwise of man today. The mind of the modern man is a sin-generative machine.

Increase in technology meant increase in evil. The advent of the television, video, computer and the internet and their potential of conveying thoughts in picture, color, language or motion is accompanied by increased engagement in entertainment and pleasure. But, and that regrettably, we go full cycle from being pleasure-hungry to pleasure-mania

to pleasure- boredom. The television, for instance, impresses some vices on the mind of youths and adults and make light of violence, hooliganism, murder and assault.

**Question 2: *What are the common contemporary vices that a Christian should guard against?***

**MENACE OF GROWING SOCIAL EVILS** (Romans 1:28-32; 2 Timothy 3:1-6,13; 1 Cor. 6:19,20; Ephesians 2:1-3)

Drug addiction, a practice found among teenagers and students in institutions of higher learning is a vice that ranks very high in contemporary times. Some freely say that scriptures did not say anything about the use of drugs. Yes. But it did warn us against defiling or, in modern usage, destroying the temple of the Holy Ghost which we have in us. **“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”** (1 Corinthians 6: 19,20).

The use of hard drugs is a contemporary vice and its toll on the life of its users is pretty heavy. Hard drugs inflame the mind, sedate the heart and make the soul to feel ‘high’. Its end is more dangerous and deadly than the beginning. It leaves its victim a wretch on one hand and a danger to others, on the other. Closely allied with drug addiction is involvement in cults among students in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. Cults, these days, pretend to be a social club but when its activities are closely examined, it is revealed as the breeding ground of all contemporary vices – wild life, thuggery, drug addiction and, at times, immorality. In recent times, dangerous weapons like live ammunition, machetes, spears and arrows are found amongst the members of cults in schools. This is a modern trend and it comes with every conceivable danger to life and property.

Another contemporary vicious practice, common amongst non-Christians, and at times, strange though, amongst Christians, is betting and pools-staking. The bottom line and motive of engaging in this practice is covetousness. An obsession to get-rich-quick or reap where you have not



sown, avarice at its worst and, of course, laziness are the driving spirits behind this practice. It is sad to see this creep into the midst of some believers' years after they claimed to be converted. Common amongst students who are desperate to excel without corresponding input of labour and diligence is examination malpractice. In contemporary times, this has reached some level that frightens constituted examination bodies, school authorities, students who have fear of the Lord and, of course, Christian parents. This practice looks like a contemporary vice that has come to stay in most societies. But its permanence or rationalization does not make it right. It remains essentially evil and vicious.

Contemporary youths and even the generality of middle-aged folks are unduly exposed to the practice of pornography. The evil sight that stirs up the base nature of man through pornography has a demonic hold on youths. Some Christian youths cannot stand or continue in the faith because of pornography. The sad thing is that youths and adults (men and women) generally accept to sit loosely yielding to the gratifications of those appetites wherein they stand on a level with the beasts that perish. Sensual pleasure is basically sinful. It is strange to see that rich, elite and seemingly refined ones, the creams of the country are held by the fiendish power of pornography. Teachers as well as their students, employers as well as their employees, leaders as well as the led, the advanced, civilized, industrial countries as well as the developing, primordial societies are all given to pornography and all kinds of immorality. Closely allied to pornography are the unclean practices of lesbian and homosexually immoral propensity to one's own sex. These are rampant practices amongst students in boarding schools and higher institutions. Strange enough, some highly placed folks are involved in this practice. Some of them are found in religious circles.

From the days of old, music has always been a spiritual and edifying medium. The Scripture exhorts us to admonish **“one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in [our] hearts to the Lord”** (Colossians 3:16b). David's songs and playing on the harp had great spiritual and soothing impact on Saul.

Elisha called for a minstrel under whose ministration he received inspiration (2 Kings 3: 15). Indeed, hymn-singing is a great inspiration to those who preach, just as good singing and music precede most of all preaching today. In heaven, music continues. **“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps”** (Revelation 14:2). Such is the traditional and even future use of music.

But in contemporary times, music has been perverted from its original spiritual, inspirational and edifying context. Wild music which in the past was once exclusive has been brought to the churches. Most churches have lost the solemnity, inspiration, freshness, and refreshing that comes with Christian music in Bible days. Contemporary youths are besieged by *rock ‘n’ roll*, wild noisy music, drumming and tune, which are very much akin to those that obtain in heathen shrines. Wild secular music has a strong appeal which makes the mind stray away from the kingdom. Contemporary pseudo-Christian music is a vice, which the believer must free himself from.

The local practice of chieftaincy titles, traditional honour and kingship as done in some societies comes with all its vices and the believer in contemporary times must avoid it like a plague. It is disheartening to see a Christian relish in the conferment of a chieftaincy title on him. One wonders how near or far such a Christian is from his Lord. Did not Jesus show his detachment from such earthly conferment of titles?

**Question 3: (a) What was Jesus’ reaction to the offer to make Him king? (b) What do we learn from this?**

**“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone”** (John 6:14,15).

If indeed we believe and know that we will truly later be made **“kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth”** in the millennium and in the New Earth forever (Revelation

5:10; 2:26,27; 11:15; 20:4-16; 22:5; Daniel 7:18), why should we then get obsessed with the transient, perishable, earthly, ritualistic and generally devil-inspired titles on earth? No real Christian who is a shining example as well as a burning light can be so loved by the world to the point of conferring honour on Him.

**Question 4: *What should be the Christian's view in relation to chieftaincy titles?***

Chieftaincy title, traditional honors and all recognition from people whose primary interest and focus is the devil and his continued hold on the people are vicious. The believer must steer clear.

Finally, the use of slang and gutter language is another contemporary vice. The Bible says: **"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt"** (Colossians 4:6). Christian language, as salt, should do five things. First, it should sweeten, edify the heart and mind of the hearers. Second, it should purify, not defile or offend since whiteness of salt symbolizes purity. Third, it should preserve the hearers from decay and spiritual decomposition. Fourth, it should be pervasive in its influence, no matter how few the words are, just as a pinch of salt would pervade a whole meal. Fifth, it should be known for its characteristic. The Bible says **"... a fool's voice is known by multitude of words"** (Ecclesiastes 5:3).

**Question 5: *What danger does the use of worldly slangs pose to the Christian testimony?***

The Christian's use of slangs sourced from brothels, drug addicts, thug-proselytizing musicians, "heroes" in boxing, sports and theatre makes a believer to be one of them and this dwindles his potential to minister to them. We all then become blind together. And the Bible asks: **"... Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?"** (Luke 6:39). And records again: **"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"** (Matthew 15:14).

**THE CHRISTIAN'S STAND** (Philippians 4:8,9; 1 Peter 1:5-11; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33)

There is no sitting on the fence for the Christian. He cannot

afford to pitch his tent with Sodomites and Gomorrahites and still claim to know Christ. The vices known in contemporary times are deceitful, but no Christian should be deceived. The Bible has given enough guide to the Christian as to the position he must take on these issues. As a Christian daily faces temptation and allurements from any of these vices, he needs ask some questions.

**Question 6: *How should a Christian assess any practice or conduct that looks like a source of temptation?***

**First**, does it glorify God? Would God behold it with joy? Can I do it in the presence of the Lord? Can I do it or talk about it without any shame or contradiction before the saints of God in the church of the living God? **Second**, does it edify the saints of God? Does it provoke the brethren to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). Is it worth emulating? **Third**, does it point the sinner to Calvary? Is that practice – pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism, smoking, involvement in cult, wild music, conferment of traditional titles, drug addiction, use of gutter language, gambling, betting and pools staking – capable of gaining a soul for the kingdom or challenging the sinner on the need for the salvation of his soul? **Fourth**, does the practice harm the temple of the Holy Ghost whose body you are? Does it weaken your frame, enlarge your heart, enfeeble your mind, waste your resources and enslave you the rest of your life?

**Fifth**, does it make you an example to believers? “**Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity**” (1 Timothy 4:12). **Sixth**, it is exigent for the Christian to always ask himself some questions before embarking on any action: Does it draw me nearer to heaven? Does it enhance my preparedness for heaven? Does it make me rapture-ready? **Seventh**, will the practice, language or lifestyle earn me a smile of approval from my Lord and Saviour? Finally, is the issue under consideration true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report? If it not, the Christian’s position is a firm ‘No!’

**THE WAY OUT** (Romans 10:9; 1 John 1:9,10; Jeremiah 18:8; Luke 13:3; Hosea 6:1; 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Victims of contemporary vices need a release. The vices are yokes and like every yoke, they must be broken.

**Question 7: *What is the way out of these contemporary social vices?***

If we are to be free from the vices, essentially, we must avoid them like one would do a plague. Whoever has slipped into them should go back to the Lord in repentance and call on the Lord for restoration. Because involvement in these vices is tantamount to loss of eternal life, there is the need to fight manfully. The Bible says, **“The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force”** (Matthew 11:12). Repentance is to be followed by a return to the Lord (Isaiah 55:7). To return implies one has felt some brokenness and contrition, and unto such the Lord is very much keen to save and deliver. **“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”** (Psalm 34:18).

It is very helpful to see the minister watching over your soul for help. After repentance, returning and restoration, it becomes very necessary to practice the abiding presence of the Lord. Imagine the Lord is ever by you and do only those things that He would approve of. Like David, remember that wherever you are, God is there with you.

## **EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

**TEXT: Jude 3-13**

**T**he Church has many adversaries. Notable amongst them are the devil, sin, the world, principalities, powers, and in some cases, institutional bodies like the government. Other religions of our time also militate against the Church. Faced with all these odds, the Church is always in the business of contending, struggling, fighting and resisting oppositions. Ours is not a fight against flesh and blood; it is not a struggle over temporal, perishable things of life - money, land, possession or material things. The fight is one orchestrated by the devil and designed to sift from us our great pearl, treasure, the imperishable word and revelation of the Almighty. This, in Scripture, is succinctly called the faith. It is the totality and entirety of all that we believe.

**Question 1: *What are the odds or forces against the Church?***

The devil, his false prophets, principalities, powers, idolaters, our flesh, the human depravity and other agents of Satan labour tirelessly to take the faith away from us. Our singular business is to contend against them.

**OUR CALLING AND CONDITION FOR CONTENDING**  
(Philippians 3:4; 2Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 4: 7; Luke 22:32; Mark 4:12; Matthew 18:3; Luke 5:32)

Before we can engage the contending forces against the faith once delivered to us, we must meet certain conditions.

**Question 2: *Mention the conditions we must meet before we can contend for the faith.***

The first of these is conversion – a definite and unmistakable break from sin. Conversion is a change of heart from evil to a righteous and Christ-like life. At

conversion, the Christian receives **“the power to become the son of God”** and to **“go and sin no more”** (John 1:12; 5:14). The strongest of men without conversion is mincemeat for the devil in the contest for faith. The weakest of men, with conversion, is a terror to him and his host. Peter, in his message on the day of Pentecost, alerted his audience on the need to **“repent and be converted”**.

Besides conversion, the soul contending for the faith must be called. All the apostles and disciples in the Acts of the Apostles were called by God. The called ones are those taken out of the world and transfixed in the body of Christ for fellowship, worship and ministry. Christ came to call the world to repentance. Moses, David, Elisha, Peter, Paul, Andrew, John and Matthew were all called. God calls men because He is not willing that any should perish but that all should have life eternal. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. After we have heeded the call then, we can start contending for the faith.

***Question 3: Mention three types of the call of God on our lives.***

The Bible qualifies the calling God gives us in these ways. First, it is described as a high calling – one higher than any other calling we could ever have on the face of the earth. It is higher than a call to serve in government, foreign service or to enjoy an overseas’ scholarship. The highest call we can ever have is one coming from heaven above. Paul the apostle puts it this way: **“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 3:14). Paul here sees his call as one higher than being a Pharisee.

Second, it is described as a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9). It is a call that only the Holy Spirit can explain, interpret and impress on a person. Third, it is a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). It comes from heaven and opens the gate for us into the presence of the Father.

Our call is further pictured in different ways in the Scriptures. Each of the descriptions shows details of the benefits accruing to us as a result of our response to the call of God. In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul described our call as one to the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor. 1:9).



Many of those who profess to have partaken of the redemptive grace of God do not know that we are called into the great riches of Jesus and into partnership with Him. In this relationship, we drop our destitution, lack, dryness and we get into the riches, power and grace of God. Jesus, through this relationship lifts us up from our prostrate position of servants unto His side on the right hand of the Father. He is calling the suffering, sorrowful and sad ones to come and share in His fellowship and enjoy His glory, majesty and joy.

We are also called to eternal life and holiness (1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). The call of God on us not only brings us into the kingdom, it also sanctifies us and preserves us in the Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). The translation, sequel to our call, is one to a realm where Satan, witches, wizards and powers of darkness cannot reach or operate. This preservation touches our soul, spirit and body. There is a hedge, an impenetrable wall around all the redeemed of the Lord who have responded to the call of God.

**COMPROMISE AND CONTEMPT FOR THE FAITH:** (Acts 13:8; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Jeremiah 5:31; 1 Timothy 1:19; Galatians 2:18)

We are called to contend for the truth and fight the good fight of faith. From the record of the Bible, there are people who, though called, did not remain within the hedge where God placed them.

**Question 4: *How does the devil entice people and make them compromise?***

The devil usually dangles alluring carrots of false hope and opportunities in order to draw saints out of the Kingdom since he cannot gain access to them. He once tried this with the Lord. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world with the glory therein at a glance. His condition was just a bow and worship. It was an attempt to draw Jesus out of the will of God, but He overcame; and we will also overcome.

**“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ”** (2 Corinthians 2:17).

But some Christians compromise their faith. They have contempt for the faith and degenerate to a state whereby they mutilate, corrupt, dilute, weaken and decimate the word of God. False prophets and congregations with itching ears are compromisers who also have contempt for the faith.

**Question 5: *What is the influence of false doctrines on Christians?***

False teachings always lower the standard of righteous living, lighten the demand of God's laws, remove fear of damnation of the soul, sear the conscience and take away responsibility both to God and man. Those who love false teaching to create some comfortable spiritual environment for themselves are compromisers. The Lord surely frowns on any fellowship, partnership or relationship with agents of compromise. We should avoid the agents of the devil who make believers to compromise and backslide like we also do to known witches or wizards. Their goal is to make standing believers make a shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19).

**Question 6: *How can a compromising Christian be identified?***

All those who were born again before but have now gone back to the use of incense in worship, candle- burning, turning the Bible into an amulet rather than a Book worthy of the most serious and earnest study are once again building the things they had destroyed. They make themselves transgressors. Those who once knew the Lord but have now gone back into carrying the crucifix in their pockets for protection, or the photographs of a so-called preacher, or wearing amulet are showing signs of contempt for the gospel, Calvary and the blood of Jesus. **“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor”** (Galatians 2:18).

**CHRISTIANS CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** (Jude 3; Nehemiah 13:23-25)

**Question 7: *What must we do to keep contending for the faith?***

To earnestly contend is to strive tenaciously to keep something that Satan is laboring to take away from us. We

contend earnestly, diligently, courageously, consistently and honestly. Our strength, life, and our all must be involved in the struggle against anyone or anything who wants to take the faith away from us.

As we contend for the faith, we must effect a clean separation from all those who compromise the faith even if it would result in persecution, deprivation or misconception. Nehemiah set an example of such a position as he contended for the faith. **“In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews’ language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves”** (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

So, must we also do when people go contrary to the word of God through immorality, adultery or speak disparagingly about the word of God. Second, we must refuse the invitation of agents of people whose design is to overthrow our faith. Third, have no fellowship with false prophets or anyone who has departed from the faith. We must evade Demases, Gehazis, Dathans, Korahs, and Abirams. Fourth, all messages and literature channeled by the enemy through his agents must be avoided. Fifth, we should preach the truth forcefully and with conviction. We need to be more earnest and aggressive in our preaching than the perpetrators of evil. Sixth, publicly rebuke any member who departs from the faith and glide into false doctrine. This corrective ministry is not just for the local pastor, overseer or leader alone; it is the duty of every sound Christian who has a precious living and dynamic relationship with the Lord. Seventh, we are to live the uncompromising life that will challenge and convict the unstable. Eighth, we are to support faithful pastors and Christians who preach the word of God sincerely without any compromise. Ninth, we need to train others who will be able to stand and effectively teach the whole counsel of God to the whole church and live by it. The whole church must rise and contend for the faith.

## THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment**” (Hebrews 9:27).

**TEXT:** Revelation 20:11-15

**T**he subject of judgment is not strange to the minds of mortals. Since it is in the nature of human beings to err, it is common in every sphere of life to see men being tried and punished accordingly. The common practice and experience in homes, schools, offices, courts and many other places is to see someone give a verdict after trial for some wrongdoing. The guilty is almost always given some punishment. This practice underscores the need and importance of justice and fairness in relationship.

**Question 1:** *How are earthly judgments different from the Great White Throne Judgment?*

Our study deals with the final judgment that God will bring upon those who reject His word and live as they pleased. This is called the Great White Throne Judgment. In this study as in other studies of the events of the last days, the Lord is graciously revealing unto us His program for this present evil world. The doctrine opens our eyes to the time when all wicked and ungodly people (the living and the dead, small and great) who neglected God’s salvation will face the final and terrible judgment of the living God (Romans 14:12). It is important that we approach the study with the seriousness it deserves and not with doubtful disputations or view it as a fable or fiction. These things are written for our learning and admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11).

**JUDGMENTS IN THE SCRIPTURE** (Isaiah 53:4-11; John 3:15-18; 2 Corinthians 5:10,11; 1 Timothy 5:24; Jude 6)

That judgment is certain for all men is clear in every part of the inspired word of God. “**And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment**” (Hebrews 9:27). However, contrary to general assumptions of a single judgment at a given time for sinners and saints alike, a

number of separate judgments are clearly taught in Scripture for different classes of people and at different times. The Lord God has always been acquitting the innocent as He did in the case of the antediluvians, Sodom and Gomorrah and Korah's company. Since He never changes (Hebrews 13:8), He will keep to the same principle in the future, final judgment.

**Question 2: *Mention different types of judgments in the Scripture, supporting your answer with references.***

It is clear from the Scripture that believers have been judged in respect of their sin. This took place on Calvary's cross when Jesus became the sinner's Substitute (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; John 3:18; Romans 8:1,2). Sin must be judged either in the sinner's substitute or the sinner himself. And Christ has already borne the punishment for the sins of humanity in the hope that men would acknowledge His love and sacrifice and accept it, so they can be acquitted. When the penitent sinner personally appropriates this vicarious sacrifice, reposes his faith in the Saviour and accepts His Lordship, he is declared justified by grace. This is the first type of judgment.

Then, as he lives the Christian life, he daily judges (or examines) himself in the light of God's word (1 Corinthians 11:31,32; 1 John 1:7) to make sure he continues to abide in Christ. This is the second type of judgment. Failure in the same may bring temporary physical suffering or chastisement (Hebrews 12:5-11).

The third type of judgment will be experienced also by believers at the "*Bema*" seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; Revelation 22:12). This will be after the rapture and the purpose will be to distribute rewards for "**the things done in the body**". No believer at this judgment will be condemned, for all are saved. But rewards will differ and the works of some will be burnt (1 Corinthians 3:14,15).

The other types of judgment will be with the intent of punishing sin. These include the judgment of Israel during the Great Tribulation (Ezekiel 20:33-44; Jeremiah 30:3-11; Matthew 24:4-25) and the judgment of the (living) nations at Christ's Second Advent (Matthew 25:31-46). Israel will be judged (for her many centuries of rebellion against God) by

the cruel hand of the Antichrist. At the end of the ordeal, **“all Israel shall be saved”** (Romans 11:26) as they shall **“look upon me whom they have pierced”** (Zechariah 12:10). The judgment of angels for rebellion against God is identifiable as another type of judgment in Scripture (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6,7).

**THE GREAT, TERRIBLE AND FINAL JUDGMENT**  
(Revelation 20:11-15; Daniel 7:9,10, 12:2; Matthew 11:20-24; John 5:25-30; Acts 24:15)

The Bible clearly presents the order of events preceding the Great White Throne Judgment and constantly urges us: **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”** (Revelation 2:7).

The world is corrupt and polluted. The fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden brought mankind to shame, guilt and condemnation. From Adam, sin came into everyone that was born into the world. God made provision for the salvation of man, but humanity has generally preferred to turn away from God’s call to repentance and pardon. Man has remained rebellious and disobedient. And it pains God that He made man on the earth for every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart has been evil continually (Genesis 6:5,6). God promised judgment and punishment for the wicked. His word declares that, **“the soul that sinneth it shall die”** and that **“the wages of sin is death”** (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23).

**Question 3: Highlight past judgments of sinners in the Bible and what believers can learn from them.**

God has been judging sinners over the ages. He judged the world in the days of Noah when He destroyed all living beings with the flood with the exception of eight persons (Genesis 6:17,18; 7:10-13,21-24). He poured out His wrath and indignation upon Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed all that were in them except Lot and his two daughters (Genesis 19:13,24-26). On other occasions, He brought judgment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram with their supporters and punished the Egyptians for refusing to let His people go. At various times, He brought judgment on Nadab and Abihu; on Uzzah; on Sennacherib and his 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (Isaiah 37:36-38); and on

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). However, in the Great White Throne Judgment, all those who were destroyed in all those cases will still be judged.

What then is this judgment? It is the last and final judgment. It is the judgment that concludes the affairs of this present evil world. At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the devil will be released from the bottomless pit for a while (Revelation 20:3,7). He will go out to deceive people again and will gather multitudes to fight against Christ and His saints. This is referred to as the Battle of Gog and Magog. Satan and his people will be defeated. Fire will come from God to devour them. After this, Satan shall be cast into the lake of fire; the stage then becomes set for the final judgment of sinful men.

Let us look carefully at the details concerning the setting of the judgment.

**The Throne:** The great God of heaven and earth, who is a great King cannot but sit on a throne. It is White, and it represents His purity. The setting is magnificent and of great splendor and glory that befits the eternal King.

**The Judge:** The Judge is God Almighty, the Omniscient and Omnipresent. He knows everything and so there will be no miscarriage of justice. He is everywhere so all things are open unto Him. His sight will be so terrible because it is judgment time.

**Those to be judged:** (Revelation 20:12,13). All those who died in sin from the time of Adam till the time of the Great White Throne Judgment will be resurrected (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15). They will all stand before God for judgment. These include:

- (1) All categories of sinners, living and dead, small and great, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, male and female, the rulers and the ruled, will be judged for neglecting the salvation of God (Hebrews 2:3).
- (2) All backsliders who denied the faith of God who once redeemed them (Exodus 32:33; Hebrews 10:26-30,38,39).
- (3) All those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ (John 3:18,19).



- (4) All religious hypocrites who are like **“whited sepulchers”** (Matthew 23:27). The sea, death and hell will give up the dead in them. The bodies of all the dead will be united with their souls and spirits to stand before God to receive the just reward for their ungodly lifestyle. It will be a very great and sober gathering.

**The Judgment:** Everyone will be judged according to his works (verses 12,13). It will be done in righteousness. It will be open and everyone on trial will know why he or she is going to the lake of fire. It will be to judge

- (1) all unrighteous deeds of men (1 John 5:17). All unrighteousness that was not cleansed by the blood of Christ before then will bring condemnation, including unrighteous feelings and imaginations.
- (2) The secret deeds of men which others may not have known, done in darkness: secret bribery, immorality, pornography, drunkenness, abortion, whispering, etc. will be judged.
- (3) The words of men – every idle word, gossip, backbiting or slander will be brought to judgment; all foolish and unedifying words; corrupt, graceless, defamatory and abusive words will be judged (Matthew 12:36,37; Ephesians 5:4). God’s judgment will be fair, just and without partiality or respect of persons. **“For the Lord God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward”** (Deuteronomy 10:17). No one can influence or bribe Him.

**The books:** **“...and the books were opened”** (verse 12). These are the books of records that will contain everything done by men while on earth. It is according to the records written in these books that judgment will be delivered. This will remove all possibilities of arguments. There will be no room to say the sentence given was based on hearsay or guesswork. All things will be documented, and these, in many books.

**The book of life:** only one book (verse 12) **“...and another book was opened, which is the book of life”**. This is the

book that contains the names of all those who are born again, those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus. Their sins had been judged earlier at Calvary when they repented of their sins, confessed them and received Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. We must endeavor to make sure our names are in this book. All saints in all ages, from the time of Adam to the time of the judgment, have their names written in the book of life.

**Question 4:** *Describe in detail the make-up of, and proceedings at the Great White Throne Judgment.*

**THE ETERNAL ABODE OF THE CONDEMNED** (Revelation 20:10,14; 19:20; 14:10,11; Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 25:41)

**Question 5:** *Describe the plight of the condemned in the lake of fire.*

**“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”** (Revelation 20:15). An awful end awaits all those that have to appear before God in the Great White Throne Judgment for **“...God is a consuming fire”** and **“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Hebrews 12:29; 10:31).

The lake of fire is the eternal abode of the devil and his angels (Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41). The lake of fire was not meant for man but all those who reject God and side with Satan, by committing sin, will have no choice than to share in their master’s destiny. Death and hell (the abode of demons and evil spirits will be cast into the lake of fire (verse 14) where the beast and the false prophet had originally been thrown (Revelation 19:20). The fire will never go out; it cannot be quenched. It will burn forever and ever (Revelation 14:10,11; 20:10). Worms do not die in it. How then is annihilation of human beings possible in it as advocated by some groups? Between Revelation 19:10,11 and 20:10 is a period of over 1,000 years, yet the beast and the false prophet had not been consumed by the fire. The fire does not destroy but continuously torments. It is a terrible thing.

Whosoever was not found written in the book of life will suffer forever in the lake of fire. His companions, neighbors and co-tenants will be Satan, the beast, the false prophet, demons and evil spirits. What a company! The Scripture

does not in any way support annihilation or purgatory but eternal burning of all sinners condemned to hell. There is, however, the possibility of escape from judgment through repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ while still here on earth.

**ESCAPING THE DOOM OF THE CONDEMNED** (2 Peter 3:9-14; 1 Peter 4:7; John 3:3,5,16; Mark 1:15; 1 Peter 5:8,9; 1 Timothy 4:16)

God gave His only begotten Son that “**whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life**”. The will of God is that all should repent, believe the gospel and be saved (2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16; Mark 1:15).

**Question 6: *How can one escape the Great White Throne Judgment?***

Knowing that all ungodly people shall be brought to judgment “**what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness**” (2 Peter 3:11). To escape the Great White Throne Judgment, you need to repent of all sins, confess them to God and receive Jesus as your Lord and personal Saviour. Genuine salvation through repentance and faith in Christ is demanded from everyone who hopes to escape. Other conditions include living a holy life, making restitutions, following peace with all men and avoiding every appearance of evil. But for those who refuse to repent there will be weeping and wailing as they will be condemned to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

## SAUL CONSULTS A WITCH AT ENDOR

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" (Isaiah 8: 19).

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 28:1-25**

David's short excursion into the camp of the Philistines was no doubt indicative of his waning faith in God's ability to continue to protect him. It opened the door to more temptations, sin and embarrassments. He had to lie to king Achish by claiming he and his troops invaded southern Judah whereas he had invaded the Geshurites, the Gezrites and the Amalekites without any justification or provocation (1 Samuel 27:6-10). King Achish then invited him to join forces with him against Israel. However, divine intervention stirred up his rejection in the Philistine camp (1 Samuel 29:3-7). David would have found himself in an awkward situation of fighting on the side of Israel's enemies in a war where Saul, the first king of Israel, would be killed. Alternatively, he would have been guilty of betrayal and disloyalty to king Achish at the most critical moment, having been granted asylum that shielded him from Saul's sword. This was a double dilemma created by a short-lived departure from the walk of faith by David.

As for Saul, his deep misery and hopelessness in his last days shows that those who refuse to be primed by God's goodness and longsuffering to repentance will certainly come to a painful end (Romans 2:4). If sinners waste away their days of grace, they will come to a point where they shall **"call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me"** (Proverbs 1:28). Saul's disregard for God's word and disobedience which began to manifest early in his kingship, finally came to roost in a miserable and horrible end.

**Question 1:** *From the text, what can saints and sinners learn from the experiences of David and Saul?*

## DESOLATION AND MISERY OF DIVINE DISCONNECTION

(1 Samuel 28:1-6; 16:14; Judges 16:19-21; 2 Chronicles 30:7; Romans 3:16)

Saul's spiritual condition at the time he ascended the throne as the first king of Israel contrasts sharply with his condition in his last days. After he was anointed king, **"God gave him another heart"** and **"the Spirit of God came upon him ..."** (1 Samuel 10:9, 10). Unfortunately, instead of taking advantage of God's grace to consolidate his walk with Him, he relapsed into self-- management and disobedience to God's perfect will. Consequently, **"the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul..."** (1 Samuel 16:14). This represents a clear refutation of the doctrine of eternal security. The spiritual security of the believer lies in his continuity in the faith. **"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence (faith) steadfast unto the end"** (Hebrews 3:14). Saul's failure to abide by God's command turned his bright prospect into a horrible nightmare, despondency, hopelessness and misery.

**"And the Philistines gathered themselves together and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa"** (1 Samuel 28:4). This was a recurring event between Israel and the Philistines. However, Israel was always at advantage to overcome their enemies because God was their defence and Defender. They were not to be afraid of the enemy since the Almighty would fight for them.

But Saul had led the nation into disobedience and victory was no longer guaranteed. **"And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled."** Sinners and backsliders always tremble and fear when their enemies confront them. **"And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets"** (1 Samuel 28:6). Saul had lost relationship with God, hence his disconnection from divine source of power, courage and victory.

Samson walked a similar path of disobedience, self-- will, false security and opposition to godly counsels and ended his life and ministry abruptly. Born at a time the nation needed a deliverer from the hands of their enemies, he was

a child of destiny and a notable judge in Israel. He had the prospect of securing a perpetual peace and deliverance for his nation from the Philistines, but he blew the opportunity through his unguarded lifestyle and fraternity with women of easy virtue. Believers need to be careful and prayerful not to bungle their opportunity and privilege of being used of the Lord to deliver souls from the captivity of the devil. Saul's glide to his miserable end is very instructive.

One, he plunged to the level of not only contemplating but actually consulting a witch. Two, he could not return to God even when faced with imminent death. Those who continue to live in sin hoping that it will be easier or more convenient at some future time to repent and become born again miss the point. They do not reckon with the paralyzing effect of sin long indulged in or the deadness of a conscience whose rebuke has been constantly ignored or the deceitfulness of sin when it becomes deeply rooted. The conscience can become so dead that God's Spirit ceases to strive with it. It is for this reason that the Scripture calls everyone to **"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."** (Isaiah 55:6,7).

**Question 2: *Why is the decision to repent and reconcile with God a wise one for everyone?***

**THE DANGER OF SEEKING HELP OUTSIDE GOD** (1 Samuel 28:7-18; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Proverbs 1:24-29; 13:15; Exodus 22:18; Galatians 5:19-21; 2:17,18)

Unable to get help and direction from the Lord, **"Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and ensure of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor"** (1 Samuel 28:7). Saul went down a dangerous precipice in consulting and seeking help from a witch contrary to the word of God. His request to have a discourse with the dead (necromancy or spiritism or divination) is expressly forbidden by the Lord who commanded the children Israel: **"There shall not be found any among you any one that... useth divination,**

**or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer"** (Deuteronomy 18:10, 11). His decision to consult a witch was informed by the ignorant supposition that by some other means other than turning to God, he could still survive his dark hour and sustain the kingdom when God was no longer with him. This deceptive notion may have fueled his disobedience and continued impertinence. The truth however is that only conformity in act and spirit with the word of God can guarantee true and enduring prosperity. No other device, invented or suggested by the living or the dead can give real comfort or bring respite to a self-willed and impertinent sinner or qualify him for the reward reserved for the obedient and holy.

Though Saul disguised himself by putting on a strange apparel before visiting the witch because he knew his action was wrong, he was still exposed, and it became a witness against his misadventure. People who cover up their evil deeds will one day be found out.

***Question 3: How can a sinner avoid a fate as tortuous and miserable as that of Saul?***

What made Saul's stray into witchcraft more reprehensible was his earlier religious zeal against this evil for which he **"hath cut off those that have familiar spirit and the wizards out of the land..."** (verse 9). By thus building again the thing which he once destroyed, he had made himself a transgressor (Galatians 2:18). As an abomination, one, his action carried the wrath and indignation of God. Two, it presupposed that there are other powers greater than the power of God. Three, it was capable of stirring up divine jealousy from a God who would not share His glory with anyone. Four, it demeaned the power and authority of God over the believer's life. Five, it amounted to a denial of the principle of divine ownership since we are all created by God and no other being should lay claim to our lives. Moreover, the New Testament classifies witchcraft among the works of the flesh. **"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are there; Adultery, fornication... idolatry, witchcraft ..."** (Galatians 5:20) (see also 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Chronicles 33:6; 2 Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4). God frowns at



His people who forsake Him to seek help elsewhere.

**"And Samuel said unto Saul, why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me ... therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do"**

(verse 15). Please observe that nothing in the discourse between Saul and Samuel should be interpreted as indicating divine approval of the evil practice of witchcraft and spiritism. The fact that Saul was acting against the revealed will of God even casts a shadow on the authenticity of the personality in the apparition. It should also not be inferred from what transpired that a witch or a wizard can call back the spirit of the departed, much less the spirit of a righteous dead. If, as nothing is impossible with God, He permitted late Samuel to truly appear, it was to affirm His earlier judgment against disobedient Saul (1 Samuel 15:26; 28:18). On the other hand, God in His sovereignty overruled the witch and prevented her from deceiving Saul. After all, a recalcitrant and greedy Balaam was used to prophesy of Israel's future and an ass spoke with human voice to warn him (Numbers 22:28-30; 24:3-9). The pronouncement was to seal his doom because he would not repent of his evil. It was quite appropriate that Saul's doom should come from the mouth of Samuel whose word he rejected when he was alive. Had he heeded his counsel and advice, God would have made him a prosperous and an abiding king.

**Question 4: *Mention some alternatives sought by sinners in their search for joy, security and hope instead of turning to God through repentance.***

**THE DOOM AND APATHY OF THE UNREPENTANT SINNER** (1 Samuel 28:19-25; Isaiah 58:5; Romans 2:16; Hosea 6:1)

**"Moreover, the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines"** (1 Samuel 28:19).

Saul's disposition at the pronouncement of the doom that awaited him, his sons and the whole nation was disappointing. With a picture of eternal doom, utter destruction of lives and property and ignominious defeat from the enemy, he still failed to do the needful; that is, a simple but sincere repentance and faith in God. If he had fallen upon his face in deep contrition and repentance, perhaps, the Lord would have repented of His judgment on the nation and forgiven them. Worse still, that the witch brought food **"before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat"** is indicative of his hardness of heart and apathy concerning the impending calamity. Indeed, the way of the transgressor is hard (Proverbs 13:15).

Let us examine his catalogue of woes and learn: one, he had to confront enemies which were more in number and better equipped than his own troops. His condition was akin to a natural man contending with satanic forces without Christ on his side. Two, he was fasting (verse 20) but it was futile because fasting alone without godliness will avail nothing (Isaiah 58:5). Three, he suffered the pain of conscience, knowing that his steps to the house of a witch was perverse and sinful. He therefore disguised himself and went under the cover of darkness. **"For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved"** (John 3:20). His disguise failed as he was eventually identified by the witch. Sinners and saints alike will do well always to remember that **"all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"** (Hebrews 4:13). Every disguise of a sinful heart using the garment of false or pretended religion shall avail nothing **"in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ"** (Romans 2:16). Four, his lamentation, that **"the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me"**, contains some elements of self-rebuke. He knew long before this invasion that God had departed from him but did nothing about it. Similarly, sinners who, in their time of seeming peace and prosperity, forget God may remember Him when it is too late, when the enemy of their souls close in upon them with his evil forces. Their frantic prayer for divine intervention at that time may receive no response from God (Proverbs 1:24).

Five, it was all sad news for Saul in his last days without a speck of comfort. **"So, Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it"** (1 Chronicles 10:13). For today's sinner, there is yet hope. The word of God still lovingly pleads, **"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten and he will bind us up"** (Hosea 6:1).

## DAVID'S VICTORY OVER THE AMALEKITES

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives" (1 Samuel 30:18).

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 30:1-31**

David's flight from Saul and sojourn in the Philistine's country had been the theme of some lessons in the preceding chapters to the text. It would be recalled that he and his men enlisted in the Philistine army to fight against his own people, but for divine intervention that inspired his rejection by the lords of the Philistin

es. Though David deceived Achish to believe he was as an angel of God, the princes of the Philistines could not be persuaded to trust his loyalty during warfare against Israel. He was thus sent back to his base in Ziklag, where he had been granted asylum.

However, before David and his men could return to base, the Amalekites, possibly on a revenge mission for the earlier unprovoked destruction of a part of their tribes (1 Samuel 27:8,9), had struck and carried away the defenseless women and children and set Ziklag ablaze. This was a deadly blow to David and his men and brought emotional distress to them. Thus, the invasion of Ziklag by the Amalekites and the expedition of David and his men to recover their wives, sons, daughters and properties form the focus of this study.

**DAVID AND HIS ARMY DISTRESSED BY THE AMALEKITES** (1 Samuel 30:1-6; Joshua 7:1-12; 8:1-29; 2 Chronicles 7:11-16)

While David and his men went to the north to join the Philistine army, their own city was left unguarded. The Amalekites took advantage of the defenseless city, attacked and razed it to the ground. David and his men returned on the third day only to discover also that "**their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives**" (1 Samuel 30:3). Tired and hungry, their dream of returning to the warm embrace of their families and comfort of their

houses was dashed.

That the Lord restrained the Amalekites from killing all the women and children showed His great mercy. However, the attack explains the need for believers to be watchful because the enemy takes advantage of our unguarded moments (1 Peter 5:8).

**Question 1: *What is the importance of watchfulness in the believer's life?***

It was indeed an awful moment for David. He wept, not only because everything and everyone was lost, but for knowing that he was responsible for it. First, there was a natural feeling of disappointment after a long and weary march. Second, there was intense pang in every heart caused by the carrying off of members of their families **"... because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters ...."** Third, the troops were so fearfully disappointed in David that they spoke of stoning him. The very men who had lately approached him with the beautiful salutation: **"peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee"** and whom he trusted threatened to stone him.

This disaster and shock of the situation drove David back to God to trust in His mercy and grace, and he **"encouraged himself in the LORD his God"** (1 Samuel 30:6). He was strengthened because, first, at this point of total loss, he perceived the love of God in the rejection of the Philistine leaders that enabled them return home early before greater damage was done to their people. Second, he remembered God's past deliverances out of danger and he trusted Him to help him out of the current predicament. God was beginning to cure his servant by a bitter dose of distress and the evidence of the cure was that he encouraged himself in the Lord.

**Question 2: *How should believers respond to challenges in life and ministry?***

In moments of rejection, crisis or difficulty, we must learn to put our trust in the Lord, His word, power and providence and be rest assured that **"...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."** David's

experience also shows that believers and Christian leaders can always find succor in God as a result of their relationship with and total confidence in Him.

**DAVID'S RETURN TO GOD AND PLEA FOR GUIDANCE** (1 Samuel 30:7-10; Joshua 7:7-13; 8:10-29; Psalm 37:3-7; Jeremiah 29:11-14)

David asked Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod with which he made enquiries from the Lord saying, **"Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all"** (1 Samuel 30:8). Since David was granted asylum among the Philistines, this was the first recorded case of his seeking the face of God. Now in great distress, he would not take any step without God's approval and direction. An ephod was a special apron that priests wore to cover their clothing so that the sacrificial blood would not splash on their clothing. It is likely this was the ephod of the high priest which had the breastplate of judgment attached to it (Exodus 28: 15,28). The breastplate had in it a pouch with two stones, known as the Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30). In seeking God through these, David relied on His word for guidance.

Prayer is a vital weapon to surmount challenges in the life of every believer. If we desire to make progress in our spiritual and secular engagements, we must resort to God in prayer, depend on His Word and counsel from genuine and mature Christian leaders. As children of God, the Lord will surely answer us when we sincerely ask Him for direction in the choice of a marriage partner, business deals, life-long career, etc.

**Question 3: Why should Christians seek divine guidance before taking important steps in life?**

Worthy of mention is David's strong faith in God. Although he needed all his men to go along with him in pursuit of the Amalekites, he was forced to drop a third part of them by the way because they were so fatigued that they could not pass the brook Besor. This was a great trial of his faith, yet in total dependence on God's word, he proceeded with only four hundred men. David's tenderness to his men at such critical moment shows that when people we trust to help

eventually disappoint us, we are not to resent them or apportion blame; we should exercise faith in God's ability and power to meet every need.

### **DAVID'S MARCH TOWARDS THE PROMISED RECOVERY**

(1 Samuel 30:11-20; Isaiah 58:6-14; Joel 2:15-27)

As David and his men pursued the Amalekites, they came across a man who had collapsed in the wilderness because he was sick. **"And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water"** (1 Samuel 30:11). Upon interrogation, he provided them with needed intelligence and his explanation suggested that he participated in the raid of David's people. Their act of kindness paid off as the young lad conducted them to the camp of the Amalekites after they had assured him of his safety.

David's compassion on the Egyptian is commendable. Our love for others must be devoid of tribal or religious coloration. Though he had reason to think he was one of those that had helped to destroy Ziklag, he generously relieved him. Despite the fact that they were in haste to rescue their abducted families, they would not **"forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death"** (Proverbs 24:11). As believers, we should not shut up our bowels of compassion from people in distress. The result of our deeds of kindness to people, including so-called enemies, could be the key to our own success or fulfilment of God's plan for our lives. **"Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head"** (Romans 12:20; Matthew 5:4). Our compassion for sinners who are drowning in sin should compel us to reach them with the gospel message. Apart from this, our love and willingness to share with them can attract them to the Saviour and turn them to useful instruments of spiritual revival and recovery.

**Question 4: *What lessons can contemporary believers draw from the compassion of David on the Egyptian?***

The Amalekites who **"spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the**



**Philistines, and out of the land of Judah"** were caught off guard by David and his men. **"And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away."** In reference to the spoil, David and his men actually ended up with more than they had lost because they were able to capture the spoil that was taken by the Amalekites from the Philistine cities. Everything the enemies had carried off were fully recovered.

Today, believers can recover both their physical and spiritual inheritance because victory is the portion of God's people who seek, trust and obey Him. His promise is, **"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm... And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you ...And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed"** (Joel 2:25-27). Abraham, the father of our faith obtained victory over the confederate kings that took Lot captive (Genesis 14:12-16); Moses defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 21:24; Deuteronomy 3:2,3). Also, God raised judges to deliver Israel from oppression (Judges 1:4; 2:18; 3:10). Christ has conquered the devil and given every New Testament believer victory and power to continually enforce the enemy's defeat (Luke 10: 19; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:11-18; James 4:7; Revelation 12: 11).

**DAVID'S LIBERALITY AND PRINCIPLE OF FAIRNESS** (1 Samuel 30:21-31; Ephesians 4:7,8; Psalm 68:18; Acts 20:33-35; 2 Kings 7:1-18; Matthew 28:18-20)

After the victory over the Amalekites, **"David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor"**. Then, those who returned from battle with him objected to sharing the spoil with those that did not go, **"save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart"** (1 Samuel 30:21,22). The reaction of these **"wicked men and men of Belial"** showed that they failed to realize that although their brethren tarried behind, it was not for want of goodwill to

the cause but because they had no strength to keep up with their pace. Also, they had previously engaged in battle and done their part. Besides, they rendered a good service by staying with the supplies to keep them from marauders.

In response to their protest, David established an important principle which became a statute and ordinance for Israel unto this day. **"But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike"**. Today, it takes several people to provide support services needed for soldiers in battle. And those who support frontline soldiers are as important in any victory as those who directly engage the enemy in battle (see Numbers 31:27). In the church, we should not neglect the people who provide support services, people who are not visible but provide behind-the-scene support for frontline ministers of the gospel. People who do not go to mission fields but contribute to the success of soul-winning in home and foreign lands will also be rewarded by the Lord if they remain faithful till the end. The ministry of **"helps"** is scriptural and cannot be neglected (1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 6:1-6; Romans 16:3,9; 3 John 1,5-8). Believers who are committed and faithful in rendering support services for the progress of the gospel will not lose their rewards (Hebrews 6:10). Courtesy demands that we reciprocate or acknowledge the kind gestures of other people.

When Jesus triumphed on the Cross, He won the greatest battle and now shares the spoil with everyone. **"When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"** {Ephesians 4:8}. As David sent messengers with gifts to diverse people in many cities, the Lord Jesus Christ is also sending us forth as His reliable ambassadors to take the gift of life and spread it throughout the whole world (Mark 16: 15).

### ***Question 5: How can believers reciprocate God's faithfulness in their lives today?***

Finally, when God grants us victory in life's battle, we must not abandon the fellowship of believers but return to praise and worship Him. Believers need to rejoice in the Lord for His care and intervention and further show gratitude by rededicating their lives entirely to serve Him.

## THE TRAGIC DEATH OF SAUL

**MEMORY VERSE:** "So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together" (1 Samuel 31:6).

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 31:1-13

**The** text gives a vivid account of the tragic death of 1 Saul, the first king of Israel, in a battle with the Philistines. This sad end was a culmination of repeated acts of disobedience, attempts to thwart God's will with impunity and unwillingness to wholeheartedly repent of sin. The Scripture affirms as well as warns present-day counterparts of Saul that: **"He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"** (Proverbs 29: 1).

Death, a fact of life, brings transition to another world of timeless bliss or blight. Those who are redeemed by Christ will be ushered through death into an endless joy with God while sinners and backsliders will pass on to an irrecoverable and endless misery in hell. With the absence of divine guidance and his straying to consult a witch without any recorded moment of genuine repentance before going into this battle, Saul's death was a miserable and an ignoble one. Without repentance, hell is the destination of all sinners.

**Question 1:** *What counsel is appropriate for those who live in sin today?*

**SAUL'S DELUSION AND BACKSLIDING** (1 Samuel 31:1; Joshua 7:8-12; 1Chronicles 10:1-3; 28:9,10; 1 Chronicles 15:1,2; Psalm 33:16-22)

Saul's downward course which started some years back was coming to a fatal end. **"Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell down slain in mount Gilboa"** (1 Samuel 31:1). The size and armory of the Philistine's army, the absence of David who became a champion by killing Goliath of Gath, and more importantly, the departure of divine presence from Saul predisposed Israel's army to a colossal defeat. When the battle commenced, the enemy

had the upper hand and **"The men of Israel fled "** Just as Achan caused Israel's defeat at Ai, Saul was responsible for this national disgrace on mount Gilboa. His incessant disobedience, even in the face of rebuke, had ruptured his relationship with God and created a big gulf which eventually led to a permanent severance.

**Question 2: *Describe Saul's spiritual state at this time as it relates to contemporary believers.***

Though still actively occupying the prime political position in the land, he had become estranged from God. He could no longer receive the support and directive necessary for a theocratic monarchy he was supposed to run. Though he started well by displaying commendable humility and evidence of Holy Spirit influence, he soon veered off and became a fiend against self-perceived but non-existence foes. Believers must not allow past successes or virtues to delude them.

**Question 3: *Outline some of the marks of backsliding believers must avoid.***

Believers must quickly deal with any of the following telltale marks of backsliding before they lead to destruction. One, being filled with one's own ways (1 Samuel 15:14-23; Proverbs 14:14; Jeremiah 44:16,17).

Two, holding to deceit, error or false doctrine (Job 31: 1- 5; Jeremiah 8:5). Three, trusting in material possessions and might rather than God (Jeremiah 49:4; Revelation 3: 17-20). Four, justifying one's misdeeds instead of admitting one's sinfulness (Jeremiah 3:11,12). Five, wandering to spiritually condemned places where there is no help (Jeremiah 31:22; Galatians 2:18). Such people need to urgently repent of sin to avert divine judgment.

**SAUL'S DEATH IN BATTLE** (1 Samuel 31:2-10; 1Samuel 13:13,14; 1 Chronicles 10:3-10,13,14; 1 Kings 13:20-26)

The Scripture is silent on the cause of the war. It did not state whether it was a routine or statutory battle. But it was so explicit on its cost for Israel. They fled **"And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. And the battle went sore**

**against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers"** (1 Samuel 31:2,3). Realizing that the end had come and hating to be killed by the 'uncircumcised' Philistines, Saul requested to be slain by his armour-bearer who declined for fear of desecrating the Lord's anointed. At last, Saul sealed his own doom by committing suicide. This was unwise as the pursuers did not get to where he was until the next day. Believers ought not to be fidgety or impulsive like Saul. We should rather act in full consideration of available and reasonable options with faith in God.

***Question 4: What striking lessons does Saul's tragic death teach the church?***

The armour-bearer declining his master's ungodly request teaches us that regardless of the personality, any sinful request or ungodly order must be refused, and the believer must choose to **"obey God rather than men"** (Genesis 39:7-9; 1 Samuel 22:16,17; Daniel 3:16,17; Acts 5:29). Probably unsure of how to manage the consequences of the unfolding reality, the armour-bearer compounded the situation by committing suicide alongside his master.

The murder of oneself is the worst kind of homicide and the highest expression of mortal folly. It implies co-operating with one's chief enemy to destroy one's soul (2 Samuel 17:23; Matthew 27:5). Of all the deaths in our text, this is the worst and most condemnable. Those who through the use of illicit drugs or unwholesome living unwittingly cut short their lives also share in the same condemnation. Believers must never consider it an option under any circumstance to harm themselves or take their own lives (2 Samuel 17:23; Job 2:4; Acts 16:27).

Questions often arise as to the fate of Jonathan in this case: why do good men like Uriah, Naboth, Stephen, and many other martyrs die 'prematurely'. Such deaths do not imply a reneging of God on His promise, neither does it suggest His inability to preserve His saints. God still keeps the distinction between His beloved children and others. Though such deaths may be painful to men, they are precious to God and serve their purposes in His perfect, omniscient plan (Psalm 116:15; Luke 16:22). **"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and**

**merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness"** (Isaiah 57: 1,2).

Though it was shameful that the uncircumcised Philistines beheaded Saul, placed his stripped armour in the house of Ashtaroth their god and hung their bodies to the wall of Bethshan, it afforded them only a fleeting pleasure. As Christians, we know that whatever is done to a corpse has neither positive nor negative significance to the dead. Like God, our Father, we place more value on the souls of men than their mere bodies. **"For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return... what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Genesis 3:19; Matthew 16:26). Besides, the glorying of the Philistines was short-lived as the men of Jabesh-gilead soon came to take the bodies of their fallen state men away.

**STEADFAST DECISION BY THE BRAVE** (1 Samuel 31:11-13; 1 Chronicles 10:11,12; 1 Samuel 24:1-6; Romans 15:3,4)

**"All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons... and burnt them there... and buried them under a tree at Jabesh"** (1 Samuel 31:12,13). The action of the men of Jabesh-gilead is commendable. It was a manifest respect for the slain leader who at the commencement of his reign had rescued them from king Nahash of the Ammonites, saving them from deep degradation and tyranny (1 Samuel 11:1-3,11). Today, bravery is shown in the Kingdom by laboring for the Lord and His people, and believers are admonished to **"... hold such in reputation"** (Philippians 2:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

**Question 5: Comment on the action of the men of Jabesh-gilead.**

In any case, the cremation was only partial, and they were so careful as to preserve the bones from being burnt in order to make them available for burial. It is noteworthy that no one from Saul's family, the priesthood, or even David, the new king and Jonathan's longtime friend raised eyebrow against the way the valiant men handled the

corpses. Everyone seemed to appreciate the effort and risk they took, understand the spirit behind their brave decision and the fact that they acted out of a common concern for the honour of the land of Israel. Learning from the valiant men of Jabesh-gilead, believers should take necessary risks and steps to preserve the honour of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords at all times. We should defend the integrity of our spirituality by projecting the interest of God's kingdom through consistent holy living on earth. In obedience to Christ, we should proclaim his death as the basis of reconciliation with God.

As the study concludes, we are reminded of the tragic end of a man favored by God with promising potentials but had a pitiable ending. It started with complacency and loss of relationship with God, continued with self-confidence or righteousness, preoccupation with the mundane over the spiritual and outright idolatry until death. **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"** (1 Corinthians 10:12).



## **DAVID MOURNS THE DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN**

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword" (2 Samuel 1:11,12).

**TEXT: 2 Samuel 1:1-27**

**B**arely three days after David's successful rescue and recovery mission over Ziklag, a sycophant and self-professed war escapee travelled about 125 kilometers to meet him with news of the death of Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 22:1,2; 23:16-18). His action reminds one of the desperation of the ungodly in anticipation of personal gains.

The build-up to this study stems from David's characteristic concern for the people of God. "**And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, how went the matter? I pray thee, tell me**" (2 Samuel 1:3,4). Like him, Christians should show maximum interest in the condition of God's people and projects, even if, like in this case, they are not directly involved. Such concern should result in empathy with the suffering, provision for the needy, supplication and contribution for successful execution of issues of God's interest.

**DAVID'S REACTION TO THE NEWS OF SAUL'S DEATH** (2 Samuel 1:1-12; Proverbs 24:17; Jeremiah 9:1; 1 Peter 3:8,9)

The response of the Amalekite escapee to David's enquiry was not at all cheering. "... **And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also**" (2 Samuel 1:4). Considering the promise and power of the God of Israel, such a defeat was usually an indication of divine displeasure or reprimand. David was

genuinely distraught and distressed; he identified with his nation and expressed profound grief for Jonathan his friend and for the king of Israel. This is a classic legacy of patriotism, faithfulness and uncommon loyalty to leaders.

**Question 1: *Outline vital lessons from David's disposition to the death of Saul and Jonathan.***

The text is an account of the grieving of the godly at the death of a self-avowed enemy. David displayed an uncommon virtue which only the grace of God can cultivate in a man. Under normal circumstances, the misfortune or death of one's enemy should elicit spontaneous rejoicing. For many, it would have been an occasion of celebration or making of uncomplimentary remarks on the failings of the enemy. But David's reaction reminds us that the fall of a pervert is not a license for the misconduct of the pious. It also teaches us that whether in a war situation or consequence of an ailment or accident or any other cause, death should evoke a sense of sympathy and rallying support for the bereaved.

Secondly, the spontaneity, unity and similarity of the reaction of his company speak volumes, not only on the impactful leadership qualities of David, but also on the integrity of his men. Christians should willingly and eagerly conform to the pattern of the godly lifestyles of their leaders. By so doing, spiritual oversight would not be a grievous function and the word of God will not be blasphemed (2 Samuel 1:11,12; Galatians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,7; Hebrews 13:7).

Though Saul had lost the battle even before it began, he did not eventually die alone. The catalogue of victims included the faulty and fretful, faithful and faultless, and the fit and fighting soldiers. Where one aligns often informs where one is consigned. David also felt for the many who lost their lives while faithfully discharging their duties to the nation under Saul who had exhausted the limits of God's forbearance. However, where an occasion of death is unavoidably similar, the destiny of the departed may be different. The spiritual state of Saul before his death was particularly pathetic (1 Samuel 28:7; 1 Chronicles 10:13; Psalm 9: 17; Hebrews 9:27). Realizing therefore that hell is the eternal destiny of sinners, every individual should, as a

matter of urgency, get reconciled with God by repenting of sin and appropriating God's offer of salvation through Christ before death strikes.

**DIRE RECOMPENSE FOR THE SYCOPHANT'S DECEPTION** (2 Samuel 1:13-16; Exodus 17:14; Numbers 24:20; Deuteronomy 25:17-19; 1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9; Proverbs 12:13,14; Ecclesiastes 10:12; 2 Peter 2:3).

Against the backdrop of the genuine account of the death of king Saul in a previous study (1 Samuel 31:4- 6), the report given by the Amalekite here is obviously false. The truth is that he had been somewhere close to the scene of the event, listened to the king's last conversation, and witnessed his last breath. Being opportune to have access to the corpses of Saul and his close aide ahead of the Philistines, he decided to take the royal insignia in hope of exploiting the situation for personal advantage. However, his hope was permanently dashed as he was recompensed with instant death for declaring his effrontery at laying his hands on the Lord's anointed (2 Samuel 1:14-16).

**Question 2: *What caution should Christians take in view of the character of the Amalekite in the text?***

The Amalekite in the study was naive. One, he mistook David for a typically depraved individual who would delight in the demise of a perceived enemy. He was not aware that David had once and again refrained from such an act even when there were ample opportunities. It is heart-warming that David overcame the subtle temptation inherent in this encounter. Though the unregenerate may ignorantly or consciously present various grades and shades of allurements that can smear the righteous, a genuine Christian must always be a living evidence of the massive change Christ's grace affords (Matthew 5:39).

Two, he was ignorant of a subsisting divine sentence upon him and generations of his descendants which disposed him to death (Deuteronomy 25: 17-19). Since the sins of his nation had not been expiated and God's wrath had not been mitigated, his visit to a divinely commissioned personality like David was a fatal miscalculation. Christians must be circumspect so as not to risk their lives needlessly in the enemy's territory (Matthew 10:23; John 7:1; 11:53,54).

The Amalekite died for misusing his tongue. **"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof"** (Proverbs 18:21). He also thought he could profit from his calculated deception. It is unfortunate that though the act was not new, its negative consequence has not sufficiently deterred those that choose to perish for failing to heed scriptural injunctions against covetousness. **"He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house..."** (Proverbs 15:27; see also Numbers 31:8; Joshua 7:24-26; Matthew 27:3-5; 2 Kings 5:20-27; 1 Timothy 6:9-11). His courtesy to David was a common trademark of sycophancy, and all hands must be on deck to check this evil from thriving, even in the church.

### ***Question 3: How can we deal with sycophants in a Christian assembly?***

As believers, care must be taken not to fall prey to those who may want to take undue advantage of us. **"And through covetousness... with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not"** (2 Peter 2:3). Though a New Testament church cannot apply David's crude method, both leaders and members must ensure they destroy every carnal sentiment to which most sycophants appeal. An intimate relationship with the Lord, uncompromising holiness, continual fullness of the Spirit and possession of appropriate spiritual gifts are vital for early detection. In addition, discovered sycophants must be denied their aim, reproved and disciplined with appropriate scriptural sanctions to deter others from being similarly inclined (Ezra 4:1-4; Acts 16:16-18).

David's handling of the impostor proved his innocence, absolved him of any possible supposition of complicity or contentment in the fate of the deceased king, impressed the people and endeared him to God who rewarded him for good, established his kingdom and gave him an enduring covenant (1 Samuel 24:19,20; Psalm 35:11-14; Matthew 5:43,44; Romans 12:14-17; 1 Peter 3:9-17). The moving dirge he composed further revealed the sincerity of his affection and the depth of his agony. Besides, it perpetuated his uncommon devotion to the nation's interest in the annals of history.

**DIRGE RECORDED FOR THE NATION'S SORROWFUL DISPOSITION** (2 Samuel 1:17-27; Joshua 7:5-13; Lam. 5:15,16; Proverbs 24:17; Isaiah 62:6; Galatians 4:19)

David's lamentation reflects the pulse of the nation which was in agony for the national defeat and disgrace, the loss of spouses and sons, and towns and settlements taken over by their triumphant enemies. The depth of his mourning and touching nature of the elegy he composed were quite uncommon. In it, he lamented their loss, wished the event would not be celebrated among the Philistines, placed a perpetual curse on the mountains of Gilboa (which have been sterile for so long after), and highlighted the commendable attributes of the departed warriors. However, while it may not be surprising for anyone to grieve for the untimely death of a very devoted friend like Jonathan, his genuine mourning of Saul is beyond the ordinary.

**"(Also, he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)"** This parenthetical apposition shows David going the extent of preserving the *qeshet* i.e. the bow, which is the title of the song, for posterity. To have encouraged its dissemination among his immediate kinsmen, to be sung in honour of someone who remained his unprovoked and implacable enemy till death was magnanimous and commendable as well as instructive to New Testament believers.

**Q4: Comment on the content of David's composition.**

The dirge recognized the strong points in the life of the deceased monarch. One, it reaffirmed the sanctity of his anointing which confers the right of honour on him. This challenges Christians to respect leaders on account of the divine angle to their appointment (2 Samuel 1:21; Romans 13:1,2; Titus 3:1,2; 1 Peter 2:13- 17). Two, it praised his valor, speed and strength which occasioned various battle victories for Israel during his lifetime. We should not minimize leaders' achievements on account of their vacating office. Three, it eulogizes Saul's economic policies which improved the living conditions of the people. Four, it was silent on Saul's mischief. This is a testimony to the complete forgiveness of David for all the wrong Saul did to him. This challenges contemporary believers to heed

Christ's command to **"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:..."** (Matthew 5:44). Five, it says nothing of his piety and fidelity. Though these ranks higher than all other virtues, they were actually missing in Saul's life. We learn here that no matter how charitable a Christian may be, lofty credentials must not be imputed to flatter undeserving individuals.

It is noteworthy that the lamentation figuratively referred to Saul and his son as **"weapons of war"** and groaned over their peril. **"How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"** (2 Samuel 1:27). Every born-again believer can be a potent weapon for the emancipation of humanity from the captivity of Satan, our archenemy. The battle against sin and its consequences must be won at all fronts. This is to be done by relentlessly proclaiming the tidings of the saving grace of God through faith in Christ. Failure to deliver on this mandate implies a great wastage of spiritual weaponry and impeding peril. There is danger when a believer fails to act in obedience to the Holy Spirit's prompting to carry out this divinely appointed assignment (Matthew 28: 18-20; 25:25-30, Job 20:4-7; Isaiah 41:15; Jeremiah 51:20; Ezekiel 3:17,18).

**Question 5: *What can Christians learn from the lamentation of David for Saul and Jonathan?***

David's dirge was commendable, but it did no good for the eternal state of Saul. Believers should rather lament for sinners who are physically alive but spiritually dead. We should seek to rescue them from eternal death through ceaseless labour and prayers that they may have **"repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil..."** (2 Timothy 2:25,26). We should travail in preaching and teaching, **"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith..."** (Acts 26: 18).

## DAVID REIGNS OVER JUDAH AND ISRAEL

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. So, all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel" (2 Samuel 5:1,3).

**TEXT:** 2 Samuel 2,3,4,5

**The** turbulent reign of Saul eventually came to its end. David mourned the death of the king and his son, Jonathan. That the news of Saul's death did not give David any cause to rejoice shows that he bore no malice in his heart. By his action, he fulfilled the New Testament obligations that require all believers to forgive their enemies, pray for them and overcome evil with good. In this study, however, we shall see how David ultimately became the king of Israel.

**DAVID BEGINS TO REIGN OVER JUDAH** (2 Samuel 2:1-7; 1 Samuel 13:11-14, 15:10-28; 16:11-13)

**"And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron".** With the death of Saul and his sons, the way was basically clear for David to ascend the throne; yet, he was neither presumptuous nor in a hurry to become king over Israel. He sought God's leading concerning what steps to take. As believers, we should learn to seek God's direction before we take any step-in life. And we should be determined to do His will as we wait patiently for His appointed time (Isaiah 28:16).

**Question 1: What steps did David take to become the king in Judah?**

In answer to David's request, God directed him to go to Judah and then to Hebron. He gathered his household and others who have been with him and brought them to



Hebron. There, the men of Judah came and anointed him king. One thing that Saul never wanted to happen finally came to pass. Though it took almost eighteen years from the time God first revealed that He had found a man after His own heart to replace Saul (1 Samuel 13:13,14), He ensured that His plan was fulfilled. As believers, we should not be afraid of the antics of the enemy. If we trust the Lord, He will fulfil His promises in our lives.

When David was made king by the house of Judah, he reached out to the people of Jabesh-gilead who got the body of Saul from the shrine of the Philistines and buried him. This was a generous and noble act which showed that though Saul was dead, David still recognized him as the anointed of the Lord. Meanwhile, the travails of David did not immediately end with the death of Saul as **"... Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel"** (2 Samuel 2:8,9). Now, Israel had two kings; David reigning over Judah and Ishbosheth ruling over the rest of Israel. This was the beginning of seven years conflict between the two sides until Abner and Ishbosheth were killed.

**THE DEATH OF ABNER** (2 Samuel 2:17; 3:17-32,37; 19:13; 20:8-12)

**"And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David". Abner the son of Ner was the captain of Saul's army while Joab the Son of Zeruiah was the captain of David's host. Abner was the one who made Ishbosheth king over Israel after Saul's death. Both men led their men to war against each other. The men of David gave a thorough drubbing to the men of Israel, but they lost Asahel the brother of Joab who wanted to get a great honour by being the one that could kill Abner. "And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner" (2 Samuel 2:19). Abner's appeal to Asahel to find another prey fell on deaf ears. At this point, he had no choice than to kill him. Though Asahel was fast-footed, he**

could not match the skill of Abner. He learnt too late that the battle is not always to the strong (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

**Question 2: *What can believers learn from Asahel's premature death?***

The civil war continued until there was a major crack in Saul's camp. **"And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?"** (2 Samuel 3:7). With this confrontation, Abner threatened to deliver the kingdom to David. Ishbosheth was afraid but there was nothing he could do. Abner was the commander of the forces and the one who made him king over Israel. He was not the Lord's anointed. When we get positions or benefits contrary to God's will, we become preys to our benefactors.

Abner, from that moment, began his moves to defect to David. He arranged a meeting with David to discuss the transfer of the whole kingdom to him. **"And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying... Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel"** on the planned unification (2 Samuel 3:12,17). He even spoke to the house of Benjamin to get their support.

We could see from the efforts of Abner that he was committed to bringing the division in the nation to an end. After getting all Israel to agreement, he went to meet with David with twenty men of Israel to perfect arrangements for the eventual handover of the whole kingdom to him. **"So, Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast... And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace"** (2 Samuel 3:20,21).

Joab, the commander of David's host, was not around when Abner struck a pact with David. He came from war with great spoils to learn that he had been around, and that David had sent him away in peace. He questioned David's wisdom and accused Abner of coming to spy. **"Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive**

**thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest."** After that encounter, without the knowledge of David, Joab sent messengers to get Abner back. He **"took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother"**. Did Joab really murder Abner because of Asahel or to secure his position in a united Israel? He revealed his real intention in later years when he also killed Amasa. He never wanted a rival (2 Samuel 19:13; 20:8-12). Leaders should observe people in their congregations who, like Joab, destroy others to protect their interests and positions and curtail their excesses. Meanwhile, David's response to Abner's murder pleased the people and helped to bring the nation together under him. It is ungodly for believers to celebrate the downfall of others. We should show concern and sympathize with other people when calamity befalls them. The Scripture enjoins us to **"rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep"** (Romans 12:15).

### **Question 3: Assess David's response to Abner's murder.**

#### **THE MURDER OF ISHBOSHETH** (2 Samuel 4:1-12)

With Abner's death, Ishbosheth, the king of Israel became totally helpless. Abner was all the strength he had. He had no capability to move the people to his side; and he had no security cover. Therefore, he was vulnerable to attack from enemies as two Benjamites looking for favour from David conspired to kill him. **"And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who lay on a bed at noon... and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night"** (verses 5-7). They headed for David's house expecting a reward, but they were disappointed as they paid dearly for their action with their own lives. **"And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the sepulcher of Abner in Hebron"** (2 Samuel 4:12). David's response was in line with the word of God that forbids

murder and decrees that whosoever takes another person's life should be made to lose his own (Leviticus 24: 17). However, under the New Testament dispensation, believers are not to use this as an excuse to take anyone's life. We should shun every form of murder today which includes abortion, backbiting, slandering, character assassination, etc.

### **DAVID BECOMES KING OVER A UNITED ISRAEL (2 Samuel 5:1-25; 1 Chronicles 11:1-3)**

**"Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. So, all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel"** (2 Samuel 5:1,3). Note that David did nothing directly or indirectly to eliminate possible challenges to the throne. King Saul and his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua died in the battle with the Philistines. Abner, the commander of Saul's army was killed by Joab, the commander of David's army without his knowledge. Then Ishbosheth, the son of Saul who was made king over Israel by Abner was murdered by two Benjamites who were seeking reward for shedding innocent blood. David mourned the death of all of them, slew the Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul as well as Rechab and Baanah who slew Ishbosheth; he also placed a five-fold curse on Joab for the murder of Abner. But he acknowledged and commended the people of Jabesh-gilead for recovering the bodies of Saul and his sons from the land of the Philistines to properly bury them.

It is quite remarkable that after the death of King Saul, David had to wait for seven and half years to become king over the whole nation of Israel. He was patient; he waited for God's time. He did nothing to force his way to the throne. Believers should not resort to self-management to get what they want. Rather, they should learn to wait for God's time. **"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise"** (Hebrews 10:36). David eventually became the king of Israel in spite of all odds according to the plan of God. Indeed, delay is not denial (Habakkuk 2:3).

David's way to the throne was strewn with many challenges. One, his father never really thought of him as a candidate for such exalted office. Two, his brethren felt ill-disposed towards him (1 Samuel 17:28). Three, King Saul whom he served faithfully sought every means to kill him. Four, the people of Keilah that he delivered from the Philistines were ready to deliver him to Saul (1 Samuel 23:11,12). Five, Nabal derided him by referring to him as a servant fleeing from his master (1 Samuel 25:10). Six, he feigned madness in despair (1 Samuel 21:13). Seven, after Saul's death, he spent another seven and half years allowing events to unfold. He knew that he was a mere shepherd boy who was picked by God to become king over His people. He also understood that God who chose him will enthrone him. So, he believed the Lord and rested on His faithfulness.

This was unlike Saul who destroyed many people to keep the throne. However, while David promptly killed those that killed Ishbosheth, he only cursed Joab, his army commander and the killer of Abner. He showed partiality and respect of person here probably because Joab was the son of Zeruiah, the sister of David (1 Chronicles 2:16). Believers cannot imitate David in this regard. The Scripture commands that there should be no respect of persons or partiality in the house of God (James 2:9). Whether in religious or secular engagements, we must desist from every shade of tribalism or nepotism as it has the capacity to weaken the church or organization.

***Question 4: What are the possible negative effects of partiality in the church?***

Upon ascending the throne, David made Jerusalem the capital of united Israel after he subdued the Jebusites who were the original dwellers. As he settled down to strengthen his rule, Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers of goodwill with gifts to him, but the Philistines launched two quick attacks. After inquiring from the Lord on each occasion, he launched a counter attack and roundly defeated them (2 Samuel 5:17,19,22,23). David's action on these two separate occasions shows that we cannot assume God's position on any matter except it is expressly stated. Note that although it was the same enemy and the same place,

God gave different directives and the methods were different. But where God's will is already expressly stated, we cannot ask for another counsel. The archenemy does not know a friend. That David had stayed in the land of the Philistines for sixteen months did not make him their friend; they still attacked him. Believers need to understand that Satan will not relent in his effort to bring them back to bondage. To keep defeating the devil and his agents, we must watch and pray; study the word of God and be saturated with it; avoid all appearances of evil and objects of temptation; be active in soul-winning; hold on to the promises of God and live every moment with the rapture in view. If we wait patiently while holding on to the promises of the Lord, we will inherit the promised blessings.

**Question 5: *How can believers maintain daily victory?***

## **TESTIMONIAL OF THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL**

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

**TEXT:** 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

**T**he church in Thessalonica was founded by Paul with Silas on his second missionary journey from Philippi to Achaia. Thessalonica, a seaport town, was situated on what was called the Thermaic Gulf, and was the ancient capital of Macedonia. Though the Jews who were sojourners in this city rejected the gospel in general, a great multitude of the devout Greek believed and associated with Paul and Silas, and not a few of the chief women of the city embraced the Christian faith (Acts 17:4). But the Jews were displeased when they learnt that the gospel accorded the Gentiles the same privileges they were called to enjoy, without being obliged to submit to circumcision and other ordinances of the law. Thus, they persecuted these ministers of the gospel. Apostle Paul therefore escaped to Berea; from thence to Athens (Acts 17:5-15); and then to Corinth. While he abodes in Corinth, Timothy and Silas brought him news of the steadfastness of the Thessalonian converts in the faith. So, he wrote this epistle to comfort and encourage them, give further instruction on the doctrines of Christ and rectify some mistaken views relative to the day of judgment, which had been propagated among them.

**Question 1:** *What should be the attitude of those who handle the word of God?*

**THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL OF CHRIST** (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4; Romans 1:16,17; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Acts 10:34-38)

**"Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Thessalonians 1:1). The first epistle of Paul the apostle to



the Thessalonians opens with a unique introductory greeting which is found in most of his epistles. He identified grace as the unmerited favour God freely bestows on the morally weak but repentant sinner by saving him from sin. **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"** (Ephesians 2:8). Peace denotes that spiritual tranquility which everyone who is brought into relationship with God through faith in Christ enjoys (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20). In a nutshell, while grace expresses the concept of divine favour bestowed upon the undeserving, peace is the effect of grace obtained from God within the soul.

Though Paul himself dictated this letter, he joined the names of Silas and Timothy because they had been with him at Thessalonica and were well known there (Acts 18:5). This simple act portrayed the humility of the Apostle which revealed the impact this same universal gospel had on his life. Paul's expression of thanksgiving to God on behalf of the Thessalonian converts who had embraced the universal gospel was in recognition and appreciation of the influence and transforming power of the gospel on them. In spite of the much afflictions and persecution they faced, they were calm and steadfast in the faith, and these caused him much joy.

### **Question 2: *Why is the gospel said to be universal?***

The gospel is universal and able to produce the same kind of fruits in the lives of recipients irrespective of their locale. Nothing else has the potency to convict and convert a lost soul like the undiluted gospel. Every sinner - educated or illiterate, young or old, rich or poor - is expected to repent of his sins and bear fruits of repentance. Once a sinner confesses and forsakes his sins, believe in Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross, he receives pardon. The gospel **"is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"** (Romans 1:16). Therefore, **"whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Romans 10:13).

**THE UNDENIABLE PROOF OF GENUINE CONVERSION** (1 Thessalonians 1:5-9; Romans 1:1,7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:1,2; Philippians 1:3-6; Colossians 1:1-6)

**"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"** (1 Thessalonians 1:6,8,9). The saints in the church at Thessalonica were careful in their holy conversation to imitate the good examples of the apostles and ministers of Christ; and by that, they became also followers of the Lord, who is our perfect Example. Upon receiving the gospel, they experienced a definite transformation. Their faith in Christ bore testimony to the power of the gospel as they disengaged and discontinued with the works of darkness. In the face of severe afflictions and persecutions, they were steadfast in the faith. Also, they renounced idolatry and served the living and true God. Believers who are truly converted have a complete break from the past. Their character at home, school, office, marketplace, etc., is a reflection of God's grace. As such, they do not indulge in sin or evil practices in the world.

**Question 3: *What specific change occurred in the Thessalonians through the gospel preached unto them?***

Since believers are expected to communicate the gospel and influence others through their lifestyles, their daily conduct should concretely reflect the image of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The saints in Thessalonica lived up to this expectation as they became **"ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia... not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything."** They made good impressions and their conversation had influence upon other people. When a believer lives contrary to Christ and His word, he becomes a bad example that leads others astray and thus become an enemy of the Cross of Christ. So, we are to walk so conscientiously before God and man that our adversaries would not find any occasion to accuse us.

**THE ULTIMATE EXPECTATION OF CHRIST'S IMMINENT RETURN** (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 9:28; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Philippians 3:20,21)

**"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come".** Paul the apostle ended the chapter with instruction regarding the return of the Lord, whose advent signifies hope and comfort for believers. It is quite remarkable that he maintained this pattern in the concluding verses of other chapters. **"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord..."** (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:16,17).

**Question 4: *Why are some people afraid whenever they hear messages on the Rapture or Christ's Second Coming?***

The teaching on Christ's coming produced the desired result in the lives of the Thessalonians. They were not frivolous in their Christian living. The hope of Christ's imminent return should comfort the hearts of true Christians who are bereaved, suffering, sick and persecuted. It should also make us watchful and compel us to promptly reach out to sinners with the gospel as Christ's commanded.

**Question 5: *In view of Christ's return, what should be the pre-occupation of all believers today?***

## EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

**TEXT:** 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20

**W**hen Apostle Paul wrote that the church in Thessalonica **"became followers of us and of the Lord"**, he captured the depth of the transformation which caused the Christians there to turn from **"idols to serve the living and true God"** (1 Thessalonians 1:1,9). That statement underscored the Apostle's ministerial success in that city, especially when considered against the very short time he spent there and the stiff opposition against the gospel by the unbelieving Jews.

Effective leadership or ministerial success cannot be properly defined without reference to the goal the leader sets out to achieve. Accordingly, the commission which Paul the apostle received from the Lord was **"to open their (Gentiles') eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..."** (Acts 26: 18). This objective was so realized in Thessalonica that the believers became **"examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia"** (1 Thessalonians 1:7). The spiritual gulf bridged by the gospel in the lives of the Thessalonians was an eloquent testimony to its power and message and reflected the effectiveness with which it was preached and modelled. If leadership is defined as the capacity to direct, guide and lead people to a defined goal, then Apostle Paul's ministry at Thessalonica presents a good example and an appropriate case study for effective Christian leadership.

**Question 1:** *With reference to the Great Commission, how would you define exemplary Christian leadership?*

The ingredients of Apostle Paul's success in Thessalonica certainly included the inherent power of the gospel and the exemplary lifestyle of the preachers. The success itself can be correctly measured by the abiding effect their apostolic

preaching produced in the hearers' lives.

**THE COURAGE AND CONDUCT OF GODLY LEADERS** (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Acts 4:13; 14:3; 2 Timothy 2:24; Corinthians 4:2; 2 Peter 2:3)

**"For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention"** (1 Thessalonians 2:1,2). Paul and his companions suffered as they were shamefully entreated at Philippi and there was much contention surrounding the preaching of the gospel. Intense opposition arose as these servants of God preached the gospel of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; yet they were bold to call sinners to turn from their idols to serve the living and true God. Besides, Apostle Paul's personal conviction about the truth gave him extraordinary courage and boldness in his drive to enlighten the Thessalonians. Christian leaders must be fully persuaded about their calling and the truth of their message. Such conviction and faith will imbue them with holy courage necessary to lead men out of satanic darkness and ignorance even in the face of opposition.

**Question 2: *What gave Paul and his companions boldness to preach in spite of the opposition?***

**"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts"** (verses 3,4). Apostle Paul and his team saw themselves as stewards graciously entrusted with the gospel and they ensured that they did not disappoint (1 Corinthians 4:2). Ministers and leaders must appreciate the honour and trust conferred upon them by the stewardship of the gospel. They must constantly remind themselves that the gospel is not theirs but God's and as such, it is their duty to preach it only as God has commanded and allowed. In so doing, the inherent power of the gospel will be unleashed upon the hearts of men to their salvation.

Paul the apostle recognized that success in ministry is tied

to character. A minister's or Christian's character is the whole capital he has for carrying on an eternally profitable labour. If it is lost, everything is gone and of no value. A careful examination of Paul's testimonial to the Thessalonian Christians reveals, one, that they were not deceitful in dealing with the people. Two, they maintained spiritual cleanness; holiness was their watchword. Three, they did not employ guile or craftiness to exploit the people. Four, recognizing that God had entrusted them with the mysteries of the gospel, they were faithful without putting the interests of men above God. Five, **"neither at any time used we flattering words"** (verse 5). Sixth, they denounced covetousness, even making God a witness to that fact. Seventh, he said, **"Nor of men sought we glory"** (verse 6). Instead, they were **"gentle among"** them, **"even as a nurse cherisheth her children"**.

The leader's personal lifestyle and conduct among the people have great influence on their success. In the case of Apostle Paul, he was so exemplary that he could, without fear of contradiction, write to the people among whom he lived and ministered, **"But we were gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her children"** (verse 7). Gentleness, a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) involves tenderness and mildness in dealing with persons and issues. It implies a deliberate show of tenderness where one could have employed apostolic authority.

Gentleness is an attribute of God that shines throughout the Scripture in His dealing with man. The imagery of a nurse and her children conjures up loving care and kindness. Christian leaders should learn from our heavenly Father that gentleness with people, even erring ones, could accomplish in their hearts and lives what the show of power and authority may not. The word of God by itself alone, has enough inherent power to convict and correct errors in men's mind if administered in love and prayer. This does not however rule out the necessity of church discipline, when necessary (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The word of God admonishes Christian leaders: **"And the servant of God must not strive but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient"** (2 Timothy 2:24).

The Apostle's gentleness and care for the Thessalonians

found expression in (i) an affectionate desire for their spiritual and eternal welfare. This is contrary to the attitude of false teachers and leaders who fleece the people (2 Peter 2:3); (ii) willingness not only to impart the gospel but also to run hazards and take risks in preaching; (iii) undertaking physical and mental labors in order to enrich the quality of their ministry without making it expensive or burdensome to the people. The practical implication of this is that leaders and ministers must work hard for the salvation of souls. It does not however follow that they will always be obliged to preach and labour freely without necessary upkeep; (iv) their holiness was so transparent that the Apostle invited not only the personal witness of the Thessalonians but God's also. The Thessalonians could observe their public, outward conduct, but God would witness for their behaviors in secret, as well as the motives that drove their actions. (v) Informing and reminding them frequently of their duties under God and motivating them to do the same. Ministers and leaders ought to be careful to walk worthy before God and before the people they assay to lead out of the blindness of ungodliness. They must always live and act in the consciousness that they are answerable to God who has committed to their trust the care of precious souls for whom Christ died.

The Apostle's motive was pure, not tarnished with any desire for personal gain or any unclean selfish purpose. He avoided the temptation to flatter men in their sin in order to keep their followership. He gave them no false hope to curry their favour or to remain popular. His purpose did not include self-enrichment, vain glory or personal ambition as do false teachers. On the contrary, he and his team denied themselves of their legitimate rights, esteem and even due wages in order to ensure that nothing stood as an obstacle to the faith of the people they had led to the liberty of Christ. They only coveted the honour that comes from God.

As a mother cares and nurtures her children without seeking the praise of men, so Paul fed, nourished, taught and led the disciples without seeking material gains. He did all things with transparent and transcending love; he never stood to any degrading method of flattery or insincerity. Seeing therefore, the level of his sincerity and transparency,



he called the believers to a holy walk. **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory"** (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

**Question 3:** *In what practical ways can Christian leaders and ministers show gentleness, kindness and care for the people?*

**THE CONVERSION AND COMPORTMENT OF GODLY MEMBERS** (1 Thessalonians 2:13,14; 4:1,2; 1:7,8; Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:1; 1 John 1:7)

In his apostolic mission to lead the people away from idolatry and ignorance, the Apostle had a most effective tool in the gospel. The divine power in it more than anything else, can change lives and situations. As far as a Christian leader's objective is to break the shackles of ungodliness and ignorance and lead the people to Christ, he will find the gospel most efficacious and **"profitable for doctrine, for reproof and for correction, for instruction in righteousness"** (2 Timothy 3:16). On the contrary, vain and idle philosophies of men, no matter how eloquently canvassed soon lose their hold on people's minds as their falsity comes to light. Because Apostle Paul's exhortation was not in deceit or of uncleanness nor of guile, it stamped its validity through the experience of sincere seekers among his audience. Apostle Paul's ministerial success among the Thessalonians had definite and abiding evidence in their lives. **"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"** (verse 13).

The depth of transformation which the Thessalonians had was so deeply rooted that they could partake with the **"church of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus"**. To lead a people who had no knowledge of or reverence for the word of God to the acknowledgment of its divine origin and power is to arm them with constantly available source of enlightenment, wisdom and knowledge.

**Question 4:** *What is the place of the word of God in effective Christian leadership?*

## **THE CONDEMNATION AND DOOM OF UNGODLY PERSECUTORS** (1 Thessalonians 2:15-20; Philippians 1:28; Romans 1:18; 2:5-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:4,5)

In spite of Paul the apostle's exemplary lifestyle and leadership, there were some who did not believe in his message, but would rather oppose, attack and persecute him. Prominent among these ungodly persecutors were the Jews **"Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God and are contrary to all men"** (1 Thessalonians 2:15). They did not only reject the gospel, they prevented others from accepting it **"to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."** Equally condemnable are those who hear the word and receive it as they would the word of men. They only judge and admire the style, composition, voice, accent and the manner in which the word is preached. We should receive the Word as coming from God with the reverence worthy of the holiness, wisdom, knowledge and power of its Author. To do otherwise is to forsake our own mercy.

### **Question 5: *What is the fate of those who reject the word of God?***

The impact and effect of the word of God in the lives of those who receive it sincerely is undeniable. In such people, the Word proves itself to be the power of God by the results it produces. It converts the soul, enlightens the mind and rejoices the soul of people who rightly receive it. Such is the tremendous power available to a true Christian leader for use to guide, liberate and deliver people from satanic ignorance and superstition. If we would be successful as Christians and ministers of the gospel, we should match our message with our manners.

## **CONCERN FOR BELIEVERS' SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you" (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

**TEXT:** 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

**A**postle Paul expressed his affection for the Thessalonian believers whom he left abruptly during his missionary itinerary in the preceding chapter. It would be recalled that after receiving the Macedonian call, his missionary team came to Philippi where they had a successful ministry that culminated in their being thrown into jail (Acts 16:9-40). After their release, they came to Thessalonica, which was the capital city of the entire province of Macedonia to preach the gospel. With a hurried departure due to intense persecution, it was natural for the Apostle to be concerned about the brethren's spiritual stability and growth in the faith. From his example, believers learn the need for personal sacrifice and consecration for the maturation and stability of new converts and the need to endure suffering while interceding for others.

**Question 1:** *Why was Paul so concerned for the spiritual state of the believers in Thessalonica?*

**ENQUIRY CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF NEW BELIEVERS** (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5; Acts 15:36; Corinthians 2:13; 11:29; Philippians 2:16; Galatians 2:2; 4:11; Proverbs 27:23)

After Paul was expelled from Thessalonica, his persecutors did not allow him to stay in the province of Macedonia and he had to go to Athens. He left Timothy and Titus in Berea but on getting to Athens, he sent for them to join him (Acts 17: 13-16). However, despite the challenge he faced in Athens and the need for the companionship of Timothy, Paul was still concerned for the Thessalonian believers. When he could no longer bear the anxiety over the faith of the new converts, he decided Timothy should go and visit them.

**Question 2: *What practical steps should believers take in showing their concern for the spiritual welfare of others?***

Paul demonstrated a strong passion and concern for the spiritual stability and growth of his converts. His correspondence, actions and prayers on their behalf proved he really cared. True concern for the spiritual welfare of others can be shown in the following ways: One, checking up on them, making inquiries and willingness to make personal sacrifices for their spiritual progress. Two, calling or visiting the brethren. Personal visits, phone calls, text messages, e-mails or delegating trusted assistants to visit them. Three, comforting them in trials or persecution. Four, interceding and crying unto God on their behalf. Five, challenging them to keep growing spiritually. Six, ministering continually to them to perfect whatever is lacking in their faith. Seven, commending them in areas where they are doing well. Apart from the Thessalonians, Paul the Apostle had concern for other churches and his fellow workers. Writing to the Corinthians, he said, **"Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"** (2 Corinthians 11:29). He empathized with his converts and was only at rest when they did well in the faith. At a point, he said, **"I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia"** (2 Corinthians 2:13). He expressed similar concern for the churches at Philippi and Galatia (Philippians 2:16; Galatians 2:2; 4:11). We should have this kind of deep concern for the welfare of other believers.

**Question 3: *What should be the major focus of our concern for other believers?***

It should be noted however, that Paul's major concern was the faith of his converts, not just their prosperity, comfort or happiness. He was most interested in their spiritual stability and strength to weather the storms of persecution. He feared lest Satan had seduced them from the faith while under the pressure of affliction; therefore, he sent Timothy to establish and encourage them (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Our priority as we disciple new believers should be their spiritual development. Although God is interested in the

physical and material prosperity of His children, He is most concerned about their spiritual progress. The vogue in present-day evangelism and discipleship, which places undue emphasis on prosperity at the expense of real stability in the faith, is one major reason many believers are weak, materialistic and shallow in their spiritual lives.

Paul also addressed the issue of afflictions or persecution as an integral part of a normal Christian life. He reminded the Thessalonians that while he was with them, he used to tell them that believers in Christ would suffer afflictions in this present world. That prediction came to pass in the experience of the Thessalonian brethren.

Paul prepared the minds of his converts concerning difficulties. But there are preachers who present the Christian life as a bed of roses to heaven. They give the wrong impression that Christians should experience a fair weather all through their earthly journey. However, the Scripture does not give us such a false assurance.

It is essential that believers have a proper perspective about afflictions lest they feel discouraged or count it strange when they experience diver's kinds of storms in their lives (1 Thessalonians 3:2; John 16:2- 4; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Timothy 3:13; Acts 9: 16; James 1;2-4). Persecutions are inevitable, and they come, not by accident but by divine appointment; believers are "**appointed thereunto**" (1 Thessalonians 3:3). Two, Satan is the chief agent behind all kinds of afflictions that come to believers, but he can only operate at God's permission and within the divinely-appointed limits. Three, Christians should not be surprised or discouraged when they face different kinds of trials and temptations; these are allowed to prove the genuineness of their profession. Four, Satan often exploits the season of suffering or time of trial to seduce and tempt believers away from Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:5). Five, there is need to rally round those who are facing challenges of life in order to checkmate Satan's attempts to destroy their faith. Six, every believer can overcome persecutions. Even young converts can be strengthened by God to withstand afflictions. Therefore, believers should exercise faith and depend on the Lord for the courage and strength to overcome. Seven, when we endure trials and persecutions,

we become a reference point and an encouragement to others (2 Thessalonians 1:4-6; 2 Corinthians 1:4); our faith grows, and the dross is removed from our lives (Job 23:10; Romans 5:3).

Another issue worthy of note is Paul's concern about Satan's subtlety on new converts, so that his labour would not be in vain (1 Thessalonians 3:5). It is possible for a believer to be lured away if proper safeguards are not put in place. For this reason, new converts should be diligently disciplined, and all believers should learn to be their brother's keeper. Then, each believer should take responsibility of watching over their own personal lives, keep using all available means of grace (prayer, Bible study, fellowship with other believers, witnessing, Christian service), and avoid secret or perpetual backsliding which may lead to apostasy.

**ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL STABILITY OF NEW BELIEVERS** (1 Thessalonians 3:6-8; 2:19,20; 3 John 3; 2 John 4; 2 Corinthians 7:6,7,13; Acts 11:20-23)

Timothy returned to Paul with glowing testimonies about the Thessalonian Christians (1Thessalonians 3:6- 8). The report centered on spiritual essentials among the brethren rather than mundane and non-essential traditions. He testified about their faith, charity and positive disposition towards their spiritual mentor. The report brought relief, comfort and encouragement to Paul in his own affliction and distress. **"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country"** (Proverbs 25:25). The news of abiding fruits of ministry is a great consolation to Christian ministers. Apostle John expressed this kind of consolation and joy in his epistle to Gaius. **"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"** (3 John 1:4). It is necessary that believers forward such good reports to cheer the heart of our spiritual leaders.

**Question 4: *What are the guidelines for scriptural reporting and the benefits?***

Notice some important features of the report Timothy gave about the Thessalonians. One, it was a good report. Though there were things to perfect in the faith of these young

believers, Timothy did not focus all attention on them. Like Caleb and Joshua, he brought a balanced report that emphasized what God has done in the lives of the people. That is not to say we gloss over the inadequacies or blunders of new converts, but we should magnify what the grace of God has done and trust Him to perfect whatever is lacking. Two, the Thessalonians were growing in faith and love. These are two basic virtues to measure a healthy Christian life. In most of his epistles, Apostle Paul mentioned "faith and love" as evidence of genuine conversion and growth in grace (Ephesians 1:15; 3:17; 6:23; Colossians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:13; Philemon 1:5). Three, the Thessalonians were as eager to see Paul as he also was to see them. That report showed mutual affection and reassured Paul that his converts did not believe the false reports the Judaizers raised to smear him. Believers should remember that **"the light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat"** (Proverbs 15:30).

The good report about the Thessalonians gladdened the heart of Paul and he commended them. This will be a kind of positive reinforcement to their faith and push them to be more faithful. Expressing our joy and satisfaction over the spiritual growth of others has a multiplier effect of building more confidence and determination in them to endure to the end.

**EXAMPLES OF SCRIPTURAL SUPPLICATION FOR NEW BELIEVERS** (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Luke 22:31,32; Acts 20:32; Romans 1:8-10; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15,16; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3,9)

The church of the Thessalonians was a model one in several respects. They were the elect of God (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5); evangelistic in outlook, seeking the lost (1 Thessalonians 1:8); energetic in labour (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3); exemplary in love (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 7) and expectant of the coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10). But despite their growing faith and love, Apostle Paul still prayed for them to increase more and more.

**Question 5: *Why is intercessory prayer necessary for***



### ***new believers and what should be the focus of such prayers?***

No believer should ever have the Esau-kind of attitude that says, "I **have enough**". Regardless of how sound our Christian experiences are or how effective we are in Kingdom service, there is always room for growth. This is where intercessory prayers for fellow believers come to focus. We should continuously intercede for the spiritual stability and growth of all believers, especially new converts.

Intercessory prayers intercept and interrupt Satan's attempts to make believers fall from grace. Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 21:31,32). Paul prayed often for all his converts and fellow workers (Romans 1:8-10; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15,16; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3,9; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). It is not enough to preach and teach the word of God, there must be prayer support for the Word to take root in the hearts of the hearers.

However, our prayer for others must not center on material needs but spiritual values: that the people of God will be holy and ready for the rapture. Paul prayed that God would give him opportunity to see the Thessalonians, so he could perfect their faith. Perfection of believers was the major focus of his prayers and labour (Colossians 1:28,29). Present-day believers should emulate this example of scriptural intercession. When Christian leaders neglect the duty of prayer or get distracted and concentrate their prayers on materials and temporal blessings, believers under their care will most likely get weak and lose spiritual focus. Our intercession for other believers is true evidence we are genuinely concerned for their spiritual welfare.

## CALL TO HOLINESS

**MEMORY VERSE:** "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

**TEXT:** 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

**Paul** the apostle wrote the first epistle to the church at Thessalonica in order to strengthen and encourage them in the faith. While encouraging believers, he still found it necessary to instruct them on the imperative of holiness and living to please God. Believers are commanded to be holy regardless of the situation or society they found themselves. This became necessary because the city of Thessalonica was notorious for immorality and idleness. Like in most cities of the Roman Empire, their standard of moral behavior was very low. Added to this was the fact that many of the Greeks in the city considered themselves to be of noble birth; therefore, they looked down on those who did menial jobs. They waited endlessly for white collar jobs while depending on the generosity of others. Against this backdrop, Apostle Paul instructed believers not to conform to the immoral and idle lifestyles of those who do not know God. True holiness entails that we lead quiet lives, mind our business, work with our hands and not sponge on the liberality of other hard-working people. In effect, God expects His children to live differently and not condescend to the prevailing evils in the society.

**Question 1:** *In practical terms, what does the call to holiness mean to believers?*

**THE CALL OF BELIEVERS TO HOLINESS IN A POLLUTED SOCIETY** (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Leviticus 11:44; Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8; Corinthians 6:18)

**"Furthermore, then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more"** (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Apostle Paul exhorted believers to walk according to the commandment given to them and live to please God. The

new converts had been taught and shown the basic rules of the Christian life. Their new life in Christ demands total obedience to God's commandments and a change of lifestyle to conform with their new calling. Learning from Paul the apostle, our method of mission work must comply with Christ's Great Commission which demands that converts should be taught to obey all that Christ commanded after baptizing them in water (Matthew 28: 19,20).

**Question 2: *What is the will of God concerning sinners, backsliders and saints?***

Believers should live to please God (Romans 15:1-3; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:22; 2 Timothy 2:4). A life that pleases God is that which fulfils His will. And the will of God is clearly stated in Scriptures. For sinners and backsliders, the revealed will of God is that they repent and be saved lest they perish (1 Timothy 2:3,4; 2 Peter 3:9); and for believers, it is that they should be sanctified. **"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication"** (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Sanctification is synonymous with holiness. It means to set a thing apart for a holy use or to make a person holy completely. A sanctified believer is consecrated, cleansed and completely free from all uncleanness. Sanctification comes after the salvation experience. At salvation, a sinner repents, receives pardon and the righteousness of God. But at sanctification, a believer experiences the removal of the adamic nature, and receives the ability to love God and neighbors as never before.

To be sanctified, a believer must thirst after purity of heart, consecrate himself to God and pray in faith. Sanctification experience is not obtained by struggling or suppression of the old nature. The same way a sinner repents and trusts in Christ's finished work at Calvary for salvation, a believer consecrates and exercises faith in Christ for sanctification. Jesus prayed for our sanctification and paid the price for it (John 17:17; Hebrews 13:12,13). God has promised to give a new heart and spirit to those who ask Him (Ezekiel 36:26,37; Matthew 7:7-11).

The unmistakable fruit of entire sanctification is increased love for God and for others. Sanctified believers are able to

go the extra mile in loving God and in making any necessary sacrifice to live peaceably with fellow men. They **"follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14). They are also enabled to live above all forms of sins, especially the besetting sin of sexual immorality. These believers with idolatrous background were already exposed to fornication as part of their religious worship because temple prostitution was a common practice among the pagans. To such converts, the pull of their old life might prove difficult to resist. So, Paul the apostle had to remind them that **"God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"**.

**Question 3: *How should believers respond to the changing moral standards in the world?***

Sexual impurity is a common vice in all culture because it appeals to the base passion of man. However, believers are called to exercise self-control. Apart from possessing their vessels in sanctification and honour, they are also expected to help others maintain their chastity by refraining from any act that could defile them. God forbids fornication or adultery of any kind, and people who indulge in such practices will incur His wrath. The standard of morality for believers derives from the authority and teaching of Jesus Christ. True Christians do not allow the changing moral standards of the world to mold their lifestyle. Although the world may tolerate or even encourage vices such as fornication, adultery, divorce, prostitution, polygamy, homosexuality, pornography and incest, believers are to avoid them.

By demanding holiness from everyone who would walk with Him, God is not asking more than is reasonable from mortal men. Rather, His demand for holiness is consistent with the new nature and His deposit of the Holy Spirit within us.

**THE CONTINUATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE AMONG PURIFIED SAINTS** (1 Thessalonians 4:9,10; 1:7; 3:12; John 13:34,35; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:17; 4:8; 1 John 4:7,8)

**"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write**

**unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.**" The call to holiness is closely connected with the subject of brotherly love among believers. We are here exhorted to demonstrate practical love for one another. Christian love is undisguised, unpretentious, selfless and genuinely committed to the welfare of others.

**Question 4: *Why is love so central in the Christian life and how can believers grow in it?***

Love is the hub around which all other virtues revolve. It is the hallmark of our Christian life and we are called to daily live in it. In our text, the Thessalonians were encouraged to increase more and more in love. In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul the apostle prayed "**that [their] love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment**" (Philippians 1:9). Other apostles also highlighted the centrality of love in the Christian life (1 Peter 2:17; 4:8; 1 John 4:7,8). Our Lord Jesus Christ actually summarized the entire commandments of God in two simple laws: "**•••Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets**" (Matthew 22:37-40). The point is, if we love God, we will keep His commandments and if we love our neighbor, we will not do them any harm (Romans 13:10). The real proof that we are Christ's disciples is that we love one another.

Our love should not be limited to those in our immediate environment. We should be able to reach out to others in faraway lands. The entire region of Macedonia could feel the impact of love manifested by the Thessalonians, yet Paul exhorted them to grow more and more. As believers, we are to increase the influence of our love to reach the mission field where sinners are yearning for the true gospel. There are also those who are persecuted and impoverished. Our love can bring relief and encouragement as we sponsor missionaries and send relevant material aids to them. Indeed, our love can grow to the point it crosses cultural barriers and reach new frontiers.

**THE COMMAND TO PROFITABLE LABOUR, PRODUCTIVITY AND SOBRIETY** (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Acts 20:35; Romans 12:11; 1 Corinthians 4:12; Ephesians 4:28; Titus 2:4-8; 3:14)

In the latter part of our text, Paul the apostle addressed a practical issue that affected the church in Thessalonica in particular, which is also relevant to present-day believers. Some people in the church were idle and wandered from house to house, spreading all sorts of gossip and idle tales. Such people could cause disaffection and divisions among the brethren if left unchecked (1 Timothy 5:13). To solve the problem, the Apostle instructed them to **"...study to be quiet, and to do [their] own business, and to work with [their] own hands... That [they] may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that [they] may have lack of nothing"** (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12).

Three major points stand out clearly in this admonition. First, study to be quiet. This is a call to soberness. Believers should display meek and quiet disposition without being frivolous, talkative or noisy. Second, do your own business. In modern parlance, we would say "mind your own business". Believers are to face their own businesses with diligence and not to be busybodies or meddlers in affairs of other people. But that should not be misinterpreted to mean we are to live in isolation and be unconcerned about the welfare of others. Though we are expected to be our brother's keeper, we must draw the line between this legitimate duty and the needless meddling that is prohibited here. Third, work with your own hands. Prevailing negative economic situations should not be used as excuse to remain idle. To avoid any form of reproach, we are to engage in profitable and productive labour.

**Question 5: *How can we help believers who are idle?***

The admonition to be involved in gainful labour became necessary because many of the new converts might be tempted to continue in their old lifestyle of idleness and dependence on others for livelihood. Among the Greeks, the aristocrats counted hard work as a curse from the gods. Consequently, most of them would rather prefer to remain idle than engage in manual labour. Recall that some of the

Thessalonian converts were aristocrats or of noble descent, and they needed to change their world view (Acts 17:4). Coupled with their faulty orientation, Paul's teaching on the imminent coming of the Lord might be taken as an excuse to refrain from work.

To correct these wrong notions the Apostle taught them to work with their own hands and be productive. He taught by precept and example as he worked with his hands as a tent maker among them. Contemporary believers should learn from the teaching and example of Paul. God's commandment is that everyone should work and take responsibility for their lives. There is dignity in labour and the Scripture condemns laziness. Some people are idle because they cannot engage in menial work. In fact, when God created man in the beginning, he was given the responsibility to tend the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15).

God's design is that man should work to earn his living. To act as parasite or depend on others negates the principle of love. Although it is scriptural to help needy believers, we must not encourage those who are unwilling to work with our liberality. The best help we can render to people who are idle is to assist them to get employed so that they can be self-supporting. When we are diligent in our work, we will not lack, family needs will be met, we will not be a burden to others, unnecessary temptations would be avoided, we shall be able to assist those in need and unbelievers will have no reason to reproach our God.



## RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so, shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

**TEXT:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-11

The Rapture is the catching away or ascension of dead and living saints to meet the Lord in the air for an endless reunion. This painless, glorious exit of people whose names are written in the book of life from this present world will be heralded by a sudden sound of the archangel's trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52). It is understandable then that Paul the apostle exhorted the Thessalonian believers to holy living prior to his admonition on rapture to enlighten some believers who sorrowed over their loved ones who died in the Lord as if they had perished. Being the first phase of the Second Coming of Christ, the rapture will signal the end of the church age and the dispensation of grace. It is the hope of all believers.

**Question 1:** *What do you understand by the word 'rapture'?*

**THE HOPE OF RAPTURE** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Genesis 5:22-24; 2 Kings 2:11,12; Acts 1:9; John 14:1-3; 1 John 3:1-3)

The hope of Christ's coming to take the redeemed to heaven is the whole essence of the Christian faith. The Scripture's prediction of His Second Coming to take the redeemed to heaven at rapture is the basis and strength of the believers' hope to meet the Lord and live with Him forever. It will be a time of reunion with our Lord and our departed loved ones who died in the Lord. Ignorance of this truth made some Thessalonian believers behave like unbelievers during bereavement. But the Apostle undertook to enlighten them that the hope of rapture is a lively and lovely one as it offers comfort and consolation to the hurting and the bereaved. **"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"** (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is comforting because the rapture marks the end of all suffering and stigmatization because of our faith. Having been saved from sin and the accompanying **"wrath to come"** (1 Thessalonians 1:10), rapture lifts us onto eternal rewards for faithful service rendered to the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10,11).

Believers must live in the light of the Scriptures and allow its truth to guide their behaviors even in times of grief, pain, disappointment and reverses of life. Christians who die in the Lord have not perished; they have been translated into the presence of God to receive their rewards. While they are rejoicing for being in heaven, we should not indulge in overmuch sorrow. Though the severance of relationship with our loved ones may be hard to bear, the consolation of the Scripture and the Spirit of God is that we shall see them again if we abide in Christ till the end. **"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"** (1 Corinthians 15:19). While abiding, we must keep maximizing lifetime service opportunities for the Lord by ministering the gospel to **"others which have no hope"** of rapture.

The rapture is not strange in Scripture. Selected individuals like Enoch, Elijah and our Saviour Jesus Christ have been translated literally to heaven without dying. This fact of its previous occurrence before the Law, in the dispensation of the Law and the Prophets, and even in the New Testament should douse any doubt on the veracity of the doctrine.

**Question 2: Identify the unique features of the expected rapture.**

The rapture is unique in many ways. One, it will be a universal experience for all believers in Christ. **"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which**

**are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Two, this resurrection of dead Christians and their instantaneous translation with all living saints everywhere assures a wonderful transport that none of earth's treasures can afford, as we will be airborne against gravity and *every* other limiting influence without the agency of any natural or mechanical device.

Three, this event will shake the world, change its order, and finally pave way for a period of unprecedented affliction, hardship and tribulation for those left behind (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). Four, it portends grave implication for unrepentant sinners and backsliders. Whoever misses the rapture, will be caught up in the throes of the Antichrist and his team who will enforce false religion, persecute 'non-conformists', and make the receipt of his mark a condition for any kind of decent living, with a frightening consequence of eternal damnation in hell fire.

Every sinner has the responsibility to "**flee from the wrath to come**" by accepting Christ's free offer of salvation. "**For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved**", and "**how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation...?**" (Luke 3:7; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 2:3).

**THE HOUR OF HIS RETURN** (1 Thessalonians 5:1-8; Matthew 24:42,44; Mark 13:29; Luke 21:34; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 10:37,38; 1 Peter 4:7-10; Revelation 3:3)

Like other eschatological events, the rapture is certain but more imminent than any other. In answer to His disciples' questions, Jesus gave the conditions and signs that would precede His coming to earth. These are already evidently manifest in the world.

**Question 3: Comment on the implication of fulfilled prophecies on end time events.**

Current realities indicate that the rapture is near. **One**, for the first time in many centuries, the Jews now have a national existence in their own promised homeland. **Two**, many other nations are emerging in fulfilment of the shooting forth of other prophetic trees (Luke 21 :29-31).

**Three**, there is the prevalence of religious formalism without godliness (2 Timothy 3:5). **Four**, the ecumenical movement of apostate religious bodies warming up for the formation of a global church in fulfilment of prophecies concerning Babylon the great (Revelation 17: 18). **Five**, increased interest in spiritism and idolatry in many parts of the world (1 Timothy 4:1,2; 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4). **Six**, increasing support for moral decadence through national policies and legislations (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). **Seven**, violence, civil unrest and lawlessness abound in homes and nations (2 Timothy 3:1-4). **Eight**, increasing hostility among nations. **Nine**, incessant experiences of cross-country epidemics. **Ten**, earthquakes, and many other natural disasters in diverse places (Matthew 24:6,7). Actually, these events were prophesied in respect of the Second Coming of Christ to reign on earth seven years after the rapture of the saints. Their fulfilment therefore clearly indicates that the rapture is imminent. **"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh"** (Matthew 25: 13).

Aside its imminence, the exact time of the rapture is not stated in Scripture. Several predictions as to its timing have all failed and will continue to fail because it is clearly unscriptural for any mortal to make any predictive or prophetic pronouncement in that regard (Matthew 24:36). **"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"** (1 Thessalonians 5:2,3). Its suddenness will especially surprise the unprepared who are usually occupied with mundane affairs at the expense of issues of eternal concern. The combined facts of its imminence and lack of exactitude of occurrence call for urgent preparation and continual readiness.

**Question 4: *In view of the suddenness of the rapture, how should a believer prepare?***

Every believer who is expecting the rapture must be watchful and sober, taking a grave view of life. He is not gloomy but serious, avoiding needless frivolities and exercising godly restraint so as not to be overwhelmed by

any fleeting earthly glories. The admonition of the Scripture in view of the imminence of the rapture is: "**... be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer**

**Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong... What I say unto you I say unto all, watch"** (1 Peter 4:7; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Mark 13:37). Two, we must eschew every clandestine activity as "**we are not of the night, nor of darkness**" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). Three, we should bear about our protective spiritual breastplate of "**faith and love**" (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Love is the basis of our faith in Christ. Without the love of God, we would not be pardoned, preserved, purified or empowered (John 3:16; Romans 5:6,8; Titus 3:4-8; 1 John 4:19). Love must also be the most eloquent evidence of our faith as we express this to Him in our worship and loyalty. We must also allow Him to express it through us as we eagerly seek to reach perishing souls with the precious gospel of salvation. Four, a life of consistent holiness, purity of actions and intentions is an indispensable qualification for the rapture; "**every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure**" (1 John 3:3).

**THE HONOUR AND HUNGER FOR THE RAPTURE** (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11; 2 Timothy 2:19-21; Matthew 11:28; Isaiah 26:19-21).

It is an unmerited privilege and a great honour to be called up to meet the Lord at the rapture and to dwell with Him forever. This privilege distinguishes believers in Christ as the beloved and peculiar children of God. Though many saints are not popular in the world, rapture will bring the best form of recognition, highest honour and greatest rewards any human can have. Above all, it will translate us to see Jesus, be with Him and share in His eternal inheritance. Every serious-minded person needs to make adequate preparation to partake of this all-important one-time event.

**Question 5: *How can one qualify to partake in the rapture?***

The Lord is not willing that any should miss the rapture or perish. However, this glorious translation is for those who desire and commit themselves to obtaining the requisite

spiritual experiences that guarantee entry. The sinner must repent, and the backslider must return to Christ. **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel"** (Isaiah 55:7; Jeremiah 3:22,23).

Readiness for the rapture requires being ransomed by faith in Christ (Genesis 15:6; Matthew 11:28), being teachable and available for sincere spiritual service in obedience to His command to **"Occupy till I come"** (Job 34:3; Philippians 2:18-21), pleasing the Father in all things (John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 7:1), transparency in life and ministry (1 Samuel 12:3,4; Acts 24: 16), unblameable and un-reproveable lifestyle (Colossians 1:22; Peter 3:13,14), resourcefulness in fulfilling the purposes of God in spite of challenges (2 Samuel 12:7; 1 Corinthians 15:10) and enduring opposition, affliction, deprivation and indeed all things for Christ's sake (2 Timothy 2:10-12; 4:5). Since the rapture is imminent, now is the time to reflect, return and rightly reposition yourself for the final flight to our eternal home.

## LOVE AND UNITY IN THE CHURCH

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

**TEXT:** John 13:34,35; 1 John 4:7-12,16-21; Psalm 133:1-3.

**T**he Bible declares that God is love. He lived up to His name by giving His only begotten Son to die for man's salvation from sin. And those who taste of this incomparable love through repentance and faith in Christ's sacrificial death do not remain the same: they are regenerated, and by implication, called out of sin and the world to live a new life of righteousness by the grace of God. This spiritual transformation makes the erstwhile sinner who has a current experience of salvation a member of the body of Christ, referred to as the Church. The Church is a group of people called out of the world through the experience of salvation in Christ's death and resurrection.

**THE CORD AND POWER OF LOVE IN THE CHURCH**  
(John 13:34,35; 1 John 4:7-12, 16-21; Romans 13:8,10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:10,11,15; 4:7; Galatians 5:22,23)

**Question 1:** *How can the sinner have the love-nature of God?*

Redeemed, believers have the love-nature of God imputed to them. And the manifestations of practical love among the brethren will naturally result in unity. This is because as new creatures in Christ, they have the implanted spiritual capacity to demonstrate love. Without this spiritual experience, life will be barren, expression of love will be carnal, and unity will be superficial.

God's love is the expected standard of the believer's love for fellow brethren. His love is unconditional (1 John 4:8-16). It is sacrificial, eternal and enduring (Ephesians 3:19; John 3:16; Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 14:4; John 13:1). Christ stirred up the hearts of believers to practically get into the life of loving one another selflessly, unconditionally and



wholeheartedly. The kind of love our Lord enjoins is not a product of the old nature which manifests itself in suspicion, malice and envy, but a disposition which reveals itself in goodwill, confidence and mutual helpfulness. We are to love one another the way Christ loves us. He loves us with a constant, consistent and forbearing love. He sacrificed Himself in love. At the Cross, He displayed the meaning of true love. He is love in bold prints, plainly written upon the pages of history and readable by all men in all ages. As He loves us, so He expects us to love one another. He says, **"As I have loved you that ye also have love one to another"** (John 13:34).

The practical life of love among brethren gives rise to unity. Having endowed us with this spiritual capacity, we are to obey His command and **"love one another with a pure heart fervently"**. This requires that every believer and member of the church carry out his responsibilities of love towards other brethren who are sick, lonely, jobless, poor, etc. It is unfortunate that many avoid or refuse to carry out their responsibilities of love towards other brethren in the home and in local assemblies where they worship. Yet, they complain that there is no unity in the church. They have forgotten that love is interactive: as they expect others to love, so should they themselves. A church that understands true and scriptural definition of love and practices the same in the fear of God will experience biblical unity.

Love is essentially a manifestation of the multi-dimensional fruit of the Spirit. And where the believer loses his first love for God, his love for the brethren will also be flagging as it is difficult to love the brethren without a blossoming and fervent love for God. The case of Peter going to fish after Christ's death and His probing question on his love for Him illustrates this point. Peter, for instance, left feeding of the lambs and sheep of God - his responsibility of love for God towards others - in search of the mundane. He could not keep the lambs and sheep of God together. But Christ restored him; and everyone who has abandoned his service of love that enhances the unity of the church needs to pray for restoration today.

### **Question 2: *Why is love essential in the Church?***

Love is vital amongst brethren in the church because it is

the true proof of Christian discipleship. According to Christ, love is one of the virtues that convince the world that we belong to Him. Unbelievers understand little or no doctrine, creed or meetings of the church. The life of love, sacrificial giving, unconditional care and shared concern among brethren is all they care to see. **"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"** (John 13:35). Love is the acid-test of a genuine salvation experience. The love that prevails in our Home Caring Fellowship has, often made observers proclaim, "These are Christians indeed, for they love one another." Love makes for fruitful service for there is no obedience without love and no service without obedience. Thus, Christ warns: **"If ye love me, keep my commandments ... If a man loves me, he will keep my words... he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings"** (John 14:15,23,24). The real test of love is obedience to Christ, submission to His will and a readiness to spend and be spent in His service.

**THE SCOPE OF SCRIPTURAL UNITY** (Psalm 33: 1-3; Romans 12:16; 15:5,6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 3:16; 1 Peter 3:8; Matthew 18:19; Luke 10:1,17)

The Bible did not leave us in the dark concerning areas of scriptural unity. Since Christ's death has removed all cause of separation, the divine imperative is for believers to be one. Therefore, those who maintain racial, tribal and ethnic divides in the church are not doing the will of God. They have, by their actions, rejected the purpose of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross where **"there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"** (Galatians 3:28).

God expects believers to be one in fellowship, caring, doctrine, worship, prayer, evangelism, etc. The church that is thus united is always a threat to the kingdom of darkness. The forces of darkness to which believers are constantly engaged in battle are, according to the Scripture, organized in a united hierarchical order. And they work through their human agents on earth against the Church (Ephesians 6:10-17). Though Satan imitates the triune God, the diligence with which forces of darkness do evil throws a challenge to the believer who sees no reason in cooperating

with God in fulfilling the great commission.

Inspired by Satan, some sons of belial bound themselves together with an oath not to taste anything until they had killed Paul. Co-operating to do evil and hinder God's work and word is outside the will of God. Believers should outperform these sadists through unity in carrying out divine imperative to save men from sin and eternal destruction.

We need to have the mind of Christ so as to be united in doing His will. The building of the Tower of Babel became an abandoned project because it was contrary to the plan of God for man. Many people still become spiritually bankrupt because they are united outside the will of God.

### **THE NATURE AND PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS' ONENESS**

(Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; 17:21-23; Ephesians 2:14-18; 4:3,4,13; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-26; John 10:16)

#### **Question 3: *What is the standard of believer's unity?***

The unity in the Godhead remains the perfect picture of oneness that is expected of believers. Christ, on several occasions, referred to the Father as working through Him. Besides, He declares that He and the Father are one. He reveals in His prayer for sanctification and unity of the church, **"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."**

Apostle Paul, in his epistles, used the members of the body to illustrate the kind of unity that God expects of believers. He says, **"we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another"** (1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:20,27; Ephesians 1:23; 4:25). The implication of this is that anyone who hurts a member is doing so to all the members of the body of Christ as evident in His revelation to Saul on the way to Damascus. As united, we share a common joy, pain, goal, aspiration, etc.

#### **Question 4: *Give reasons why unity is necessary in the***

## **church.**

The believer needs to seek to obey God's command to be united with other brethren. A song-writer highlights the common spiritual experience of all believers in his piece:

*"Elect from every nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation  
One Lord, one faith, one birth  
One holy name she blesses,  
Partakes one holy food,  
And to one hope she presses,  
With every grace endued."*

Since there is one God, one faith, one baptism, there is no room for disunity in the church and family of God. Any wonder then that Christ prayed for the unity of the church! He knows that the church that enjoys unity in aim and spirit is animated by the same desire to promote the glory of Christ.

Unity is indispensable in the church of God today. The Bible says two are better than one: if one falls, the other will lift him up. In the battle against the Amalekites, Aaron and Hur supported and held Moses' hand up to ensure Joshua's victory, a picture of what co-operation and intercessory prayers offered on behalf of missionaries on the battlefield for the Lord can do in the church today. So, we need to be united to win the victory in life's battles, advance and initiate positive changes for the good of the kingdom and edification of the body of Christ (Exodus 17:12; Judges 20:11; 1 Samuel 14:6,7; 2 Kings 6:1-3; Ezra 10:4; 1 Chronicles 12:38).

### **MAINTAINING LOVE AND UNITY IN THE CHURCH**

(1John 4:7-12, 16-21; Psalm 133:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27; 4:2; Colossians 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8; Nehemiah 4:1-23)

### **Question 5: How can you, as a believer, maintain love and unity in the church?**

Unity is not an idle dream: individual members of the church have a part to play if the church is to remain

united. **"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"** (Ephesians 4:3). Apart from current and genuine experiences of salvation, sanctification and Holy Spirit baptism, the believer needs to pray for the rich experience and manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit if there is to be practical love and unity in the church. We need special grace to live the life that brings about love and unity by constantly triumphing over the sinful nature. Quarrels and disagreements can be settled among the brethren easily where all seek to live the selfless, Christ-like life. We must bear the inadequacies of one another as we seek to perfect the body of Christ. We must instruct in righteousness and rebuke/correct those who sow seeds of discord through gossip, jealousy, malice and other carnal behaviors in the church. It is important also for individual members of the church to practice restitution towards those that have been offended or hurt by their words or actions inadvertently. Leaders should be prompt in handling genuine grievances and complains of neglect among the brethren like the early church (Acts 6: 1-7).

Unity and love are so essential in the Church that no surrender of our own preferences can be too great to secure it. For nothing should we pray for more earnestly than Jesus' prayer that **"they all may be one."** We must all work at diffusing and permeating the church with a peaceful spirit by promoting and provoking love and unity which is the unvarying condition of all real success. The fulfilment of the function and force of the Church also requires unity. Therefore, each believing Christian must esteem the other better than himself. Unity calls for mutual esteem and affection. This can only be attained by a disposition that seeks to identify and place high premium on the good qualities in others.

Unity, like an exquisite fragrance, attracts people. Unity in the Church is a constant invitation, though voiceless, yet influential and effective. Through unity in the Church, many souls will be won, and backsliders restored to the faith. It is as we are so united in love, fulfilling the divine purpose that God's blessings will be immeasurably showered upon us. The scripture testifies that where love and unity existed among brethren, **"there the LORD**

**commanded the blessing, even life for evermore".** Victory over adversaries and progress in the service of God, such as Nehemiah and the Israelites had while doing His work, will be a mirage without love and unity in the church. God's anointing flows and His presence abides unceasingly with believers who are united in Christ. **"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you"** (2 Corinthians 13:11). Christ has prayed and died to make us one; we also need to pray and continue to make sacrifices of love to maintain unity in the body of Christ to the glory of God.

## **SERVING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10).

**TEXT:** Romans 12:9-13; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

**P**aul's discourse on the essential teaching of Christian living glides from vital Christian service and ministry within the body of Christ to daily practical Christian relationship that underscores Christian brotherhood. These teachings are put forth with an obligatory tone leaving no place for excuses or exemptions. This body of teaching zeros in on the life of love and its full- blossomed fruits. Unfeigned love produces selfless, unpretentious and excited service one to another in the Church. Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts being exercised in the present-day church. Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle-working power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. This is the hub of Christian life and relationship. If we have all things and lack love, we have nothing. All ministry activities we engage in will be unprofitable if the love of God is not at its foundation. Although people have different gifts, love is required of everyone.

**CHRISTIAN LOVE: THE BASIS OF SERVICE** (Rom. 12:9,10; John 13:34,35; Phil. 1:9; Rom. 13:10; Heb. 13:1)

The Lord took extra pain to teach and show His disciples the new commandment- love. This is the only virtue that could help them to reach the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the propelling quality that could fire our zeal. The desire to serve one another is fulfilled when the heart is rich in love. We cannot give any excuse of being too busy or too occupied so much as not to be concerned about the physical and spiritual needs of our brethren. God, who looks at our disposition, thoughts and hearts, who protects and keeps will know; "**and shall not he render to every man according to his works?**" (Proverbs 24: 12).

**"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one**



**another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"** (John 13:34,35).

**Question 1: *What is the place of love in Christian service?***

What articulates and loudly declares our relationship with the Lord is not our preaching, ushering or singing in the choir. It is our life of love that tells the world that we are disciples of Christ. The measure of our love should be the measure of the love of Jesus for us. The strange thing amongst believers is that Christian activities seem to drown the love of God in our hearts. The more activities we get engaged in, the less of love we have for the brethren. True fellowship always dies where love ceases to exist. This is the reason many fellowship centers are witnessing low turnout.

But here, Paul the apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, admonishes that our love must be pure and unfeigned. It is disheartening that most of us have learned how to pretend to love others - how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them. Some are even skilled in pretending to be moved with compassion when they hear of others' needs, or to become indignant when they learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness. Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. Because of the prevalence of feigned love among believers, Peter the apostle had this to say: **"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently"** (1 Peter 1:22).

**Question 2: *How is love best expressed?***

Our society today confuses love and lust. Unlike lust, God's kind of love is directed outward toward others, not inward toward ourselves. It is utterly unselfish. This kind of love goes against our natural inclinations. It is possible to practice this love only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so that we can show love while expecting nothing in return. Thus, the more we become like

Christ, the more love we will show to others in the body of Christ. Our love must not be smiles covered with bitterness and hatred; it must be devoid of lust. It must not be one that loves the opposite gender and excludes his gender from his deeds of love. Covetousness must be stripped off our life of love. We should not love because of what we stand to gain or enjoy from the relationship.

Again, our love must be impartial - free and full; love for all without discrimination or ulterior motive. Our love must be one that is fervent, not passive or disinterested. Some say: 'I love people, but I don't know how to show it'. But they err. Love is expressed in actions of affection, kindness, consideration and empathy.

**"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"** (Ephesians 4:32). Love overlooks the mistakes of others, forgives others very readily even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. When we do this, we are really following God (Ephesians 5:1). The Lord wants us to manifest love in our actions and relationships with one another. In fact, this is the very basis and foundation of our activity in the Church and ministry in the body of Christ.

Our love must not approve of sin. We must eschew or run away from any act or conduct that has the stain of sin. Gossips, backbiting, negative criticism must be abhorred. We must not be party to anything that would discourage or put down a brother or a sister. On the contrary, we should cleave to that which is good.

Remember the golden rule always and live by it. **"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"** (Matthew 7:12). If you want people to love you, you should love them first. If you want people to forgive you, appreciate you and speak well of you, do the same to them. If you want your mistakes and oversights to be overlooked, do the same to others too. If you do not want false stories about you to be peddled, do not do that to others too. This is the foundation of our service.

**COMMITMENT AND ZEAL IN GOD'S SERVICE** (Romans 12:11, 12; Acts 18:25; Psalm 69:9)

**"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer"** (Romans 12:11, 12).

**Question 3: *Mention six things that should characterize our Christian service.***

Six things are noted in these two verses as characteristics of our Christian service. First, not slothful in business; second, fervent in Spirit; third, serving the Lord; fourth, rejoicing in hope; five, patient in tribulation; and six, continuing instant in prayer. All these must be carefully considered and cultivated if we want our service to be acceptable to the Lord.

The charge to eschew slothfulness in business applies both to our daily private pursuits and our Christian service. **"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies"** (2 Thessalonians 3:10,11). We should be diligent in the daily execution of our secular work. A true believer must provide for the need of his family members. God places a high premium on dignity of labour.

Besides, women also should not be slothful in domestic business. The homes of Christian women should not be left untidy or their personal body unkempt with the excuse of a heavy load of Christian service to bear. Again, believers who are involved in different aspects of work in the church must not be slothful. The preacher in the church must create time to study and read the Bible thoroughly before ministering to God's people. If you will be a member of the choir in your church, you must be prepared to give the hours of arduous practice required to minister in songs to the people of God.

Fervency of Spirit involves some personal internal motivation and desire to carry on a given task. This is described as zeal. It strips our service of every form of passivity. **"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me"** (Psalm 69:9).

Serving the Lord in whatever capacity - literature

distribution, hospital visitation, prison outreach, etc. - must be performed with cheerfulness and zeal. **"Not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."** Our service must be **"as unto the Lord"** (Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 4:23,24).

### **THE SACRIFICIAL LOVE AMONG THE BRETHREN (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 5:13)**

**"Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality"** (Romans 12:13).

#### ***Question 4: How and what can we distribute to meet the needs of other believers?***

Here, we have the commandment of the Lord concerning our service. It is a responsibility for all believers. Some feel they are so poor that they have nothing to distribute. But they miss it. While we may not have something tangible or material to share, we can speak kind words to comfort the sorrowful and encourage those who are discouraged (1 Thessalonians 1:2,3). Our love should not be partial, passive or theoretical. We must show mercy to the needy and give to meet the needs of other saints. **"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother has need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him"** (1 John 3:16,17).

Supreme love for God and for our fellow men attracts divine blessings. There will be divine favour and supplies to meet our needs. God will answer our prayers and fulfil His promises in our lives and endeavors when we pray. He will make our days like **"the days of heaven upon the earth"** (Deuteronomy 11:21).

So, we must happily lay down our resources for the good of the brethren if we say we love the brotherhood. This is the New Testament commandment. It is the summary of the law and the prophets put together. We must serve one another in love.

## THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Revelation 21: 1).

**TEXT:** Revelation 20:11-15

**The** present age in which we live is referred to in the Scriptures as the "**last days**" (Hebrews 1:1,2). The series of events in these last days predicted in the Bible is often referred to in theology as "eschatology". Eschatology is the branch of theology concerning final events such as death, judgment, heaven, hell and the end of the world. The focus of this study is the New Heaven and the New Earth.

The New Heaven and the New Earth "**wherein dwelleth righteousness**" will be made by God where the redeemed shall dwell with Him forever (Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:12,13; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2,3; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5). This present, sin-polluted earth will pass away after the Great White Throne Judgment (Psalm 102:25,26; Isaiah 51:6; 65:17; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21: 1). No unclean thing will be found in the New Heaven and the New Earth. There, we shall know each other, our knowledge having been perfected. There will be no more curse on anything or night, but the glory of the Lord will be the light thereof. It is a place everyone should look forward to as we toil here below.

**Question 1:** *What is the revelation of the Scripture concerning the New Heaven and the New Earth?*

**UNPLEASANT STATE OF THE PRESENT EARTH:** (Genesis 3:17-19; 1 Samuel 15:23; Job 5:7; Ecclesiastes 1:2,3; 2:23; Isaiah 24:5,6; Romans 8:20-22; Job 31:40; Revelation 8:13)

This present earth has been polluted by sin. And this can be traced to Adam's disobedience to God's commandment in the Garden of Eden. As a result, the earth came under a curse (Genesis 3:17-19) and this has greatly impaired its fertility. In other words, the earth has since been unable to reach its potential. Besides, man's efforts are visited by

blasting, mildew, insects, wet weather, and floods because of the curse thereby cutting off all expectations of full happiness while he labors here on earth.

**Question 2: *What necessitates the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth?***

This present age, also called the Church age, is marked by evil, the dominion of Satan, darkness, ungodliness, lust, murder, lying and all manner of sin. The Scripture refer to the present world as an **"evil world"** where the believer wrestles **"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"** (Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 6:12). That effectively makes the earth a battleground in which the Church is not left out. There is a continuous denial of God, Christ, faith, sound doctrine and Christian living (1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; 3: 1-8). The devil and all his fallen angels walk to and fro the whole earth. The atmospheric heavens are polluted by their activities as they roam all over the world to spread woes and sorrow among God's creation.

Believers today groan under the harsh and cruel conditions of the earth. There is mutual and universal grief or intense agony and continued suffering. The inhabitants of the earth are in a world of misery and death, and all people in every age have experienced it. They look forward to a change - a New Heaven and New Earth wherein dwells righteousness and holiness.

**STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1- 7,16-26; John 14:1-3; 2 Peter 3:7,10-14)**

**"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."** God's plan is to replace this corrupted and evil earth and atmospheric heavens with a new earth and a new heaven that will match His glory, holiness and righteousness. This gives a good picture of what shall become of the present earth and heavens. All what we may call beautiful edifices and empires today will melt away in fervent heat. The glories of men and all the so-called "wonders" of this world shall not stand the fervent heat. The

New Heaven and the New Earth are secure and safe and entirely free from any taint of sin. Therefore, the consequences and effects of sin are absent in it. Thus, there is no death, sorrow, pain, tears, or separation from God (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:4). As God created the present heavens and earth, so will He create the New Heaven and the New Earth which will be NEW in quality and in TIME.

The great, holy and eternal heaven will have New Jerusalem as its capital. This is the capital of the eternal state called the "Bride" because of its virgin beauty and unstained state. Here, Christ and all the saints, from all ages, will reside forevermore. Indeed, all things will be new. This is the place Jesus spoke about when He said, **"if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"** (John 14:3).

***Question 3: Describe the beauty and blessedness of the New Heaven and the New Earth.***

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, is a material city and not a mystical one. Its beauty is beyond human description. About 1,500 miles each in length, breadth, and height, the streets are made of pure gold, and as clear as glass. With walls of jasper and its twelve foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones, it has twelve gates with twelve pearls. The entire city wall is pure gold, as clear as glass. There will be no temple there; the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

**"And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.** The redeemed of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into the city. The gates of the city shall not be shut, day or night. The pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb. The tree of life by the sides of this river bears twelve manners of fruits monthly and the leaves are for the healing of the nations. **"There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever"** (Revelation 22:5).

Life and living in this eternal city will be glorious. It will be



a life of fellowship (1 Corinthians 13:12), rest (Revelation 14: 13), full knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:12), holiness (Revelation 21 :27), joy (Revelation 21 :4), service (Revelation 22:3), abundance (Revelation 21 :6), glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) and worship (Revelation 19: 1; 7:9- 12). Words are insufficient to describe this new creation.

**Question 4: *Describe the life of inhabitants of this eternal city of God.***

**INHABITANTS OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH** (Revelation 21:7; 2:10,26-28;3:12,21; Zechariah 8:8; Hebrews 8:10; 1 John 3:2,3; 5:4,5; 2:15-17; 2 Peter 3:11-14; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Knowing that life in this eternal city will be glorious, it is important to know those who will be in that city and what it takes to partake of this divine provision.

The Scripture is clear on the kind of people that will inherit the New Heaven and the New Earth. Inhabitants of this glorious city are those who overcome sin, Satan, the world and its din. So, sinners must repent and be saved while believers must continue to overcome sin to be there. **"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son"** (Revelation 21 :7; 12: 11). This victory is one that is habitual. **"He that overcometh"** implies one who daily maintains his victory over sin and Satan. To be an inhabitant of that city, there must be a current experience of salvation. Those with historical salvation will not be able to make it. This simply means that backsliders must return to the Saviour immediately and not rely on testimonies of yesteryears. All who will dwell with Him in that city must be like Him (Revelation 21:3; Colossians 3:4).

**Question 5: *Who is qualified to be in the New Heaven and the New Earth?***

False prophets, sin and evil must not have dominion over us if we hope to inhabit that great city. We must flee from all appearances of evil. In times of persecutions or temptations, we must overcome to be part of this great inheritance (Revelation 2:10,26-28). The overcomer is the one who prevails and triumphs over all the works of the devil. The overcoming life begins with genuine repentance

and faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

**PUNISHMENT OUTSIDE THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH** (Revelation 21:8; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Hebrews 2:3; 9:27; 12:14; Revelation 20: 14, 15; 22: 15)

There is punishment awaiting the unrepentant who chooses to ignore Christ's sacrifice and continue to live in sin. The Scripture is not silent on the eternal misery of the wicked. It reveals that they will be banished from the new city and cast into hell. They will suffer torments eternally in the lake of fire.

**Question 6: *Describe the plight of those who miss the New Heaven and the New Earth.***

The truth that everyone has only one life to live (Hebrews 9:27) should make the believer remain faithful and steadfast in the Lord, the sinner should repent and be saved and the backslider to return to the Lord for restoration. Neglect of this "**so great salvation**" will be visited with divine wrath. We must live consistently holy lifestyles so as not to miss the glories of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

God has the ultimate plan to judge sinners who remain obstinate to His call to repentance. "**And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire**" (Revelation 20: 15). Having seen what is ahead, the need to prepare adequately for that glorious world cannot be overemphasized. And the time to prepare is now!

## DAVID BRINGS BACK THE ARK TO JERUSALEM

**MEMORY VERSE** “And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” (2 Samuel 6:17).

**TEXT: 2 Samuel 6:1-23**

**F**or many years, the Ark of the Covenant had been out of public glare, tucked away in the house of Abinadab. The nation of Israel lived in denial of it throughout the reign of Saul, except once when he requested its presence (1 Samuel 14:18). Now that David, a man after God’s heart, had taken over power in Israel, he decided to establish his kingdom in the Lord and on godly principles. As a first step, he set out to bring the ark of God into the city of David and restore proper worship. His action also reflects his gratitude to God for sparing his life and fulfilling the promise to establish his kingdom. Though David’s first attempt to bring back the ark failed because they “**sought him not after the due order**” (1 Chronicles 15:13), he did not give up, but made necessary corrections and eventually brought the ark to its rightful place.

**Question 1:** *What can we learn from the initial failure and David’s final resolve to bring back the ark?*

**THE DECISION TO BRING BACK THE ARK** (2 Samuel 6:1-4,6-10; 1 Samuel 4:3-6; 1 Chronicles 15:3; 1 Corinthians 10:9)

“And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims” (2 Samuel 6:2). The ark meant so much to the children of Israel because it symbolized God’s holy presence, power, and blessing (1 Samuel 4:3; Joshua 3:13; 2 Samuel 6:11). Its obscurity during the reign of king Saul spelt gloom and defeat for Israel, even after its return from the land of the Philistines (1 Samuel 6:7-21; 7:1,2). This

must have spurred David and the entire nation of Israel to thirst for its return.

David's decision to bring back the ark is highly commendable because, for Saul's forty years in the saddle, he relegated the ark of the Lord to the background. It was not surprising that he made so many mistakes, lived in disobedience and died a tragic death. Children of God should cultivate the presence of God's Holy Spirit and live in obedience to His word so as to escape the multiple pitfalls associated with divine absence. The ultimate desire of every child of God should be to attract God's presence into their families, businesses and homes. Just like David decided to bring back the ark, we should long after God's presence, power, righteousness and harvesting of dying souls into His kingdom.

With the support of thirty thousand chosen men, the king **"set the ark of God upon a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart"** (2 Samuel 6:3).

**THE DEMISE OF UZZAH FOR CONTEMPT** (2 Samuel 6:6-10; 2 Kings 2:23-25; Psalm 19:12,13; Hebrews 10:29; 2 Peter 2:10)

Although commendable, David's decision to bring back the ark was not according to the laid down procedure. While it was in transit towards the city of David, **"Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God"** (2 Samuel 6:6,7). Uzzah's action was termed a transgression before the holy God and he was struck dead for being presumptuous.

The children of Israel had been instructed on how to transport the ark from one place to another; and the responsibility was given to the Levites (Numbers 1:50,51; 1 Chronicles 15:15). It amounted to an act of presumption or taking God for granted that the ark was transported in a cart, talk less of Uzzah or any other person attempting to hold it. The Israelites had earlier been warned to avoid presumptuous sin. **"And the man that will do**

**presumptuously... even that man shall die... And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously”** (Deuteronomy 17:12,13).

God is all-knowing. Uzzah’s supposed zeal smacks of undue familiarity and contempt of His holiness and caused Uzzah to incur divine wrath. He manifested zeal without knowledge and it cost his life. Men ought to know that though God is love, He is also “**a consuming fire**” (Hebrews 10:29). Sacred things must be handled with reverence, care and caution. Believers must avoid Uzzah’s error in their relationship with God and be conversant with His will as stated in His word while zealously serving Him (Romans 10:2). Considering Uzzah’s punishment, we should avoid all rashness and irreverence in handling holy things. God will be sanctified in those who come to Him in this dispensation of grace.

**Question 2: *What lessons can believers learn from God’s wrath on Uzzah?***

Presumption is a canker that heaven-bound Christians should avoid. We should not conduct ourselves in any manner suggesting that we are familiar with God or His word or leaning on our own understanding because we have been long in the faith. Taking decision on spiritual matters without support of the Scriptures is dangerous. Many of the children of Israel lost their lives in the wilderness because of presumptuous acts. The Scripture warns us: “**But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities**” (2 Peter 2:10).

The breach and judgment on Uzzah forced David and his people to abandon the program of bringing the ark back to Israel, albeit temporarily. The ark was, instead, taken to the house of Obbedom. “**And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obbedom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obbedom, and all his household**” (2 Samuel 6:11).

## **THE DEMONSTRATION OF JOY IN THE LAND** (2 Samuel 6:5,12-15,17-19; 1 Chronicles 23:5; 15:16,27; Psalm 81:1)

As soon as David heard that **“The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God”**, he **“went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness”** (2 Samuel 6:12). The king perceived that God had forgiven their transgression and was now favorable to them. As he read God’s frown against them in Uzzah’s death, he also read His favour to them in Obededom’s prosperity. If we repent genuinely and make necessary corrections, God will surely forgive our trespasses (Isaiah 1:18,19; 1 John 2:1).

The blessing that came upon Obededom showed that as the ark was a huge blessing to godly Israel, it was a great curse to their enemies (Exodus 14:20). Happy was the nation and people who obeyed the Lord and had it with them. In like manner, Christ is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to those who are disobedient, but to the believer, He is a Cornerstone, elect and precious (1 Peter 2:6-8). Contemporary believers should give God first place in their lives knowing that He will surely bless them. Those who truly reconcile with Him have the opportunity to enjoy His blessings always (Romans 5:1; 8:31,32). Since Christ is a blessing to all, sinners and backsliders should welcome Him into their lives. He said, **“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”** (Revelation 3:20).

### **Question 3: *What can believers learn from David’s new commitment to bring back the ark?***

Despite the initial setback, David kept the vision of bringing back the ark by correcting his errors and following due order. He did not allow the failure that he had experienced to scuttle the project. This is a great lesson for believers: the giant in them can still rise again if they obey the Lord (Job 22:29; Micah 7:8).

As David and his men brought the ark into the royal city, **“David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod”** (2 Samuel 6:14).

His action was, first, a reflection of how much he loved the Lord. He counted it a great privilege to serve Him. Second, though a king, he forgot his royalty and abandoned himself in God's hands. We cannot serve God with all our hearts if we are too conscious of our position, prestige and fame. If we are obsessed with our social status and what people will say about us, we might not be able to give everything to the Lord. Third, David was not ashamed to be associated with the Lord and His work. Fourth, he served with all his might, heart and soul. Our service to God should not be half-hearted, but total. How believers need to cultivate these attributes of David in order to be their best for the Lord.

As soon as the ark was lodged in Jerusalem, David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to God for His continual favour. Believers must appreciate God for all He has done for them; they should express this in praises and prayers and avoid all forms of unrighteousness and ungodliness. Besides, our worship sessions must be devoid of frivolities and worldliness or anything that would drive His presence away from us.

**THE DANGER OF DESPISING GOD'S ANOINTED** (2 Samuel 6:16; 20-23; Numbers 12:1-10; 16:1-5,31-35; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Psalm 105:15; Acts 23:3-5; 1 Peter 3:10)

David's great and heart-felt service to the nation was misunderstood and despised by no distant person but his own wife, Michal. She felt that her husband-king was not dignified enough before the people and had behaved in a manner unbecoming of royalty. **"...And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!"** (2 Samuel 6:20). She had forgotten that it is a great honour to be associated with the King of kings and, anyone thus privileged should count their richest gain but loss and pour contempt on all their pride. David never forgot his humble beginning. He did not think he was too big to sing and dance before God. Rather, he humbled himself not minding his royal status. No one should be too 'great' to serve God or too 'dignified' to



undertake any assignment for Him. Jesus says, **“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels”** (Mark 8:38). Michal reproached David unjustly for his devotion; God therefore put her under a perpetual reproach of barrenness. Believers are not to speak evil of God’s servants or despise those that are sent by Him to feed them with the word of life (Ecclesiastes 10:20).

***Question 4: What are the dangers of despising God’s word or ministers?***

It is instructive that believers must strive to uphold and bring back the presence of God where it is noticed to have departed. They must restore His praise in their personal lives, fellowship, community and nation through holy living. Sinners and backsliders too, should welcome Christ, the living ark, into their lives and make Him their Master and Lord.

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever**” (2 Samuel 7:16).

**TEXT:** 2 Samuel 7:1-29

David brought back the ark of God to Jerusalem in the preceding chapter and began to enjoy a reign of peace and rest from all his enemies. While ruminating on divine goodness, mercies and presence he had enjoyed in times of war and peace, he broached the idea of building a temple for God, a project Prophet Nathan promptly endorsed. That same night, however, God came to Nathan and gave him a message for David. As noble as his plans were, he did not have the Lord's approval. Truly, **“There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand”** (Proverbs 19:21). God had another plan for him and his posterity that far exceeded what he had conceived. What a great and marvellous God we serve: One whose thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8,9). We thus learn to commit all our ways into His hands and lean on Him to fulfil all that He has promised us.

**Question 1:** *What was David's concern in the text and how does that apply to believers today?*

**GODLY CONCERN FOR A BEFITTING PLACE OF WORSHIP** (2 Samuel 7:1-3; 1 Chronicles 17:1,2; Proverbs 11:14; Nehemiah 1:3; 2:17-20; Haggai 1:4,8; Psalm 69:9; John 2:14-17)

**“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest roundabout from all his enemies; That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains”** (2 Samuel 7:1,2). Though David was chosen and anointed by God to be king over Israel, he went through trials, temptations and hardship. His ascendancy to the throne would have been practically impossible given the array of forces and obstacles that confronted him. While ruminating over his travails and numerous divine interventions that brought him from tending the sheep to the throne, David thought it right to use his moment of peaceful reign to serve God by

way of building a befitting place for His ark. He wanted to reciprocate divine goodness by doing something for His glory. Thus, he considered it unethical to dwell in a stately palace while the ark of God dwelt within curtains.

Grateful souls who have enjoyed divine benevolence cannot be contented living in comfortable houses while the church of God is in shambles. God is not happy with indifference to building a befitting place of worship for Him. **“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house”** (Haggai 1:4,9). Like David, believers whom God has lifted up to great estates in life should think of how to use their privileged positions and fortunes for the glory of God and the expansion of His Kingdom, rather than live to please themselves only.

***Question 2: What do believers learn from David’s proposal to build a house for God?***

David, however, did not embark on this noble plan without consulting the Lord. He sought counsel from Prophet Nathan. This is a clear rebuke to all believers who lean on their own understanding. The Bible says, **“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety”** (Proverbs 11:14). We should seek godly counsel on immediate and future plans so as to receive guidance, whether in the choice of career, marriage, projects, property acquisition or on other issues of life.

From Nathan’s wrong approval of David’s plan and God’s eventual revelation of His mind, Christian leaders should learn to lean on God as they carry out their God-given assignments. Samuel made a similar mistake when God sent him to anoint David to replace Saul. Thus, ministers should be patient in spirit and pray so as not to mislead those who come to them for counsel.

**GOD’S COVENANT WITH DAVID AND HIS POSTERITY** (2 Samuel 7:4-17; 1 Chronicles 17:3-15; 2 Chronicles 21:7; 7:18; Isaiah 9:6, 7; 55:3; Matthew 9:27; Psalm 89:3,4,28,29)

God directed Nathan to reveal His mind concerning the project of building a befitting place for Him. Though He rejected David's proposal to build a house for Him, saying, **"Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in..."**, He acknowledged and appreciated his intention. The execution of the project was to be handled by his son, Solomon who said, **"the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name"** (2 Chronicles 6:8,9; 1 Kings 8:18). God reserves the right to reject or approve of our good intentions.

Prior to the revelation of the covenant, God reminded David of his humble beginning as a shepherd boy and how divine benevolence lifted him to the throne, granted him success and victory over all enemies, bestowed the divine presence on him and made him a great name (verses 8,9). He also spoke about granting His beloved people of Israel a permanent settlement and protection from their enemies. He ensured that they possessed the land of Canaan and settled them in a nation that could not be conquered by surrounding enemy nations. With the revelation of the past and present favour bestowed on David and His plan for the children of Israel, God made a covenant of mercy with him saying, **"...I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever"** (2 Samuel 7:12-16). This is referred to as the Davidic covenant. This covenant is not only with David but with his posterity. A covenant is a legal or contractual agreement between two or more parties with conditions for its execution.

### **Question 3: *Explain God's covenant with David in the text.***

God's covenant with David had both immediate and future fulfilment. One, the **"seed"** of David who would build God's house found immediate fulfilment in Solomon who built a temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 17:13; 22:9,10; 28:6). But a more perfect fulfilment was in Christ who was called the Son of David (Matthew 1:1; 9:27; Luke 1:32). Two, Solomon built a physical temple, but Christ came to build spiritual temples for God's dwelling (1 Kings 8:17-20; Zechariah 6:12,13; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Three, Solomon was enthroned king over the kingdom of Israel but Christ, the **"Son of David"** was crowned the King of kings and shall reign literally in the Millennium Kingdom; He shall reign forever (Isaiah 9:6,7).

Four, it is a covenant of perpetual mercy, unceasing and **"sure mercies of David"** (Isaiah 55:3) which Solomon enjoyed. It also relates to Christ's work of redemption through which penitent and sincere seekers would receive divine mercy. It was this unfailing mercy in the Davidic covenant that two blind men requested when they cried, **"Thou Son of David, have mercy on us"**. Five, God promised to chastise David's seed if they disobeyed Him. Nonetheless, all Israel shall be saved at the Second coming of the Lord. Christ, the Seed of David, only bore chastisement for the sins of mankind for the sole purpose of our redemption.

### **Questions 4: *Explain the double fulfilment of the Davidic covenant through his seed and how we can benefit from it.***

Moreover, the Scripture reveals that God raised Christ as the promised Seed of David to be our Saviour; **"...he raised up unto them David to be their king... Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead... he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of**

**Moses**" (Acts 13:22,23,33,38,39). So, forgiveness of sins, justification, salvation, healing, deliverance, righteousness, holiness, Holy Spirit baptism and innumerable blessings have been procured by Christ for all and are obtainable only by mercy and grace through the Davidic covenant. Besides, believers shall also reign with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom. The literal reign of David and Solomon ended long ago but the blessings of the covenant will forever be enjoyed by those who believe in Jesus Christ.

**GRACIOUS APPRECIATION TO GOD AND PETITION FOR CONTINUED FAVOUR** (2 Samuel 7:18-29; 1 Chronicles 17:16-27; Psalms 102:18,28; Ezekiel 36:37; Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 2:8,9)

After receiving this covenant from God through Nathan, David appreciated His goodness. **"Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears"** (verse 18,22).

**Question 5: *What should believers do when they receive God's favour?***

David was full of praises to God for the favors and mercies bestowed on him. As believers, we should never think our achievements are by our own merit but by grace. **"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God"** (2 Corinthians 3:5). David knew he could not have attained his present status without God. He affirmed that He raised him from a humble background to great honors. Thus, we should ascribe all we have and are to the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8,9).

David afterwards prayed to God to confirm the covenant made unto him. **"And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as thou hast said. And let thy name be magnified forever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before**

**thee**" (verse 25,26). As David pleaded with God to perform His promises, believers should claim God's promises through prayer of faith. Though God has committed Himself to fulfilling His promises, He requires that we pray for their fulfilment. **"Thus, saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock"** (Ezekiel 36:37). This underscored David's petition that God should do as He had promised. God has made great provisions pertaining to life and godliness through Christ and has given us precious promises through which we can enjoy them. Believers need to acquaint themselves with God's promises concerning every area in their lives and pray to claim them.

God fulfils His promises to those who believe and trust His faithfulness. He answered David's prayer and fulfilled His promises in the covenant through the incarnation of Christ (Luke 1:30-33). As God made a covenant of mercy with David, so will He make with everyone who establishes a relationship with Him. Those who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness will enjoy all other provisions. God's promises of abundant life of holiness, dominion, healing and health, deliverance, protection, provision, and heaven, are available for appropriation by all believers.



## DAVID EXPANDS HIS KINGDOM

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put the garrisons, and all they of Edom became David’s servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went” (2 Samuel 8:14).

**TEXT:** 2 Samuel 8:1-18; 10:1-19

Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, annihilated major enemies of the nation but left the various tribes to conquer the remaining ones within their allotted territories. However, due to lack of zeal and love for the Lord, none of the tribes was very successful in this regard. Had each tribe accomplished total destruction of the enemies, there may be no need for David to fight any war. With time, these nations grew stronger and became snares to Israel. When David became the king, he had to wage wars against them, relying on God’s assurance and promise that “**...thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever**” (2 Samuel 7:16). The Lord gave him victory, expanded and consolidated his kingdom.

In our texts, David initiated aggressive campaigns to conquer and subdue all enemies who dwelt on the land that the Lord had promised the children of Israel. He was successful in this campaign as he subdued all of them.

**DAVID’S CAMPAIGNS AND CONQUESTS** (2 Samuel 8:1-8; 1 Chronicles 18:1-6; Genesis 3:15; Psalm 8:2,3; Revelation 20:1-4,7-9)

After God’s covenant with David, commonly called the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:1-29), the king embarked on a series of wars with renewed vigor against surrounding nations. This was in line with God’s commandment that “**thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them**” (Deuteronomy 7:2). Prominent among the nations listed for destruction were the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Syria, Amalek and Edom. And in that order, the Philistines were smitten and subdued (2 Samuel 8:1). The Moabites were subdued, reduced to the level of servants

and made to pay tributes (2 Samuel 8:2). The Ammonites and the Syrians were all smitten, subdued and made servants (2 Samuel 8:12; 8:3; 10:15,16). The Edomites in league with the Amalekites and other nations that threatened to render previous victories fruitless were conquered by troops led by Abishai and Joab (2 Samuel 8:13,14; 1 Chronicles 18:12; 1 Kings 11:15). The Ammonites' capital city of Rabbah was besieged by Joab (2 Samuel 11:1) and finally conquered by David (2 Samuel 12:26-31).

These wars of David with the surrounding nations had a greater significance: they specifically encapsulate the great conflict which was ordained from the beginning (Genesis 3:15). They appear to portray the continuation of the spiritual battle between Satan and the lineage of David from which the Seed of the woman was to come. The victories also foreshadow the victory of the Son of David over Satan and the nations which will mass against the millennial city (Revelation 20:7-9).

***Question 1: How central is the Davidic covenant in both the new and old testaments?***

All the seven nations that David warred against were a confederate of proud, selfish, idolatrous war mongers (Psalm 68:30). They, like Satan, fought against the counsel of the Most High and sought to exterminate the people of God. Their confederacy is described in the Psalms. **"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us"** (Psalm 2:2,3).

***Question 2: In spiritual terms, what do the wars of David typify?***

In all of David's wars, the Lord preserved him wherever he went. His victories, protection and preservation in the midst of foes should encourage contemporary Christians. **"The Lord preserveth the faithful"; "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely"; and "shall be saved"** (Psalm 31:23; Proverbs 10:9; 28:18). We must live by the word of God if we expect to be kept by His power. Every believer who evangelizes, delivers the oppressed and engages in

Christian service is in a holy strife (Philippians 1:27; Ephesians 6:12; Jude 3) and might be exposed to dangers as David but God will always protect His own. Christ said: **“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).

**THE DEDICATION OF SPOILS OF WAR** (2 Samuel 8:9-18; 1 Chronicles 18:6,13; Psalm 31:23; Deuteronomy 32:41-43; Proverbs 10:9; 28:18; Luke 12:7; 2 Samuel 8:10,11; 1 Chronicles 18:9,10; Acts 4:34-37; 20:35)

David gathered all the spoils of war along with other presents brought to him and deposited them in the sacred treasury for future use. The king's piety is an example which Christians of all ages should follow.

**Question 3: *What treasure must an individual contribute to the kingdom of God?***

Today, the first treasure we must dedicate to God is our hearts. Others – gold, silver, houses, land, talent – must equally be laid at His disposal. Our time should also be used for His glory as we take time off to share the gospel with other people.

**Question 4: *What can believers learn from the grateful heart of David to the Lord?***

By laying the best of his treasures before the Lord, David exhibited an unselfish spirit. When his gold and silver increased, he thought of God and the overriding national interest. The Bible says, **“if riches increase, set not your heart upon them”** (Psalm 62:10). Secondly, he displayed a grateful spirit. He recognized that battles were never won by brawn or brain, but God's providence (1 Chronicles 29:10-14). Thirdly, he exemplified a faithful spirit. The best and the greatest portion of his spoils were devoted to God (1 Corinthians 4:2; Proverbs 3:9,10; Luke 19:13). Finally, his act suggested a devotional spirit.

David was also diligent in appointing qualified leaders into various offices for easy administration of the kingdom (2 Samuel 8:14-18). He was the king and overall head; Joab, the military commander; Jehoshaphat, the recorder; Zadok and Ahimelech, the priests and Seraiah, the secretary.

Benaiah was a sectional head over the Cherethites and the Pelethites and David's sons were chief rulers. By devolving power to other sectional heads, David was in a better position to oversee and supervise his rapidly expanding kingdom. So, the king's territory suffered no damage.

### **DAVID'S VICTORY OVER THE AMMONITES AND SYRIANS** (2 Samuel 10:1-19; Judges 11: 4-6; Deuteronomy 31:6-8; 1 Corinthians 16:13,14)

David displayed outstanding quality of kindness to the Ammonites. But their rejection of that kindness led to further expansion of his kingdom. Heeding the wrong advice of his princes, Hanun humiliated the ambassadors sent by David. Provocative as it was, David did not make any move until the Ammonites enlisted the help of other nations in a confederacy against Israel. **"...The children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ishtob twelve thousand men..."** (2 Samuel 10:6). The display of war tactics, courage and bravery of David's army under Joab and Abishai saw to the defeat of these nations and the Ammonites became slaves to Israel.

#### ***Question 5: What can we learn from David's kindness and the response of the Ammonites?***

David's deed of kindness to the Ammonites and their response throw up some vital lessons. One, it is always good to show kindness. David, like our Lord Jesus Christ, was full of compassion and mercy even to the merciless. We need to emulate such because we can win more souls into the Kingdom by our deeds of kindness to sinners. Two, we must depend on God, not on the arm of flesh, for guidance before taking important decisions. Hanun's reaction to David's kind gesture, based on the advice of the princes brought evil upon him and his people. Three, sinners and backsliders are consumed with fear and insecurity; fear has torment (1 John 4:18). Therefore, sinners should repent and turn to the Lord while backsliders should pray for restoration so as to be bold before the Lord. Four, the tactics and courage displayed by Joab and Abishai are lessons to us in defeating the cunning craftiness of Satan who is always waging war against believers. Prayer and

obedience to the word of God will help believers to plunder Satan's strongholds and liberate the captives for Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Five, all things work together for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28). The twin means of aggressive campaigns and kindness assisted David to expand and consolidate his kingdom. At the end of time, people who make themselves enemies of the cross of Christ will be subdued and punished while those who embrace His mercy and love will reign with Him forever.

## **DAVID'S KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually” (2 Samuel 9:7).

**TEXT: 2 Samuel 9:1-13**

**O**ur text opens with David’s question expressing his desire to extend kindness to the house of Saul, for Jonathan’s sake. In spite of Saul’s unprovoked persecution and oppression, David remembered the sacrifice and selfless love of Jonathan and determined to reciprocate it. Usually, most leaders who assume office against all odds embark on revenge missions against their real or perceived enemies. David did not. He did not allow the gall of bitterness to develop into hatred against Saul’s offspring. Also, his new position as king did not becloud his sense of gratitude towards a man who, at the risk of his own life, saved him from the sword of Saul. Such is the attitude of a person whose relationship with the Lord is sound and convincing.

How David went about seeking and restoring Saul’s estate to his children and grandchildren and the special privilege accorded Mephibosheth, though lame in both feet, form the discourse in this study.

**DAVID’S DETERMINATION TO RECIPROCATE JONATHAN’S KINDNESS** (2 Samuel 9:1,2; 10:2; 1 Kings 2:7; Matthew 5:44,45; 18:35; Mark 11:25; Ephesians 4:31,32)

**“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”** (2 Samuel 9:1). David’s request to extend kindness to the house of Saul was out of a genuine and sincere heart. This attitude marked him out from people of the world who would have seen their ascension to power as an opportunity to deal with their perceived enemies or those who had persecuted them unjustly. Recall that David was hunted for a long time by Saul for no fault of his. He hid in caves and mountains in order to escape his

spies and murderous attempts. But for God, he would have died before getting to the throne. Now at the helm of leadership in the nation, he could have marked out Saul's descendants and those who took sides with him for elimination. If he wanted to avoid being labelled a vengeful king, he could use the services of the secret agents to carry out the executions. David's attitude shows that, one, he was forgiving. He generously forgave Saul for his unjustified persecution and other oppressive actions against him. He ignored the tendency to remember the hurt and harm inflicted on him. Two, in spite of his other challenges, he did not overlook the good deeds of Jonathan, but remembered his unqualified love. Three, he did not draw a battle line between him and the house of Saul; he drew them with a cord of love. Four, he did not subtly develop a program or policy of systematic oppression, elimination or annihilation of the house of Saul as some would do against their opponents.

**Question 1:** *Itemize the godly qualities exhibited by David in this passage.*

David's action is in perfect consonance with God's express word against retaliation, victimization and oppression. It says, **"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing"** (1 Peter 3:9; see also, Leviticus 25:17; Romans 12:17; Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 20:22; 24:29). Instead, we are admonished to show mercy and kindness even to the undeserving (Matthew 5:44,45). True believers in Christ should be willing to forgive, ready to do good and support the oppressed, downtrodden people. The idea of retaliation or revenge should be strange to them. They should imbibe the godly traits manifested **"in the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel"** (2 Samuel 23:1).

**Question 2:** *What can believers learn from David's attitude to show kindness to everyone left in Saul's family?*

**DEMONSTRATION OF GENUINE KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH** (2 Samuel 9:3-8; Isaiah 43:4,5; 41:8-10; Titus 3:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:18,19; 1 Cor. 15:10)



**“And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may shew the kindness of God unto him?”** (2 Samuel 9:3). David demonstrated genuine love and kindness to Mephibosheth, despite his physical deformity. Mephibosheth could have been ignored easily by the society, but he became a delight of the king of Israel. The king brought him to wine and dine at his table, thus giving him the status of a prince among the privileged few in the land. Mephibosheth himself confessed that he was no better than **“a dead dog”** (2 Samuel 9:8). The king’s action can be likened to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to mankind which is not premised on personal qualification or endowment, but on Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross. No one merits the privilege of getting to heaven and sitting with the King of kings in His kingdom, but for His work and atonement on our behalf. Christ Jesus reconciled mankind to himself, even when we were unworthy and dead in our sins and trespasses (2 Corinthians 5:18,19). He, through His priceless mercy, quickened us (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13) and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6,7). Christ is the Qualifier of the unqualified, the Saviour of the condemned and Lifter of the downcast. He remembers the forgotten, exalts the downtrodden and gives hope to the discouraged.

***Question 3: How should believers relate with the less-privileged in the society?***

Mephibosheth was awe-stricken because he least expected the honour that was given to him. He exclaimed, **“What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?”** (2 Samuel 9:8). Redeemed sinners who benefit from the mercy of God need to acknowledge, with all humility, that it is of the mercy of God that they got saved, not by personal qualification (Ephesians 2:8,9; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Titus 3:5). The realization of this should keep every believer in check lest they fall from grace.

**THEY DELIVERY OF SAUL’S ESTATE TO MEPHIBOSHETH** (2 Samuel 9:9-13; 4:4; 19:28-30)

**“Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house”** (2 Samuel 9:9). King David did not have any sinister motive in bringing

Mephibosheth to the palace other than to honour him and deliver his fathers' estate to him. Here, he fulfilled his promise by ordering Ziba, Saul's servant, to restore all that belonged to Saul to Mephibosheth. Backsliders who return to Christ will have their lost inheritance of peace, joy of salvation, assurance of sonship and righteousness restored to them. Also, their portion in the kingdom of God shall not be taken away when they go to meet the Lord.

David delivered on his promise to Mephibosheth, first, to show kindness to him for Jonathan's sake; second, to exalt him from obscurity and uplift him from despondency associated with his physical challenge; third, to ensure that justice was done since his father's inheritance rightly belonged to him; and fourth, so that the remembrance of Jonathan would not be forgotten from among his people. As King David used his position to favour Mephibosheth, believers should use their positions of authority to give hope to the hopeless, help the less-privileged and ensure that justice and fairness reign.

Ziba, Saul's servant promised to diligently carry out the king's biddings concerning Mephibosheth. **"Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons"** (2 Samuel 9:11). Like Mephibosheth was invited by King David into the splendor of the palace, Christ is inviting all people into His kingdom with a promise of freedom from sin, satanic oppression, bondage to the enemy, etc. Those who honour this invitation shall be blessed here and hereafter. He says, **"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"** (Revelation 3:20).

**Question 4: *What are the benefits believers in Christ stand to enjoy today?***

Believers are blessed with the privilege of salvation, divine healing, sound health, deliverance, victories in life's battle, and eventual reign with Christ. Like Mephibosheth, we should not allow our physical, social or financial disability to rob us of the great provisions and privileges that abound

in the kingdom of God.

**“So, Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet”** (2 Samuel 9:13). Saul’s grandson continued to enjoy the great privileges thrust upon him by the king in Jerusalem. A major condition of continuing to enjoy God’s great salvation is to abide in Him (John 15:4,5; Hebrews 3:14). He promised that if we continue in His word, we shall abide with him forever. **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”** (John 14:3).

## DAVID COMMITS ADULTERY

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die” (2 Samuel 12:13).

**TEXT:** 2 Samuel 11:1-27; 12:1-31

**D**avid had been a great warrior right from his youth when he was shot to limelight by defeating Goliath, the Philistine giant. He maintained consistent victories over Israel’s enemies even as he roundly defeated the coalition of the Syrians and Ammonites in the preceding chapter. In the present texts however, we see this valiant warrior humiliated and prostrate before a hideous enemy, the flesh. David yielded to the demand of his flesh and committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife in violation of God’s commandment that “**Thou shalt not commit adultery**” (Exodus 20:14).

Rather than repent immediately after the ugly incident, he assailed to hide it, perhaps for fear of suffering public disgrace. Thus, David hatched different plots that included getting rid of Bathsheba’s husband. He had forgotten that the word of God says, “**there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known**” (Luke 12:2). God sent Prophet Nathan to open up his can of worms and pronounce divine judgment on him and his posterity for his sinful acts. Believers need to learn that the flesh is a deadly monster that must be constantly tamed to avoid ruining their chance of entering heaven. They must imbibe the principle of self-discipline to avoid suffering similar spiritual fate. Apostle Paul said, “**I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway**” (1 Corinthians 9:27). David’s sin of adultery, his unsuccessful cover-ups, the wrath of God he incurred, and his repentance are discussed in this lesson.

**Question 1:** *Identify the enemy that conquered David in the texts.*

**DAVID'S TEMPTATION AND FALL** (2 Samuel 11:1-4; Proverbs 7:26; Genesis 3:1-7; 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 4:1-7; 6:13; 26:41; Luke 4:13; 1 Corinthians 7:2; 10:13, 1 Timothy 6:9; Job 31:1)

**“And it came to pass after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him; and all Israel, and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah, But David tarried still at Jerusalem”** (2 Samuel 11:1).

There is something significant about this period: it was the time kings **“go forth to battle”**. But David chose to tarry still at Jerusalem. This was a very costly mistake because there is a time and purpose for everything on earth. If David had been in the right place at the right time, he would not have been a victim of Satan's ploy to soil his testimony and garment of righteousness.

Rising from his bed at eventide and walking about on the housetop exposed the great warrior-king to a battle he never prepared for and, unfortunately, he lost out. This degrading defeat was not in the hands of enemy nations but from his own flesh. This evil had been the undoing of many people - leaders, great men like Samson, Reuben, Judah, Solomon and many contemporary believers. The Scripture warns against **“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...”** (1 John 2:15-17). **“For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life”** (Proverbs 6:26).

Some careless believers have made a shipwreck of their faith because they failed to **“abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”** (1 Peter 2:11).

**Question 2: *In what areas should believers watch against immorality today?***

Christ's teaching on adultery reveals that the sin is actually committed before it happens in real life. He says: **“whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”** (Matthew 5:28). In God's reckoning, everyone who lustfully gazes at the opposite sex is a fornicator or an adulterer even when he has not gone into the real act. Things that

incite and inflame the flesh are projected on multiple fronts in our society today, especially with the advancement of modern technology. No one needs walk around on rooftop before being confronted with David's kind of temptation. Live and still images of nude people litter social media platforms and are accessible on laptops, tablets, and cell phones. Pornography and obscenity in mass media and the Internet is the norm today. But the fact that it is becoming socially acceptable can neither change God's judgment on those who indulge in them.

Believers can overcome this evil by obtaining the sanctification experience, forsaking all appearances of evil, refraining from gazing at objects of temptation, avoiding sinful curiosity and passion, reading and meditating on God's word regularly, praying for preservation from evil and yielding or consecrating all members of the body entirely to the Lord. Job's consecration was: **"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"** (Job 31:1).

**Question 3: *Explain Christ's teaching on adultery and how believers can overcome this evil.***

From David's fall, believers must learn that, one, Satan is watching for their unguarded hour. Two, there should be no place for loose living. Three, the best of saints can be defeated after victory. Four, a believer's fall can have terrible consequences on himself and his posterity. Fifth, the backslider should promptly repent instead of covering up sin. Sixth, God still restores those who sincerely repent of sin.

**DAVID'S ATTEMPT TO COVER UP SIN** (2 Samuel 11:5-27; Proverbs 1:10; Ezekiel 33:12,13; Luke 13:1-3; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 32:3; 1 John 1:8)

**"And the woman conceived and sent and told David, and said, I am with child"** (2 Samuel 11:5). On hearing this, David planned to cover up his sin by plotting to kill Uriah. He recalled him from the war front with the pretext of showing concern for his safety. The king instructed him to **"Go down to thy house and wash thy feet"** but it was meant to ensnare him in his (the king) mess. **"And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide**

**in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing**" (2 Samuel 11:11). Like Uriah, members of the church should maintain their consecration to the Lord. Uriah's self-control (which the king lacked) was a glaring rebuke of his betrayal and sin.

Having failed in his first cover-up effort, the king made Uriah drunk with wine with intent of making him return to his house to meet with his wife. This design was meant to result in a disputed paternity of the child. This also failed. Lastly, David sent a letter through Uriah to Joab, the army commander to set the former up to be killed. Thus, Joab became an accomplice in the death of Uriah. **"And the men of the city went out and fought with Joab, and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also"** (2 Samuel 11:17). David caused Uriah's death contrary to the word of God.

After Uriah's death, David sent and took Bathsheba to be his wife (2 Samuel 11:27). The journey into sin and backsliding goes from one level of degradation to the other. When sinners attempt to cover up sin, more sins are committed. David added murder, covetousness, hypocrisy and criminal conspiracy to his sin of adultery, all because he failed to promptly repent. **"But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."**

**Question 4: *What are the consequences of attempting to cover up sin?***

David's fall was a sad turning point in his life as there was a sharp decline in his life, family, nation and ministry. Believers are warned to flee from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Things were never the same for David after this inglorious and shameful sin.

**DIVINE JUDGMENT FOR SIN AND DAVID'S PENITENCE**  
(2 Samuel 12:1-31; Psalm 51:1-17; Romans 12:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14 Romans 14:10-12; Jeremiah 3:12,13,22; Proverbs 28:13; Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11)

God sent Prophet Nathan to David after the child was born to reveal his sin and the accompanying judgment. Nathan



presented a parable on the merciless act of a rich man who used the only lamb of his poor neighbor to entertain his own guest. David responded in anger and pronounced a death sentence on the anonymous culprit, including a four-fold restitution for being so merciless before he knew that he was actually the offender. Nathan then bluntly revealed: **“Thou art the man”** (2 Samuel 11:7). Like Nathan, believers must faithfully declare the divine message without adulteration so that it can yield the desired fruit of righteousness in the lives of others.

Nathan also declared the grievous judgment of God for his sins. **“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus, saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun... because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die”** (2 Samuel 12:10-14). God is holy and just in His judgments; He hates sin and loves righteousness. Anyone who toys with sin will definitely incur His wrath, irrespective of position, social status, political or religious title.

When David told Nathan, **“I have sinned against the Lord”**, he did the right thing. Believers should learn to accept responsibilities for their conduct and, if in error, should admit and repent promptly. This is because every unpardoned sin, hidden or open, shall be judged. **“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”** (2 Corinthians 5:10). David’s wholehearted repentance and earnest prayer for mercy and restoration is recorded in Psalm 51 as a model for every sinner or backslider on how to reconnect with God and be restored to His favour.

**Question 5: What does God expect all sinners to do today?**

From the eventual repentance of David, we learn, first, that every secret sin is an open scandal before God. What David tried to cover up with the death of Uriah was not hidden from God. Second, **“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished”** (Proverbs 11:21). God will always punish un-confessed sin, no matter the pedigree of the sinner, for God is not a respecter of persons. Third, secret sins eventually leave open scars. What David covered up for close to one year eventually became a scandal that affected many of his children.

It is important for the believer to know however, that the hope and promise of forgiveness is no license to sin. Apart from our ignorance or lack of knowledge of our length of life and when the rapture will take place, the scars that follow a pardoned sin, like we see in today’s study, might be too heavy a price to pay.

As a king, it was commendable on David’s part that he eventually humbled himself before God for his sins. Others deny, with empty boldness, when they are confronted with their errors. Instead of humility and genuine repentance, many choose to bluff their way through blatant lies. God expects all backsliders to repent.

The closing verses of the texts carry mixed blessings. The fruit of adultery David fasted to be preserved died in divine displeasure, but a second child was born by Bathsheba whom David named Solomon, a man of peace in view of God’s promised reign and the peace that he obtained following his restoration. God also sent Nathan to christen Solomon with a second name, **“Jedidiah”** which means ‘beloved by Jehovah’. That this son would eventually take the seat of David reminds us of the amazing grace of God that turned the shameful chapter in the life of David into a story of unmerited favour. God still forgives sins if there is genuine repentance, plea for mercy and faith in Christ, our Advocate and Propitiation (Hosea 14:4; 1 John 2:1,2). Aside victory over sin, there was also conquest of Rabbah, the city of the children of Ammon by David’s army.

## PRECEPTS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

**TEXT:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

**T**he hope of rapture of the saints expounded in the previous chapter is both sobering and comforting. However, mere expectation without thorough preparation will lead to disappointment (Matthew 7:21- 27; 25:1-13; Luke 13:26-30; Psalm 5:5-7; 2 Timothy 2:19). This study focuses on believers’ assurance in respect of last day events, identifies key elements that distinguish saints from sinners, and advocates maintenance of believers’ distinctiveness. Apart from being truly converted to Christ, contemporary Christians must totally conform to the word of God and be tenaciously committed to His cause.

**Question 1:** *What are Christ’s expectations from believers?*

**BLESSED READINESS AHEAD OF THE DAY OF THE LORD** (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4; Isaiah 2:12; 13:9; Jeremiah 46:10; Joel 2:1,11; Amos 5:18; 2 Peter 3:10-14)

**“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”** (1 Thessalonians 5:1,2). In this epistle, the day of the Lord is treated as a period of unprecedented wrath upon humanity for their wickedness, unrepentant posture and rejection of God’s grace offered through Christ (Isaiah 13:6-11; Joel 2:11- 13; 2 Peter 3:10). Unfortunately, sinners are unmindful of this, not for lack of adequate information, but essentially because they are blinded by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Though sinners have access to God’s word, they generally trivialize vital truth, wax gross with unbelief and get inescapably caught in the throes of latter-day indignation (Matthew 13:4-7; Mark 4:4-7; Luke 8:13; 21:34; 2 Corinthians 4:3,4; 1 Timothy 6:9,10; 1 John 2:15,16). However, faithful believers in this

dispensation will not partake of the wrath as they would have left the earth in the rapture to be with Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

**Question 2: *What is the attitude of sinners to the gospel?***

Every rapture-conscious believer should be expectant like the five wise virgins waiting for the return of the bridegroom. One, the unpredictability of the exact moment of its occurrence should always evoke a sense of sobriety and watchfulness (Matthew 24:3-14,36,42- 44; Acts 1:7; Revelation 16:15). Two, Christians should realize that faith in Jesus Christ unites us with other believers. As such, we should not forsake the enriching fellowship of precious believers (Hebrews 10:24,25; Proverbs 27:17; Isaiah 35:3,4). On the other hand, we should avoid needless intimacy with unbelievers in order to avoid spiritual contamination (Proverbs 9:6; John 17:6; Acts 2:40; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Revelation 18:4). Three, believers should “**...not sleep, as do others**” (verse 6). We should avoid every kind of spiritual lethargy and insensitivity that could lead to unwariness and carelessness (1 Corinthians 1:7; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 3:12). Rather, we should maintain self-control (1 Thessalonians 5:6; Luke 22:46; Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 5:14). Four, expectant believers should always seek heavenly treasures above mundane things (Luke 12:34; 21:34; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1-3). Five, since the rapture is expected to launch believers into eternal rewards, we should serve God faithfully and relentlessly (1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 6:10). Six, we should put “**on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation**” (verse 8). Without faith, it is impossible to please God; and without love, it is impossible to serve Him acceptably or reach men effectively with the gospel.

**BELIEVERS’ RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD LEADERSHIP AND THE LAITY** (1 Thessalonians 5:5- 15; Hebrews 13:7,17; 1 Peter 3:22; 4:8; Proverbs 20:22; Luke 6:35; John 13:34,35; 2 Thessalonians 3:13-16; Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:12,13)

In view of the imminent blessed hope, this section exhorts believers to practical holy living among the brethren and

towards others. It also highlights the responsibilities of Christians towards their spiritual leaders. We are expected to “**know**” our leaders. This implies recognizing them as God’s representatives who have oversight functions in God’s house for the advancement of His project in the world through edification and mobilization of the church. Every member must therefore accept, appreciate and obey them in submission to the divine will. Secondly, we are expected to “**esteem them very highly in love**”. Though there is need for continuous personal development of leaders in Christian assemblies, basically, the respect given to them is not earned by physical attributes; it is conferred and commanded. Even where filial or other secular relations exist between a leader and some members in the fold, leaders must nevertheless, be honored “**for their work’s sake.**” Their work is appointed by God primarily for the benefits of the church, and the world. Therefore, a slight on a leader in a Christian setting is an affront to the appointing Authority (Mark 9:37).

The epistle also highlights admonitions that bother generally on responsibilities towards members in a Christian assembly. First, is the maintenance of peace among the brethren and with the leadership. We must deliberately avoid rancor, fault-finding and the like (Romans 14:17-19; Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:13-15; James 3:18). This usually requires forbearing and forgiving offences whenever they occur. Also, believers are exhorted to “**...warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak...**” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Here, Paul tries to correct the widely held notion that these are purely pastoral functions.

### ***Question 3: How can members assist the pastor in his work?***

Born again Christians should assist leaders in a church by correcting erring members in love and truth. One, they should speak against the introduction of corrupting practices or worldly influence in the church. Two, parents must inculcate Christian standards in their children. They must correct strange manifestations in speech, conduct and practice. Three, they can report seemingly incorrigible deviants to the pastor for further help. Four, members

should organize relief for the elderly, bereaved, unemployed or sick brethren. Five, members can carry out diligent and thorough follow-up on new converts with a view to disengaging such from attachment to long held traditions which tend to limit our liberty in Christ. Six, we should dutifully remind one another of the Lord's imminent return and the need to be ready at all times.

As believers, in respect of our dealings with all people, we should **"...be patient toward all men."** This implies that we should not easily give up on the possibility of anyone coming to terms with the truth on repentance, restitution, holiness, comportment to Christian standards or overcoming any obvious weakness. Also, we should not hastily judge the action or motive of others negatively (1 Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 5:22). The last of the admonitions in this section is an offshoot of the foregoing: **"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men"** (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

**BASIC PRECEPTS FOR RADIANT CHRISTIAN LIVING** (1 Thessalonians 5:16-28; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 4:30-32; 1 Peter 1:1-6; Acts 17:11; Philippians 1:10)

While not being needlessly hilarious or frivolous, sobriety is not an excuse for melancholy. **"Rejoice evermore"** (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Compliance with this command is proof of continuing internal joy. However, the joy of the righteous is not a product of mere mundane matters, but a result of right relationship with the Source of interminable joy. The born again rejoices for God's remission of past sins, righteousness graciously imparted, redeemable promises, hope of final redemption and eternal rewards. Even when there is a harrowing experience of hardship, persecution or poverty, rather than being moody, the believer rejoices. A joyful destiny commands a joyful disposition (Psalm 97:12; Proverbs 17:22; Matthew 5:12; Acts 5:41; James 1:9; 1 Peter 4:8,13). Though there will always be need for prayers in the life of a Christian or a church, there should always be thanksgiving for already answered prayers as well as for petitions awaiting answers. **"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"** (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 34:1; Ephesians 5:20;

Hebrews 13:15). Joyfulness and thankfulness are proofs of vibrant Christian faith and God's abiding Spirit.

Our conduct in fellowship or response to God's word determines the level of our spirituality. The admonition, **"Quench not the Spirit"** is of great relevance to Christians in contemporary times.

**Question 4: *Mention some attitudes that can constitute distraction to spiritual growth.***

So, we must avoid every disturbing act such as side talks, attending to phone calls, distracting movement or indecent posturing during fellowship meetings. As believers, we are expected to fuel the flame of the Spirit by regular meditation, self-examination and rededication to God. No one should resist the transforming influence of the Holy Spirit. Correction must be heeded promptly.

**Question 5: *What are the consequences of despising God's word today?***

A disregard of God's word may manifest in lack of enthusiasm to listen to faithful ministers, opposition to sound doctrine, or reluctance to make Scripture-based amends to one's life. Such rebellion pitches one against the Lord, excuses one from His kingdom and makes one condemnable (Psalm 50:22; Hebrews 12:25). However, to avoid the danger of straying into error through a counterfeited process, believers must try to verify the authenticity of any prophecy. This is even more necessary in this end times.

As the epistle winds to a close, three vital recommendations stand out. Firstly, the apostle model's reciprocal supplication between the leaders and the led. While he prayed and assured the church of God's ability, willingness and faithfulness to fully sanctify, he, in turn, requested for their prayers too. **"Brethren, pray for us"** (1 Thessalonians 5:25). Christians must cultivate the habit of trusting God for every need and pray for their leaders. It is instructive that Apostle Paul's request here has no particular specification or limitation. This indicates the need for Christians to pray on all points for both ministerial as well as personal needs of our leaders. Secondly, he advocates mutual affection among members. **"Greet all the brethren**



**with an holy kiss**" (1 Thessalonians 5:26). It was common in Paul's culture to greet friends with a kiss on the cheek. The men greeted other men this way, and the women did the same with other women as an index of personal affection, not romantic love. Thus, the apostle encourages outward physical expression of true Christian love in a way that is culturally acceptable in our localities without breaking scriptural bounds.

Thirdly, by insisting that the epistle be read aloud, he recommends that members are well-informed in the Scriptures.

The study finally concludes with an apostolic benediction, **"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you"** As in all his other epistles, Paul the apostle reminds us of the indispensability of God's Resources at Christ's Expense (G.R.A.C.E). Everything that believers enjoy in Christ is by grace, not on the basis of merit or good works. By God's grace, believers' needs are met, their prayers are answered, they enjoy divine visitation and obtain the Christian experiences that make them walk in godliness and ready for heaven.

## COMMENDATION OF THE BELIEVER AND CONDEMNATION OF THE UNGODLY

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

**TEXT:** 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

**T**he second epistle to the Thessalonians was said to have been written soon after the first one while Paul was still working in Corinth with Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Acts 18:5). The Apostle was informed that his first epistle caused a mixed reaction among the brethren in the Thessalonian church. Many of them were confused about the timing of Christ’s return, while some thought the day of the Lord had already come or that a particular time had been set for it. As a result, they became idle, disorderly and refused to engage in any meaningful work since, according to them, it would be needless in view of Christ’s imminent return (2 Thessalonians 3:11).

The Apostle needed to write therefore to clarify his message on Christ’s second coming and correct perceived misunderstandings. Moreover, he set out in the epistle to comfort the suffering, persecuted saints, and charge the careless, unruly ones to be disciplined and diligent in lifestyle. The chapter under consideration challenges the believer to grow in grace, be exemplary in character, persevering in persecution, and “**be worthy of [His] calling**”, so as to “**fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness**” (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

**Question 1:** *How can Christian leaders ensure the brethren are sound spiritually and doctrinally?*

As a follow-up letter, the epistle is meant to encourage young and persecuted converts to establish them in the sound teaching of the word of God so that they could be preserved in the truth. Soul-winners and workers in the

church should not hesitate to teach and mentor young converts through personal visitation, letter writing, sending of text messages, e-mail or other useful means of communication in order to conserve them in the Kingdom of God.

**PRAISE FOR GROWING AND WORTHY BELIEVERS:** (2 Thessalonians 1:1-4; 1 Peter 2:2; Romans 1:8-12; 1Corinthians 1:4-6; Ephesians 1:15,16)

Paul, the apostle, begins the epistle with his characteristic salutation **“...unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”** (2 Thessalonians 1:1,2). His introduction is similar to the earlier one to the same church (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Here, he is full of appreciation to God for their faith which had witnessed phenomenal growth. **“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth”** (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

**Question 2: *Why did Paul praise God on behalf of the Thessalonian brethren?***

The Christians in Thessalonica grew spiritually in the midst of persecutions. That their faith grew exceedingly implied that they became more and more established in the truth of the gospel. The Apostle expressed his great esteem for them because their lives brought glory and honour to God. He chose to speak of what was praiseworthy in a way of thanksgiving to God. He was grateful, not because the church had a growing popularity in the society, but in faith. Despite their growing challenges, they had a living and abiding grace which made their faith to grow to match their challenges. Obviously, they grew from salvation to sanctification and the experience of the Spirit's baptism. Believers today – whether new or old – should seek to grow steadily spiritually. We should **“all come in the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:14). Indeed, we are commanded to keep growing in the spirit till the day of Christ (1 Peter 2:1,2; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 3:18).

Then he spoke of their “**charity**” – love – abounding. Where faith grows, love will abound, for faith works by love (Galatians 5:6). It is also noteworthy that the Apostle acknowledged their patience and faith in persecutions and tribulations which they endured principally for the cause of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:4). When Christians continue to live for God and labour for the furtherance of the gospel despite their persecution and hardships, they become models and motivation to other Christians.

**PUNISHMENT FOR UNGODLY AND WICKED PERSECUTORS** (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Ezekiel 25:17; Matthew 5:10-12; Hebrews 10:30; Philippians 1:28-30)

As expected, the Thessalonians were persecuted because of their steadfastness and unwavering faith. They were persecuted because they would not compromise and conform to the evils of their day. The Apostle admonished them not to see this as strange because it was necessary **“that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God”** (verse 5). It is certain that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 14:22; Philippians 1:28). As for reproach, ridicule, victimization, deprivation, even martyrdom, Christians should joyfully endure knowing that a great reward awaits them in the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:10-12).

**Question 3: *What should be the attitude of a Christian to persecution?***

When Christians are persecuted, they should not seek revenge or resort to self-pity or compromise with the persecuting world. Rather, they are to rejoice and be glad because they are partakers of Christ’s suffering (1 Peter 4:13).

However, the Lord promises a just and equitable recompense for persecutors who refuse to repent and embrace Christ. **“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you”** (2 Thessalonians 1:6). The Christians’ unjust suffering from persecutors is a sign that the persecutors will experience God’s just retribution. Great indignation will come upon the persecutors because they rejected the offer of salvation, abhorred the light and hated righteousness, purity, the

name of Jesus Christ and the people of God.

This is a serious warning to those who have decided to work at cross-purposes with God and His word. The Lord has fired a warning shot to His adversaries because they shall be taken in their nets if they die persecuting the people of God. They should remember Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, and others. God will surely defend His children.

**Question 4: *Distinguish between the rewards of the unrighteous and the righteous.***

Since God is a God of justice, right recompense of reward will be meted out to both the righteous and unrighteous at the end of the age. Faithful Christian believers will be rewarded with rest from all troubles and glorification in Christ. On the other hand, those who know not God or obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be justifiably rewarded with tribulation and everlasting destruction in eternal lake of fire (Mark 9:42-44).

**PRAYER FOR GODLINESS AND GLORIFICATION OF TRUE BELIEVERS** (2 Thessalonians 1:11,12; Philippians 1:8-11; Colossians 1:9-12; Ephesians 1:15-19; 3:14-19)

Seeing that a great reward and recompense awaits both sinners and saints alike, Paul the apostle resorted to prayers for the believers **“that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power”** (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Prayer is a great resort for necessary transformation in order to please the Lord in all things. To be worthy of God’s high, heavenly and holy calling, to live a life that is well pleasing unto God, we must pray for ourselves and intercede for others faithfully.

In most of the Pauline epistles, we encounter the Apostle’s fondness for prayer for the brethren. To the Romans, he wrote: **“without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers”** (Romans 1:9); to the Ephesians, he said: **“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man”** (Ephesians 3:14,16). This

is a challenge to all Christians, especially leaders to give themselves to praying always for all saints (Ephesians 6:18,19; Acts 6:4).

The content of Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian believers is very instructive. One, he prayed that God would count them worthy of this calling; that is the calling to remain pure and holy in Christ till the day when He shall come to be glorified in His saints. Two, that they might have grace to live godly and glorified lives in Christ. The reason for our creation and redemption is to bring glory to God. Three, that God would fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power in them. Four, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in their lives. Five, that believers would be glorified in Christ. Let all Christians and ministers of the gospel be pre- occupied with the spiritual welfare and wealth of other believers in their prayers and intercessions.

## **WARNING AGAINST DECEPTION IN THE LAST DAYS**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

**TEXT:** 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

**P**aul the apostle taught the Thessalonian recipients of this epistle about the certainty of Christ’s Second Coming. While they were eagerly waiting for His return, some erroneous teachers began to teach among them that the rapture had already passed. Expectedly, this falsehood generated tension, fear and insecurity in their hearts. When this deception, orchestrated to overthrow their faith, filtered into the ears of the Apostle, he wrote to debunk the error as well as re-emphasize the truth he ably communicated in his first epistle to them (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Like Paul, ministers of the gospel should watch against deception in lifestyle and doctrine, commit themselves to untiringly teach the truth that saves, sanctifies and prepares the flock for heaven. The Apostle’s warning is predicated on the danger deception and peddlers of falsehood pose to the Christian faith and our hope of heaven. The Adversary’s purpose is to deceive, discourage, destroy and damn men’s souls through false doctrines (2 Peter 2:1-3).

**MISINTERPRETATION OF THE TIME OF CHRIST’S SECOND COMING** (2 Thessalonians 2:1,2; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 7-11; Luke 21:9,19; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Matthew 24:6-14,31; 2 Peter 3:3-8)

Paul the apostle wrote to the Thessalonian brethren to correct the erroneous teaching that the post-rapture day of the Lord or the day of divine judgment upon the world had come. The implication of this error was that the Thessalonian believers had been left behind. This falsehood gained originality from spurious claims that it was a new revelation by the “**spirit**”, “**word**” of mouth or “**letter**” purportedly written by the Apostle. Some mischievous impostors actually wrote to the church in Paul’s name to make this falsehood believable. On discovering this deceit,



the Apostle passionately pleaded with the church not to believe any doctrines, dreams or revelations that lead astray.

**Question 1: State the error that was spreading among Thessalonian believers and its implication.**

The proliferation of religious literature, audios and visuals and the multimedia channels of spreading falsehood worldwide make this plea more relevant to present-day believers. Besides, **“Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time”** and that **“Many false prophets”** and **“many deceivers are entered into the world** (1 John 2:18; 4:1; 2 John 7). The Apostle clarifies, in consonance with other New Testament scriptures, that deception in the last days will lead to **“a falling away”** from the faith near the Second Coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1,2; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:3-5). This agrees with Christ’s warning that false Christ’s will emerge to show **“great signs and wonders”** in order to deceive (Matthew 24:24). Their ability to conceal their real identity as **“wolves”** in outwardly pious religious gab will make unsuspecting believers let down their guard and become easy preys.

**DESCRIPTION AND DAMNATION OF DECEIVERS AND THE DECEIVED** (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5,8-12; Daniel 7:25; 8:9-11,25; 1 John 2:18,22; 4:1-6; Isaiah 14:12-15; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Hebrews 2:3; Ephesians 5:6; Romans 1:23,24,28-32; 2 Peter 2:1-3)

The Antichrist, the grand deceiver, is described in the text as **“...that man of sin ...the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God”** (verses 3,4). He will be the embodiment of sin, lawlessness, rebellion, blasphemy, wickedness and apostasy. This great world leader who will arise during the great tribulation is also referred to as the beast, prince, king of fierce countenance and the Antichrist (Daniel 8:23-25; 9:26; 11:36; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 13:1-17). He will violently oppose every form of true worship and will enthrone himself in the temple of God, claiming to be God and demanding worship. Those who refuse to worship him will be severely

tortured and many will be martyred.

**Question 2: From the text, why is the Antichrist described as “the man of sin” and “son of perdition”?**

The Antichrist will be empowered by Satan who has been a liar, deceiver, seducer and corrupter from the beginning. He has lying spirits that perform lying wonders (1 Kings 22:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:9). His interpretations of Scriptures, gifts and favors are deceptive and destructive (Genesis 3:4-7; 2 Corinthians 11:3,4; Revelation 13:14-18; 14:9-12). Satan, as Lucifer, deceived about one-third of the angels, and together with them staged a failed coup in heaven against God. His incurable evil ambition of becoming God led to his expulsion from heaven to the earth.

The mystery of iniquity that is already at work through agents of the Antichrist would climax during the great tribulation when, **“with all power and signs and lying wonders”**, the son of perdition will unveil a policy of peace to achieve massive deception. Though looking like a lamb, he will be diabolical and destructive (Daniel 8:24).

As forerunners, present-day antichrists use lying signs and wonders to delude multitudes of people who love miracles more than salvation and worldly ease more than heaven. Interestingly, Christ teaches that we can identify end-time deceivers **“by their fruits”** (Matthew 7:15,16). Modern-day false teachers will not appear outwardly as deceivers but the fruits of their life and labour, message and ministry, fellowship and followers will reveal their true identity as persons who possess gifts without grace, charisma without character, love without light, tenderness without truth, hospitality without holiness, worship without the word, eloquence without enlightenment, prosperity without purity and success without salvation. As deceivers, they pretend and pose as shepherds, but they do not protect and feed the sheep with the substance of the word of God; they devour the sheep and make merchandise of them.

**Question 3: How can believers identify false prophets and teachers today?**

The Apostle’s rhetorical enquiry that: **“Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”** referred to the truth he had communicated in his first

epistle to them. Having placed a curse on himself or any other preacher or angel that would introduce any other gospel, he re-emphasized the same truths he had always taught. Christ's teaching on salvation, restitution, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism, marriage, rapture, Second Coming, heaven and hell are unchanging. Believers should cultivate the habit of regular intake of the Word to avoid losing their conviction and the risk of being tossed about by destabilizing winds of erroneous teachings. Ministers also should employ all available means to constantly remind the flock of God's word to preserve them from being preyed by deceivers.

The Lord Jesus will slay the Antichrist at His coming. **"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."** People who do not love or who abandon the truth that saves, sets free and sanctifies are given over to **"a reprobate mind"** and **"strong delusion"** of deceivers and will be eternally damned (Romans 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:11). God expects everyone who hears the gospel to believe and be saved but **"he that believeth not shall be damned"** (Mark 16:16). Believers must therefore beware lest they throw their souls into the mouth of **"ravening wolves"** disguised in **"sheep's clothing"**.

**DIVINE RESTRAINT ON THE ANTICHRIST** (2 Thessalonians 2:6,7; Genesis 6:3-5; Isaiah 59:19-21; 1 John 2:18; 4:3-6; Galatians 5:16,17; Revelation 20:1-3)

Prior to the day of the Lord and the full manifestation of the Antichrist, the Apostle hinted that the church will **"be taken out of the way"** at rapture. The Holy Spirit who indwells the Church now **"withholdeth"** or restrains the full manifestation of the Antichrist. He will not be available after the rapture to hold back lawlessness from overflowing and overturning the world.

The Holy Spirit restrains, limits and neutralizes the plans and activities of agents of Satan through the believers' prayers, gospel- preaching and godly influence. Indwelt by the Spirit, the believer is a co- laborer with and battle axe of God. Seventy disciples of Christ dethroned Satan from the communities they reached with the gospel; Paul the apostle broke the influence of Bar-jesus from Sergius Paulus and

Philip loosened the hold of Simon the Sorcerer over Samaria by the operations of the Holy Spirit.

**Qu. 4: *When will the man of sin be revealed and why?***

Apostle Paul uses the words **“And then”** in verse 8 to show that it is only after the rapture that the Antichrist or the **“Wicked”** will fully manifest.

**SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION OF HEAVEN-BOUND BELIEVERS** (2 Thess. 2:13,14; John 15:16,19; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Acts 15:7-9; Ephesians 1:4-7; 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 4:3,4,7,8; 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:12-14; 2:10,11; Colo. 3:4)

Moving from the revealed damnation of the Antichrist, false prophets and their deluded followers, the Apostle now praises God for **“brethren beloved of the Lord.”** Having responded to God’s call through the gospel, they were converted (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

It needs be underscored that God, in His sovereignty, has chosen everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9) and offers this salvation through the gospel. **“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit.”** And those who accept His choice, repent of sin and believe in Christ are saved. Essentially, God initiates our salvation: **“The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself”** (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2) but we must appropriate His provisions for our salvation for it to become effective in our lives (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15,20). Those who reject or turn away from the Lord make His choice of none effect in their lives (Matthew 13:15; Acts 28:27) and incur eternal suffering. Moreover, God expects everyone He saves to be conformed to Christ through sanctification of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:4-7; 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,4,7,8; 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:12-14) in preparation for the final salvation. Sanctification is a gracious experience of inward holiness provided by Christ and performed by the Spirit in consecrated and surrendered believers. The ultimate outcome of our salvation, **“the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”** will be the crowning joy and blessedness of our response to God’s call and choice.

**Question 5: *Why are salvation and sanctification experiences indispensable for everyone to enter***

*heaven?*

**EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS** (2 Thessalonians 2:15-17; Romans 15:4-7; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Philippians 2:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3; 4:13-18; 5:11-15; John 14:16-18; Hebrews 6:18-20).

In view of the predicted “**falling away**” from the faith, the appearance of the son of perdition, the rise and deception of false prophets and antichrists, the danger of being seduced by counterfeit miracles, false signs and lying wonders, and the necessity of possessing “**the love of the truth**”, these brethren were called to greater faithfulness and unwavering steadfastness. Saved and sanctified, they were exhorted to “**stand fast, and hold the traditions which [they] have been taught, whether by word, or by our epistle.**” Contrary to the doctrine of eternal security of saved souls, the Apostle clarified that present salvation does not automatically lead to final salvation. Believers must persevere and maintain their spiritual experiences of salvation and sanctification while upholding unadulterated truths of the Word to obtain eternal glory.

The “**traditions**” Apostle Paul refers to here are not “**the traditions of men**” which “**make the word of God of none effect**” or “**spoil**” or damn people’s souls (Mark 7:6-9,13; Colossians 2:8). Any traditions which are contrary to the word of God are worthless, dangerous and soul-damning.

The Apostle prays for the Thessalonian believers in the closing verses of this chapter to receive divine comfort. He recognizes Christ as well as God the Father as the Source of our comfort, love, consolation and hope. Suffice it to say that comfort or consolation from earthly sources will fade away and terminate at death. Redeemed by God’s love, we have “**everlasting consolation**” and “**good hope through grace**” which shall continue to strengthen and sustain us to the conclusion of time when we shall enter the everlasting Kingdom.

While still on earth, God who saves us through Christ also enables and establishes us “**in every good word and work.**” The good word and work are the indisputable proofs of our conversion. Being establish in them by way of good works is the antidote to yielding to falsehood.

## ADMONITION AGAINST IDLENESS

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:12).

**TEXT:** 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

**A**postle Paul ended his epistle in the previous chapter with prayers for the Thessalonian brethren. He prayed that God would comfort and establish them in the faith. As he rounded off this second epistle to the Thessalonians, he exhorted them to “**pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith**” (2 Thessalonians 3:1,2). While he had condemned unruly behavior exemplified by laziness (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 5:14), it was apparent that there were some that did not take the admonition seriously. Thus, he had to re-echo the same message with greater emphasis.

Apostle Paul was informed of the disorderly walk of some brethren in Thessalonica, and he used the information to teach them on the expected attitude to heretics and the disobedient within the fold. Information to ministers that is aimed at promoting godliness and practical obedience to God’s full-orbed truth is scriptural and such should be encouraged.

**PURPOSEFUL MUTUAL PRAYING FOR GOSPEL WORK** (2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 2 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; Acts 4:24-31)

“**Finally, brethren, pray for us**”. Paul underscored the importance of prayer in the concluding chapter of this epistle. He strongly believed in the potency of prayer. While he was a prayerful person himself, he enlisted the brethren to pray for him. By this request, he wanted all God’s children to be partakers in His work. While everybody cannot be pulpit ministers, every person can pray for the success of the gospel. His request for prayer is not only for ministers but also for all saints (Ephesians 6:18).

## **Question 1: What was Paul's prayer request for the Church?**

Apostle Paul's prayer request was hinged on three factors. One, that the word of the Lord may have free course. Two, that the word of the Lord be glorified. Three, that they will be delivered from evil men. These requests give us a guide on how to pray for the messengers of God and their messages. It is instructive that these requests were not centered on mundane things but on spiritual matters. The gospel is to be freely applied to all men, and it is glorified when it is attended by large number of recipients, heard with reverence, cheerfully obeyed and believers' lives transformed by it.

There had been several oppositions to the gospel. The Sadducees and Pharisees constituted great opposition in Christ's time. Despite all the antagonisms by evil spirits, and men energized by Satan, the gospel had and will remain invincible. Jesus said: **"upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"**. The church will continue to move forward. Apostle Paul's expression of confidence in God and the brethren teaches that ministers of the gospel are to be positive in their expectation from members, believing that God will help them.

The coming of Christ and the need for patience while waiting cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore, the Apostle prayed that **"the Lord direct [their] hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."** In the midst of sufferings, trials and persecutions, the Lord expects that we manifest patience because **"...he that shall come will come, and will not tarry"** (Hebrews 10:36,37). The hope of Christ's imminent return should comfort the hearts of true Christians who are bereaved, suffering, sick and persecuted. It should also make us watchful and compel us to preach the gospel as Christ commanded.

**THE PROBLEM OF IDLENESS AMONG THE SAINTS** (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Timothy 3:5; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Galatians 6:9)

**"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from**



**every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us**". Paul had exemplified, both by teaching and practice, the indispensability, desirability and dignity of labour. Yet, there were some who walked disorderly among the brethren as they refused to work. The mistaken belief that Christ would soon come induced some of the Thessalonians to idleness. They opined that if Christ was to come soon, of what value would their labour be? But they erred. God, at the beginning, commanded Adam to till the ground. Christ said, **"I must work"**. Apostle Paul's confession showed that he labored so much with his hands. **"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you."**

The idle person is injurious to himself and to others because he will lack necessities of life and be dependent on others. Those who are idle in the church are not helpful because they will lack the resources to provide for the needs of their families and support gospel work. Truly needy brethren cannot receive any assistance from them. They are also injurious to the community because they will discourage industry.

***Question 2: Enumerate the possible dangers that are associated with idleness.***

The church must not encourage idleness through charity for the indolent. Rather, brethren are to withdraw fellowship from such as a corrective measure. **"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly"**. The goal of discipline is to correct by making such people ashamed. Withdrawal of fellowship and admonition are vital tools in helping the idle people who despite encouragement to work and still remained unyielding.

***Question 3: What are the types of disciplinary measures that had been used in the Scriptures?***

While everyone should work to earn their living, they should be encouraged to give to the needy as well as God's work. There are always genuine cases of need. People may

be adversely affected by disasters like famine, socio-economic downturn, unpaid salaries, incapacitating sicknesses and others. To such, the Lord expects the church to rise to the duty of help and hospitality and furnish them with such things as are necessary. With such sacrifices, God is well pleased (Hebrews 13:16).

**APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION FOR SAINTS** (2 Thessalonians 3:16-18; Romans 15:33; John 14:27; 20:21; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Romans 16:20)

Apostle Paul ended this second epistle with an apostolic benediction: **“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all”** (verse 16). This has been his pattern of writing. Here, he wishes them peace which the Lord alone gives. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. To have certain and durable peace, sinners must repent of their sins and accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, while believers must abide in Christ. The world is indeed full of upheavals and this will definitely escalate as the age winds down, but believers are assured of peace. **“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:7).

**Question 4: *Identify the prayer wishes of Apostle Paul for the Thessalonians.***

As his usual practice, the apostle showed affection for the Thessalonian brethren and commended them to the grace of God. God's grace is all that every heaven-bound pilgrim needs as he journeys towards heaven. Grace is the unmerited favour God freely bestows on the morally weak but repentant sinner by saving him from sin. We need grace to live victoriously and serve God acceptably. Grace and peace are like twin blessings that make the believer live the days of heaven on earth. Peace is the effect of grace obtained from God within the soul (Colossians 1:14; Romans 5:1). It is the divine rest and tranquility in the heart that attests to the reality of cancelled sin and entry into God's family (Ephesians 2:18,19). How we need to ask for grace and peace for ourselves, family and others!

## CHARGE AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so, do” (1 Timothy 1:3,4).

**TEXT:** 1 Timothy 1:1-20

**T**he epistles of Paul to Timothy are called Pastoral Epistles. They are written to exhort, instruct, warn and encourage ministers and believers to remain godly and steadfast in the faith. This first epistle consists in admonitions, plainly setting out the duties of faithful pastors. Before Paul exhorted Timothy to stand against false doctrine and advance the gospel of Christ, he had declared himself as the “**apostle of Jesus Christ**”. He addressed this epistle to Timothy whom he described as “**my own son in the faith**” (verses 2).

Paul and Timothy were on gospel itinerary to Macedonia via Ephesus. They however discovered that false teachers had begun to undermine the great work done in Ephesus. The Apostle had to excommunicate the two ringleaders of the heresy, namely, “**Hymenaeus and Alexander** (1 Timothy 1:20). He left Timothy in charge of the church there in Ephesus and went to Macedonia. While there, he wrote two letters, one to Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5) and another to Timothy in Ephesus with a charge to maintain doctrinal purity. “**As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightiest charge some that they teach no other doctrine**” (1 Timothy 1:3).

A study of this epistle is relevant to our contemporary world and churches today because of the similarity between their situation then and now. Both the Old and New Testaments speak against the admittance of false teachers in the fold. “**But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak or that shalt speak in the name of other gods, even the prophet shall die**” (Deuteronomy 18:20).

Though we are not to put people to death in the New Testament dispensation, we must resist false teachers and their teachings. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ warns us in His sermon on the mount to be wary of “**false prophets**” who, though come in “**sheep’s clothing**” are actually “**ravening wolves**” (Matthew 7:15).

**Question 1: *What should be our attitude as Christians to false prophets?***

**EXPLICIT WARNING AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE** (1 Timothy 1:1-11; Matthew 16:6-12; Galatians 1:6-10; Matthew 24:4,5,11-13,24,25; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1; Jude 4,12-19)

Paul, as a good shepherd and a minister with the mind of Christ, was mindful of the evil false doctrine can do in the church of God. False doctrine cannot be separated from false teachers just as a book cannot be separated from the author. He explicitly warned Timothy “**to charge some that they teach no other doctrine**” other than the ones he had handed over to the churches at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse and Thessalonica. He warned that no innovation should be made either in the apostle’s doctrine itself, or in the manner of teaching it. This brings to the fore the need for a continuous watch against false doctrine wherever it surfaces. And as believers, we should not “**give heed to fables and endless genealogies**”. We must bear in mind that sound doctrine is corrupted, not only by false opinions, but also by utterances which do not help our faith in any way.

It is well known and documented that false teachers lead sinners farther away from the cross of Christ by preaching the doctrine of eternal security, promoting worldliness, lesbianism, homosexuality, polygamy, gay marriage and antichrist philosophies. They attempt to take believers out of the narrow way by perverting the doctrine of holiness and righteousness. Therefore, every form of false doctrine should be vehemently rejected and resisted by believers. “**Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (Jude 3).

**Question 2: *What should be the believer's attitude to false doctrine today?***

Believers should take their stand against false doctrine by obeying God's word in all circumstances, avoiding false teachers like one would a contagious disease and follow **"charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned"**. This, of course, is what keeps them from veering off from the path of righteousness into empty disputes on spiritual things, or **"vain jangling"**.

Apostle Paul also emphasizes the purpose of the law. For instance, the ceremonial law was a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ, and He is the end of that law for justification to everyone who believes. But false prophets do not use God's words for the purpose for which they were given. In other words, they do not interpret the law according to its spirit and design; hence, they do not use it lawfully.

Again, the expression, **"the law is not made for the righteous"** needs to be explained for clearer understanding. It does not mean that the righteous are lawless. It simply means that the law does not stand against the righteous; it does not condemn him because living by grace, the righteous lives to the glory of God, and so, does not expose himself to its reprimand. This is not true of unbelievers. But the false prophets will interpret this passage out of context to mean that the believer should disregard the laws of God. This is a pointer that false prophets and teachers are spiritual criminals who will receive God's inevitable eternal judgment for polluting the gospel of Christ and recruiting candidates for hell.

**Question 3: *What penalty awaits teachers of false doctrine and their supporters?***

**EXTRAORDINARY SALVATION OF A WICKED AND PERVERTED SINNER** (1 Timothy 1:12-17; Acts 4:12; Proverbs 28:13; John 3:1-7; 1 John 3:8,9; Ephesians 2:8,9; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 3:20; Acts 9:1-18)

The miraculous transformation and regeneration that Paul had when he encountered the only Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ lingered in his memory for the rest of his life. His salvation was extraordinary; it was through a divine encounter. He had been a great persecutor of early

Christians and was the one who took custody of the clothes of the mob that stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:58). But the Lord arrested him, and he admitted that his salvation was by mercy and not by merit. No one gets saved on account of good works but only by grace.

It was on his way to Damascus to arrest the Christians that he had an unforgettable encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ that led to his surrendering his life to Christ. Describing his sinful state before salvation, Paul, the apostle, said he “**was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious**” person; classifying himself as the foremost of sinners.

**Question 4: *What was the spiritual state of Paul before his salvation? How can a sinner be saved?***

Paul’s salvation confirms that God’s grace is always available to save all sinners who come to the Saviour for salvation, and that all sinners who truly repent of their sins will surely receive God’s pardon. The blood of Christ is powerful enough to blot out past sins. All that a sinner has to do is to recognize the biblical conclusion that he is a sinner (Romans 3:23), confess and forsake those sins (Proverbs 28:13) and accept Christ as Lord and Saviour (Revelation 3:20). Paul’s salvation demonstrates that all sinners who repent will be saved. If an unrelenting and dreadful sinner like Paul could be saved, every sinner can repent today and have their names in the book of life, no matter how vile. God is ready to forgive (Isaiah 1:18).

**EXPRESS CHARGE TO WAR A GOOD WARFARE** (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 6:12; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:3,4; 4:7,8).

Paul here charged Timothy to be faithful to the Captain of salvation, contending against sin and striving to save sinners. Timothy, like every believer today, was expected to contend with earnestness as a Christian and a minister in the holy service in which he was engaged, and endeavor to secure the victory. That is the good warfare. As a true soldier of Christ, he was not expected to permit false doctrine in the church of God. He was supposed to “**contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints**” (Jude 3). That is what we are also expected to do

today because false teachers are crafty wolves clothed as faithful prophets. They are daring in their approach, deceitful in appearance, destructive in their application of biblical principles and determined to attack innocent souls (1 Kings 13:11-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 2 Timothy 2:17,18).

A Bible scholar likens a believer who embraces false teaching or give up the faith to a soldier who throws away his armour and to a sailor or pilot who abandon his helm and compass. Those who thus reject God and the gospel have made shipwreck of their faith, an allusion to ships that are ruined by storms on the high sea.

True believers must watch against false teachers and their doctrines; pray for grace to maintain the standard of holiness; expose and warn others of the dangers of false doctrine; remain steadfast and unmovable in God's service; live blameless and harmless lifestyle and determine to make heaven at all costs.

***Question 5: What should true believers do to resist false doctrine and teachers?***

Paul echoed the importance of avoiding throwing away the faith citing the examples of Hymenaeus and Alexander whom **"he delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme"** (verse 20). Such was a replica of the type given to a man who committed immorality in the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 13:2,10). The church should not tolerate any form of sin especially heresy. Those who are found to be heretic in their teachings should be vehemently rejected and strictly avoided, however highly placed in the church, before they pollute the whole of congregation (Titus 3:10).

As believers who have pledged our allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords, we should make up our minds to get involved in purging the church of false prophets and their teachings by joining the church leadership in exposing them. False teachings embedded in tracts, books, CDs and VCDs should be avoided by the membership of the church. Every member is to **"Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14), but not at the expense of sound doctrines.



## THE NEW BIRTH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

**TEXT:** John 3:1-7

**T**he new birth is the foundational spiritual experience everyone must have. Jesus underscored the importance of this experience when He spoke to Nichodemus, a ruler of the Jews (John 3:3). No one can claim to have a relationship with God or enter His Kingdom without being born again. Any favors God bestows on people are designed for this singular purpose: to draw them to obtain this experience. He has also promised to bestow countless other blessings on people who seek and obtain His righteousness through the new birth experience.

**Question 1:** *Why is the new birth an indispensable Christian experience?*

The importance of this experience cannot be overstressed. The new birth is the beginning of a life- long experience of walking with Christ. Of all the experiences that a natural man can have, the new birth is the most glorious. Without it, the spiritual life cannot be enjoyed.

Nicodemus, a man of high social and religious standing in Israel, marveled at the message and necessity of the new birth. This shows that salvation cannot be obtained through participation in religious activities, memorizing the doctrines of the Bible and trying to be morally good. An inward change wrought by the Holy Spirit is the only means that makes the new birth possible.

There are those who believe that they are saved because they have godly parents. Others bask in being raised in a Bible-believing church. Yet, some people hold to “good works” as their hope of salvation. All who want to make heaven their eternal abode should realize that apart from Christ, every other ground is “sinking sand.”

**A RULER AND HIS PROFESSION** (John 3:1,2; 7:50- 53; 19:39; Acts 26:24-29)

Our text reveals a ruler of the Jews “named **Nicodemus**” (verse 1). Nicodemus was not just a Pharisee, he belonged to the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling religious council. As a Pharisee, he was learned in the Mosaic laws. He was a defender of the law and would not want it to be broken (John 7:50,51). This prominent religious leader of the Jews came to Jesus by night. He had an issue bothering his mind. As a Pharisee and a ruler, he was not bold enough to come to Jesus within the public glare. Yet, he could not stay away either because he felt there was something uncommon about Jesus.

**Question 2: *Why are many people reluctant today to surrender their lives to Christ?***

In his confession, Nicodemus declared Jesus as Master (Rabbi); that He is a Teacher come from God and an extraordinary miracle worker with God’s backing. He acknowledged His great and unusual ministry. His encounter with Christ was not like those of other Pharisees and Jewish leaders who were looking for ways to ensnare Him. Nicodemus was sincerely concerned for his soul and was convinced that Christ could show him the way into the kingdom of God. Convinced that something was missing in His life, though he was religious, he came to Christ to know the truth. How eternally rewarding if people would cast aside their religious garb and descend from their lofty positions to seek the most important experience in life!

**THE INDISPENSABLE QUALIFICATION FOR ENTRY INTO GOD’S KINGDOM** (John 3:3,5-8)

As Nicodemus spoke of Christ’s greatness, Jesus answered, **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (verse 3).

Jesus was unequivocal in revealing that there is an experience which qualifies one for the kingdom of God. This experience is variously called the new birth, salvation, regeneration, being born again, justification, conversion, redemption, etc.

To be born again is to become a new creature in Christ. It is a change or transformation that comes through the renewing of the mind by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. John Wesley described the new birth as “that great

change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life; when He raises it from the death of sin to life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is created anew in Christ Jesus; when it is renewed after the image of God, righteousness and true holiness. Then the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility, aggression into meekness, hatred, envy, malice into a sincere, tender love for mankind. It is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned into a Christ-like mind.

***Question 3: Describe, in your own words, the new birth experience.***

Man was created by God in His own image and likeness. God is holy and righteous and so man originally was holy and righteous. Then sin came, and man became depraved, without any ability to do good. From Adam's fall, all that are born inherited the sin nature. Indeed, after the fall: **"there is none righteous, no, not one."** All are qualified for hell. Therefore, everyone born into the world must be born the second time if they are going to be delivered from the nature and power of sin. The new birth experience is not optional for all who desire to enter into heaven.

***Question 4: Mention some religious activities that people often mistake for the new birth experience.***

There are activities that do not qualify as substitutes for the new birth experience. Examples of these are regular church attendance, being a worker or leader in the church, ability to recite large portions of the Bible, being a moralist and a keeper of the law, observing the ordinances of water baptism, Lord's Supper, and such like. No religious activity can take the place of the new birth. Religious pilgrimages and other rituals or ceremonies will not do.

It is noteworthy that Jesus said the new birth is by water and the Spirit (John 3:4,5; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 1:23; John 15:3; Titus 3:5). The word of God is compared to water that cleanses because it washes away sin. As the word of God is proclaimed, the sinner and the self-righteous see the need to repent and trust the Word for forgiveness and cleansing. Jesus said, **"ye are clean through the word**

**which I have spoken unto you”** (John 15:3).

Also, the Spirit of God is indispensable in the work of regeneration. There can be no transformation except there is a renewing of the mind by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is One that reproves of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8). The natural man cannot change himself. The Spirit brings conviction as one hears the Word, leading to repentance and conversion.

**COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS** (John 3:6-10; Ephesians 4:17,18; Romans 9:6,8; Mark 12:32-34; Acts 17:23-25; Isaiah 48:8; Acts 28:27; John 3:6; Galatians 5:19-23; John 1:12,13; Job 14:1; 15:14; Colossians 1:13,14; John 6:37; Psalm 51:5; 2 Peter 1:3,4).

**“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:6,7).

The Lord compares the similarities and differences between the natural and spiritual birth. Although a baby exists in its mother’s womb, it is not counted as part of the family before it is born into the world. So, it is with spiritual birth. One may be interested in the Word of God, fellowship in a gospel church but cannot be regarded by God as part of His family until he or she is born again.

Secondly, an unborn child is completely in darkness. Even though it may be breathing in the mother’s womb, it does not see the sun and everything around. It has eyes, but it cannot see. So are sinners or the unregenerate. They may have physical eyes, but they are blind spiritually. Again, the unborn baby dwells in total darkness even though it might be deriving some nourishments from the mother. The same is true of anyone who is not born again: he may enjoy some provisions and protection from God, but he is still in darkness spiritually.

Thirdly, an unborn baby seems to be very near yet very far. Its conception may bring joy into the hearts of other members of the family. Older siblings may rejoice and expect to have someone added to the family. But it is difficult to predict its future.

Fourthly, an unborn baby derives sustenance from its mother, yet it does not know her; the mother is the unknown personality supplying all its needs. Although, the Lord gives the sinner light, food, rain, etc., he does not know Him as Father.

As there are similarities, so there are also contrasts. The natural man is ruled and controlled by the dictates of the flesh. But to be born of the Spirit is to experience transformation and live by the Holy Spirit. Two, when a man is born of the flesh, he is born of the will of man. But when such becomes born again, they are born by the Spirit of God.

Three, the natural birth brings one into the world of sin. Spiritual birth takes away from the world of sin into the kingdom of God.

Four, natural birth takes place without one's personal decision. But spiritual birth needs a personal decision.

Five, when one is born of the flesh, one possesses the depraved, human nature but when born of God, one possesses the divine nature.

**Question 5: *How is the natural birth different from the spiritual birth?***

**STEPS TO THE NEW BIRTH** (Romans 3:23; Luke 18:10-14; Mark 1:15; 1 John 1:9; Romans 10:4-10).

First, the sinner must acknowledge his sinful state because all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Excusing our sin will not do. We must agree with God that we are sinners.

Second, repentance is compulsory. True repentance leads to confession and forsaking of all known sins (Mark 1:15; Proverbs 28:13).

Third, recognize the need for a Saviour. No man can save himself. All our acts of righteousness are filthy rags in the sight of God.

Fourth, believe that Jesus died for our sins. Anything besides the blood of Christ cannot atone for sin (John 3:16).

Fifth, the sinner must invite Jesus into his life as personal Saviour and Lord. Jesus will not save anyone against their

will; He will not do it by force. He stands at the door of the heart knocking and waiting for to be let in (Revelation 3:20).

Sixth, the sincere seeker must believe that his sins are forgiven (John 1:12). All those who truly repent and receive Christ become new creatures.

**Question 6: *What is the evidence of the new birth experience?***

Many people have been unable to experience this great blessing because they think their money, water baptism or tears will buy the experience for them. Others think their sins are too great that they cannot be so easily forgiven. The truth is, God will not accept any other means of salvation since Christ died for our sins. God counts sin as sin, whether big or small. Believe in His love and faithfulness to be forgiven as He has promised.

Marks of the new birth are clearly outlined in the scriptures (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:11; Galatians 5:22,23; 1 John 3:9; Ephesians 4:23-32). When this miracle happens in our lives, we will know it. Heaven also knows because the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are involved. Our neighbors, family members will know by the fruits we bear. Jesus said: **“by their fruits, ye shall know them.”** When a person is born again, he begins to hate the sins he used to like before. His language, dress code, relationship, etc. will change. Old things will pass away. All lying, stealing, drinking, smoking, cheating, partying, will become things of the past.

The new birth experience is real and glorious. It is the gateway to God’s inexhaustible blessings on earth and in heaven.

## HELL: THE DESTINY OF SINNERS

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

**TEXT:** Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:3-15

**T**he fact and reality of hell are recurring and important themes in the Scripture. It is vividly captured as the ultimate place of agonizing torment and everlasting punishment in unquenchable fire for those who reject the offer of salvation provided by God through Jesus Christ. Yet, the teaching on hell is not popular in many religious circles. Many people have tried to rationalize the truth of the Bible on this subject due to the frightening credentials of the teaching on hell. Against the attempts of many philosophers to make men believe that hell is not a material place of life after death but a phenomenon of the present, the scripture provides unambiguous and ample illuminations of the fact that hell is the indisputable abode of sinners. That the unregenerate, mortal man does not find the knowledge of a certain divinely ordained eternal punishment a convenient subject to face is pitiable. The Scripture truly affirms that **“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 Corinthians 2:14).

**Question 1:** *What is the essence of teaching the doctrine on hell?*

It should be emphasized, however, that the essence of the teaching of the doctrine on hell is not to scare or frighten hearers but to get them adequately prepared to avert the danger that is inherent in being in that terrible place throughout eternity.

**WRONG NOTIONS ABOUT HELL** (Psalm 9:17; 1Corinthians 2:14; 1:18,21,23)

It is unfortunate that as fearsome as hell is, erroneous and unscriptural views of false teachers have largely interfered



with the essence of the message, that is, to forewarn wayfarers of the danger that lies ahead. Even in religious circles, Bible-carrying individuals are not spared this assault.

**Question 2: *Mention some erroneous beliefs of religious sects about hell.***

Chief among these false ideas about the eternal doom of the wicked are the doctrines of purgatory and annihilation. The doctrine of purgatory has it that there is an intermediate state between death and appearance before God in judgment where the unrighteous dead remain for a while to suffer during which their concerned saviour can “atone” for their sins and “qualify them for heaven”. The second false doctrine – annihilation – states that sinners will be burnt up in hell at once. These doctrines are as false as they are unbiblical. But strange enough, most of the congregations that uphold them believe that there is a place of blessedness where the righteous will live in full consciousness for ever after death. The future punishment of the wicked is eternal while the sinner at death automatically receives an express translation into hell **“where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”** (Mark 9:48). The needless controversy over the reality of hell is not strange. Actually, no man believes in hell because he simply wants to; he believes in hell because he is compelled to do so.

**THE FACT AND REALITY OF HELL** (Psalm 9:17; Matthew 7:15-19; Revelation 14:10,11; Matthew :22,29; 10:28; 18:8,9; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5; 16:19-31; Matthew 25:41-46; James 3:6).

It is true that eternal punishment is not a pleasant subject for discussion, yet it is a fearful reality, an awful and tragic fate of those who fail to appropriate God’s provision for their salvation here on earth. Since God is holy, sin must be punished. To speak otherwise is to **“speak not according to this word... because there is no light in them”** (Isaiah 8:20). Even commonsense agrees that, ‘if there is a paradise for virtues, there must be a hell for [vices] crimes.’

When a sinner dies, his soul immediately proceeds to hell where, with full consciousness, he tastes the excruciating

pain that hell offers. The story of Lazarus and the rich man best illustrates the eternal punishment awaiting sinners (Luke 16:23,24). Hell is also a place where the memory of the damned comes alive. The rich man recalled his riotous living while on earth as well as his five brothers that were yet unsaved. Beside the acute discomfort of hell, the regret of an error of judgment while on earth on the part of the unsaved, presents an everlasting torment on its own.

**Question 3: *What does the emphasis in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ teach us about the reality of hell?***

The word of God is clear with respect to the teaching on hell. Every part of Scripture makes it clear that hell is a place of everlasting torment in unquenchable fire. The regular usage of hell in scriptures, apart from the allusions drawn to it by the Lord and other Bible characters, lend enough credence to its reality.

The Lord Jesus Christ spent considerable time affirming this reality. He warned the city of Capernaum, for instance, that it would be turned into hell because of its iniquities (Matthew 11:23,24). He did not mince words as He warned repeatedly on the danger of hell and the need for His listeners to steer clear of it (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; Luke 12:5). He made it clear that there was everlasting punishment and an eternal abode for all sinners who die unsaved (Matthew 7:15-19; 18:9; Revelation 14:10,11; Matthew 25:41-46). He also repeated three times the fact that, in hell, **“their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched”** (Mark 9:43- 48).

The Apostles were also united in their warning against the danger of hell as an eternal place of doom for sinners (Romans 2:5-9; Hebrews 10:26,27; James 3:5,6; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 7,23). John the Baptist was very clear on the issue and made it plain that **“trees that bringeth not forth good fruit”** shall be **“cast into the fire”** (Matthew 3:7-10). Therefore, the church cannot take a less specific position on the teaching. Those who know the truth (and perhaps taught others) but fail to live righteously should bear in mind that God is no respecter of persons and that **“the soul that sinneth it shall die”** (Ezekiel 18:20) and shall have its **“part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”**

(Revelation 21:8).

**ESCAPING THE DANGER OF HELL** (Matthew 7:14; Isaiah 52:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1; Revelation 21:1-8,27; 22:14).

**Question 4: *To avoid hell, what does God command the sinner and the believer to do?***

It will be utter foolishness for anyone to deceive themselves for any reason and trifle with sin and its consequent eternal doom. Everyone – within and outside the church – must live with the consciousness that **“the wicked shall be turned into hell”** (Psalm 9:17) irrespective of age, sex, social status, educational background, nationality or tribe.

Those whose nature and lifestyle can be described as unclean, those who are beastly and not on the highway of holiness are on the broad way to hell. The way to hell is broad because it has a lot of latitude. In it, there is no restriction, self-denial, submission to God’s will, sacrifice or consecration. Fornication, homosexuality, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, lying are some of the sins that characterize the lives of people on the broad way. The destiny of everyone who remains obstinate in sin is hell.

But everyone who seeks to escape from hell must be free from every sin. Those who will escape hell must have a definite change of life, character and aspirations. They must come over from the broad way to the narrow way where they can serve God in holiness, remain uncompromising and follow the totality of God’s word for the rest days of their lives. God wants us to be clean, holy and righteous to be able to get to heaven.

Continuity in the narrow way requires separation from unbelievers to avoid being smeared by unclean, sinful lifestyle. God’s express command to everyone is to come out of defilement and sin into the highway of holiness; the sinner must repent of his sins and exercise faith in Christ’s blood for cleansing. And those that have entered must not only pray for sustaining grace to continue on the path of holiness and righteousness that leads to the heavenly city but must also help others to come into this narrow path.

## THE URGENCY OF OUR TASK

**MEMORY VERSE:** “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: The night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

**TEXT:** Luke 13:1-5; Ezekiel 3:17-21; John 4:35-38

**T**he task of taking Jesus’ saving gospel to the sinful and drowning world is urgent and important at all times. The consequences of the gospel if preached or if denied the sinner transcend this transient world.

The task of preaching the gospel is urgent because time is running out. The world will soon come to an end (1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 1 John 2:17) and the opportunity for service to the Lord will also close with it. Since God’s revealed judgment against sinners is unchanging, the unending cry of multitudes of people who would have been saved had they heard the gospel from any believers around them should compel us to reach them with the gospel. There is the dreadful reality that the time of God’s mercy may pass when seekers may not find Him (Isaiah 55:6). It is therefore dangerous to delay or fail to preach the gospel.

Every lost opportunity leaves the heart more hardened and makes it more difficult to come into conformity with God’s will (Hebrews 3:12,13). Lost days of grace amount to incalculable loss. Therefore, believers should preach while the opportunity lasts, and sinners should respond and be saved while the Spirit is calling.

**Question 1:** *Why is gospel-preaching by every believer very urgent?*

**BELIEVERS’ DUTY AS WATCHMEN** (Ezekiel 3:17-21; 2 Kings 9:17-20; Romans 10:13-15; Isaiah 62:6,7; Jeremiah 6:17; Revelation 3:14-22)

The work of a watchman is to warn others of impending dangers. The prophet is the watchman of God to warn careless evildoers of the dangers of sin (Jeremiah 6:17). Careless souls move about blindly till doom’s day. Scorners may continue jesting till the day of death if no one warns them. Few realize they may be close to death. Many fail to

recognize there is only a step between them and death (1 Samuel 20:3). As there are lots of careless people among those who do not know Christ, so there are careless and negligent people among those who profess to know Christ.

### **Question 2: *What is the work of a watchman?***

In the church of God, to aid and abet any sinful conduct is to deny both the overseer of the church the knowledge of his flock about which he must give account to God, and the backslider the opportunity to be availed good counsel and correction of his evil way.

Sinners inside and outside the church must be warned of the danger of sin. Everyone should be given the opportunity of hearing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). If they hear the gospel and by faith repent from sin and call on the name of the Lord as their personal Lord and Saviour, they would be saved, else, they will be damned (Mark 16:15,16). But how **“shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”** (Romans 10:14).

As our lesson today reveals, ours is a God of justice. He does not act indiscriminately. It is the soul that sins against Him that shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). God will not slay the righteous with the wicked (Genesis 18:23-33). When a man sins, the immediate fruit of his action is guilt. He bears the burden of that guilt. What he does with his guilt is very important. He may repent of his sins, call upon God for forgiveness and permit Jesus Christ to wipe away his guilt through His shed blood on the Cross. If he does this, he will be saved. But if he refuses to repent, he will continue to bear the burden of his sins. He risks eternal damnation if no one warns him of the evil of his way and shows him how to be free. This task of warning the careless and guiding him unto salvation is not optional for the believer. We are compelled to warn the sinner and the backslider to repent; else, we too risk our own place with God. Our souls are in danger of eternal loss except we warn the careless sinner in or out of the church.

**DANGER OF INDIFFERENCE** (Revelation 3:14-19; Ezekiel 34:1-6; Isaiah 32:9; 47:8; Amos 6:1; Zephaniah 1:12; Matthew 22:5; 24:12)

The Laodicean church was indifferent about spiritual things; consequently, it was on the verge of getting its relationship with the Lord severed. The case of the Laodicean church is similar to the state of many believers today. Half-heartedness in the service of the Lord has never pleased God.

**Question 3: *What inevitable end faces the sinner in the church who refuses to repent?***

All those who profess devotion to God but are by their lives and desire uncommitted to Him, are condemned in the Scripture. For example, Saul, the first king of Israel, obeyed God in the mission God sent him, but not wholeheartedly. He was judged and rejected (1 Samuel 15:13-19). Jehu avenged God upon the house of Ahab as God had stated, but he **“took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God...”** and consequently, **“in those days the Lord began to cut Israel short...”** (2 Kings 10:30-32). The people of Judah who the Lord had given a great victory in battle were not total in their devotion to Him. They held on to their idol worship and did not prepare **“their hearts unto the God of their fathers”** (2 Chronicles 20:31-33). So too was Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:2). Needless to mention Judas Iscariot, who for his partial devotion to the Lord and for the reward of his iniquity, fell headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out (Acts 1:16-20)

To be indifferent to the cry of dying sinners is to break the already heavy heart of the Lord. He expects that having saved us, He will use us to save the world (John 17:20; 21:15-17). To be lukewarm, indifferent or nonchalant about the urgency of the task of the gospel is to heartlessly damn the world for which Jesus bled and died (Isaiah 53:1-5).

**Question 4: *What are the dangers posed by indifference to the urgency of our task?***

Causes of lukewarm disposition to gospel-preaching include absorption in business (Luke 14:18), procrastination (Acts 24:25), and insensitivity (Acts 28:27). But the Lord is calling us to repentance (Revelation 3:19).

**THE UNDYING VISION** (John 4:35-38; Matthew 18:11; Mark 4:29)

**“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest”** (John 4:35)

To the husbandman or farmer, the long days of toiling and sowing precious seed, contrast sharply with the happy and joyous time of harvest. For him, harvest time comes with great expectation. He looks forward to it with infectious enthusiasm and passion. The Lord in this text draws a correlation between the natural way of sowing or planting seed with the spiritual sowing of the seed of the word of God. In either case harvest time is eagerly awaited.

With the right preparations, the seed sown is sure to germinate with the promise of fruitfulness and a good harvest. But unlike the natural seed which usually took about four months to bear mature fruits, Jesus, who a short while earlier had just sown the precious seed of the gospel into the hungry and ready heart of the Samaritan woman, was expecting immediate results. **“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest....”** The Lord knew that the potent testimony of the Samaritan woman would begin to bear bountiful fruit immediately, not till four months.

But looking down, His disciples could not see the already ripe bountiful harvest from Samaria about to be gathered into the Kingdom. **“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields,”** Jesus urged the disciples, **“for they are white already to harvest.”** The field of harvest is all around us today. The readiness of the dying world to be saved stresses the urgency of our task to reach the dying sinners around us with the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It also points at the fact that while we continually look down, too preoccupied with the mundane things of life, we fail to see sinners with wounded hearts, bruised by sins and heading towards destruction. Their desperate plea forbids us to linger. It must be now. They are ripe already for the harvest. We are to immediately put in the sickle, because the harvest is come (Mark 4:29).



**THE REWARDS OF SOUL-WINNING** (John 4:36-38; Psalm 126:5,6; Daniel 12:3; Proverbs 11:30; 1 Corinthians 9:19)

The labour of soul-winning is not without reward. Jesus says in our text: **“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.”** This reward is partly in the present time and in the future also. As the harvester rejoices when his fruits are gathered into the storehouse, so does the soul-winner when souls are won to the Lord. In fact, the more fruit the harvester gathers, the more his joy, so too the greater number of souls won to the Lord, the greater the joy of doing the will of God; for **“Herein is my Father glorified”** Jesus says, **“that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:8). And this is the primary duty of the believer. Jesus emphasized this when He said, **“ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”** (John 15:16).

**Question 5:** *What are your rewards as a soul- winner?*

Beyond the present, the reward of soul-winning is largely in the future when the saints shall be gathered home to glory. **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

# BUILDING *the* BODY



Caring Fellowship Outlines

# CONTENTS

| <b>Study</b>  | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <i>A word from the Pastor</i>                                   | 301         |
| <i>Believers Fellowship Covenant</i>                            | 304         |
| <i>Format of the House Caring Fellowship</i>                    | 306         |
| Lesson 01 Watchmen Upon The City Walls                          | 307         |
| Lesson 02 Knowing Jesus   | 310         |
| Lesson 03 Conscience Void Of Offence                            | 312         |
| Lesson 04 Partaking Of His Divine Nature                        | 315         |
| Lesson 05 Rivers Of Living Water                                | 318         |
| Lesson 06 Home Caring Fellowship - A Key<br>To Evangelism       | 320         |
| Lesson 07 Greatest Barrier To Salvation                         | 322         |
| Lesson 08 Harden Not Your Heart                                 | 325         |
| Lesson 09 The Perfect Walk                                      | 328         |
| Lesson 10 Prepared Instrument<br>For Soul Winning               | 331         |
| Lesson 11 Promoting Christian Love And<br>Fellowship In The HCF | 334         |
| Lesson 12 Mending The Family Broken Wall                        | 337         |
| Lesson 13 Walking In The Light                                  | 340         |
| Lesson 14 Essentials Of Effective Evangelism                    | 342         |
| Lesson 15 Vanity Of Worldly Pursuits                            | 344         |
| Lesson 16 The Goal Of Christian Living                          | 346         |
| Lesson 17 Believers' Source Of Strength                         | 349         |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Lesson 18 How Is It That Ye Have No Faith | 352 |
| Lesson 19 Danger Of Delay                 | 354 |
| Lesson 20 Consistent Christian Living     | 357 |
| Lesson 21 Walking In The Spirit           | 360 |
| Lesson 22 The Narrow Way Pilgrim          | 363 |
| Lesson 23 Dealing With Problems           | 366 |
| Encountered By New Converts               | 369 |
| Lesson 24 Eternity                        | 372 |
| Lesson 25 Righteous Living                | 375 |
| Lesson 26 Exemplary Parenthood            |     |

## A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

“And they *continued steadfastly* in the *apostles' doctrine* and *fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread*, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. *And all that believed were together*, and had *all things common* ... And they, *continuing daily* with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with *gladness* and *singleness* of heart, *praising God*, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord *added to the church* daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

The above-mentioned verses become clearer when we consider the italicized words. The number of Christians, who can confidently say that their lives are in conformity with the above-mentioned scripture, is low. The church, especially in Africa, should provide the opportunity of a forum at which the entire church membership will fulfill these New Testament distinctive role of caring, loving, helping, exhorting, edifying and building-up one another. In Africa, almost every church is noted for her largeness, particularly in the area of organizing events, such as big crusades, programs, and big Bible study classes. The leadership should be concerned about the position of new members and visitors to the church. In most cases, first timers integrate into the “big church” without notice of the leaders. This is not the will of God for the Church.

This booklet - Building the Body - provides the long-sought solution to this problem in the Church. *Building the Body* is a bi-annual publication, prepared for use in the Home Caring Fellowship or in churches all over Africa and globally. The Home “Church” aims to achieve the following objectives:

### 1. CARING FELLOWSHIP

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts

2:44, 45).

A Home Caring Fellowship comprises believers who hold Christian meetings for the benefit of all its members. Once you become a member, you will get needed support, even when people of the world fail to give you necessary help. Personal matters discussed are held in strict confidence. The Home "Church" will provide advice or practical help to members, irrespective of the time of day or night. In cases of emergency, for example, where members are desperate for help, the Home Church will surely provide necessary help.

## **2. GROWTH INTO MATURITY**

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41, 42).

## **3. FELLOWSHIP, FRIENDSHIP, FREEDOM**

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:46, 47).

The Home Church stays together in the Lord, enjoys freedom of fellowship and like a real New Testament Christian community, prays together. The Home Caring Fellowship helps you and other believers to live a holy, lovely and wholesome life.

## **4. TOTAL EMANCIPATION FOR THE INDIVIDUAL**

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

In the Home Caring Fellowship, every believing member is free from falsehood of fake teachers. The apostles' doctrines, Christian fellowship and apostolic prayer will gradually eliminate false doctrines and practices. Thus, you are emancipated (set free) to worship in spirit and in truth.

## **5. EVANGELIZATION**

"Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

The Home Caring Fellowship comprises 'active' Christians. When you invite a neighbor to the fellowship, it should lead to the salvation of a soul. The salvation of a new comer should be focus of every saved member of the Home Caring Fellowship.

## **6. PRESERVATION OF FRUITS**

"And they, continuing daily with one accord ..." (Acts 2:46).

As many as are brought into the Home Caring Fellowship are preserved and taught to continue daily with one accord.

## **7. INTERDEPENDENCE AMONGST BRETHREN**

"... and they continued steadfastly ..." (Acts 2:42).

Decades ago, John Doane said, "No man can be an island, complete to itself". And the sage of old, Solomon said: "Two are better than one, for there is a better reward for their labor". The Home Caring Fellowship provides opportunity to share knowledge, experience, victories, joys, as well as learn from each other's challenges. This process contributes to developing every member.



## **BELIEVERS' FELLOWSHIP COVENANT**

Before you begin this series, realize and agree on some common goals and disciplines with other members of the fellowship. The strength of your Home Caring Fellowship is dependent on how you adhere to the common disciplines. They include the following:

### **1. ATTENDANCE:**

To ensure prompt attendance to the Home Caring Fellowship meeting, do not put other engagements at the time that the Church has set for the fellowship, except in cases of emergency.

### **2. CONFIDENTIALITY:**

To keep personal matters discussed at the fellowship strictly confidential.

### **3. EVANGELIZATION:**

To tell your neighbors about God's love, mercy, and show them how they can enjoy it and willingly accept new members to the Home Caring Fellowship.

### **4. ACCOUNTABILITY:**

To set goals for your life and ask other members in the fellowship to "support" you in them. Give permission to the fellowship members to hold you accountable.

### **5. VISITATION:**

To go out on a weekly basis; to see other members of the fellowship in their homes and share the love of Christ with them.

## COVENANT STATEMENT

I, .....

will meet

(Full Name)

on ..... (day of the week), at  
..... (time of day) with other brethren  
in my Home Caring Fellowship. With the help of God, I  
will be a regular, faithful, caring member of this group.

Signed: .....

## **FORMAT OF THE HOME CARING FELLOWSHIP**

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1. Opening Prayer   | 3 minutes  |
| 2. Choruses   | 5 minutes  |
| 3. Testimonies  | 10 minutes |
| 4. Follow-up/Visitation Report and submission<br>of Prayer Requests | 12 minutes |
| 5. Praises and Intercession   | 15 minutes |
| 6. Bible Discussion   | 30 minutes |
| 7. Prayer   | 5 minutes  |
| 8. Follow-up Schedule   | 7 minutes  |
| 9. Closing Prayer   | 3 minutes  |

## **STUDY 01**

### **WATCHMEN UPON THE CITY WALLS**

**TEXT: Ezekiel 3:17-21.**

In ancient Israel, watchmen were appointed to stand upon the watchtower who lift up their voices and blow the trumpet to warn of impending doom and destruction or deliver messages of hope and succor. They were to sound alarm to alert the inhabitants of the cities of wars, or give good tidings of conquest in battles. In like manner, today, believers have been appointed to carry out a two-fold mission. They are to warn the careless, sinning world of the danger of hell and the doom of sinners. On the other hand, they are to proclaim the glad tidings of God's offer of love through the death of His only begotten Son at Calvary.

Upon Christ's departure from the world, He gave a charge to the Church to preach the Gospel. The early disciples gave prompt obedience to this charge with great fervency. This brought about a great harvest of souls into the early Church. **"... And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following"** (Mark 16:20).

Regrettably however, the devil has robbed believers of today of the power for fervent, earnest, persuasive and aggressive gospel proclamation. There is utter neglect of the Great commission arising from the pursuit of selfish gains and greed, procrastination, self-indulgence, blindness to spiritual realities and ignorance. Lukewarmness and apathy concerning the plight of sinners have taken the place of zeal and aggressiveness to pull sinners out of the fire of hell. Complaints and murmuring about economic uncertainties are fast replacing the declaration of the story of love.

Believers need to realize the consequences of neglecting their responsibility as watchmen. There will be many more souls going into hell who could otherwise have been saved. The watchman's soul too is in danger of hell. Darkness will cover the whole city if not saturated with the gospel of peace.

A wise watchman needs to get equipped with sound and complete salvation, genuine sanctification experience and current, biblical Holy Ghost baptism. Prayer and passion for souls, vision for the work and wisdom for carrying out this God-appointed duty are equally important. Purposeful and prayerful study of the Bible will furnish him with adequate knowledge for rightly dividing the word of God according to the needs of sinners. Besides, exemplary Christian living will be a shining light in him pointing sinners to the Savior. Above all, faith in God serves as a shield when he is faced with opposition and persecution on account of his preaching.

Every believer should rise up to the task now with a sense of urgency so that we may "by all means save some".

1. (a) What is the primary duty of a watchman? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) What are the consequences of neglect of duty by the watchman?
  - (i) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do some believers neglect their responsibilities as watchmen?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How can a watchman be well-equipped for his work according to the following scriptures?

(a) Ezekiel 36:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Matthew 9:36 \_\_\_\_\_

(c) 1 Timothy 4:13,15,16 \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Psalm 2:8 \_\_\_\_\_

(e) Acts 27:25 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 02** **KNOWING JESUS**

**TEXT: John 3:1-6,14-18.**

Some people think they know Jesus just because they have read about Him. Others think they know Jesus because their parents bear Bible names and they themselves bear such names. Knowing Jesus is more than all that.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews must have been versed in the Law of Moses and the Jewish religion, yet he was a timid sinner seeking Jesus by night. Although Nicodemus could recognize “a teacher come from God”, who could do miracles that no one else could do, yet he was not born again.

The expression, “except a man be born again” came out of the lips of Christ himself in John 3:3. So if anyone wants to “see the Kingdom of God”, he has to be born again as commanded by the Lord of the Kingdom. This is why in John 3:14,15, the Bible says, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life”**.

God has given Jesus Christ as a sacrifice already. All that man needs is to appropriate this sacrifice.

A sinner can know Jesus Christ through a number of steps: Firstly, as he hears the gospel preached, he should accept his guilt. Secondly, he should repent according to the proclamation of the gospel, **“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, ...”** (Acts 2:38). Thirdly, he confesses his sins to God and forsake all sins committed and confessed. Fourthly, he should accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Fifthly, he should believe God that He has forgiven him.



When a sinner does this, the joy of salvation will come into his heart. It is only then that a person can say he knows Jesus Christ.

1. What do you understand by knowing Jesus from the study?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Enumerate the basic steps a sinner must take to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior.
  - (i) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (v) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What lessons do we learn from the following scriptures?
  - (i) Matthew 11:28 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) Mark 1:15 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) Proverbs 28:13 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) Romans 10:9,10 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (v) Psalms 51:3 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 03**

### **“A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE”**

**TEXT: *Luke 19:1-10; Acts 24:16.***

Repentance from sin is not complete without the accompanying act of making restitution.

Restitution is therefore an integral part of repentance which God expects every believer to do if our repentance will be reckoned with by heaven. Though many teachers and preachers of the gospel are silent on the teaching of restitution, yet it remains one of the cardinal teachings of the Bible which our Lord Jesus Christ in our text approves as one of the demands of God from every believer after repentance from sins. (Ezekiel 33:14-16).

The practice of restitution dates back to the period before the Law (Genesis 20:1-14), where God demanded restitution from Abimelech concerning Abraham's wife which he forcefully took away. God also included restitution in the moral laws for the children of Israel as a rule for righteous living. The Kings that ruled in Israel as well as the prophets also upheld and enforced the practice of restitution.

Jesus Christ also taught His disciples to make restitution as God's requirement from all believers (Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-17). In like manner, the apostles embraced and practiced the act of restitution in the dispensation of grace (Acts 23:1-5; Acts 24:16).

For our conscience to be void of offence towards God and man, a truly converted person will restore stolen or misappropriated articles or wife, pay back just debts, apologize to those he had slandered or offended, uncover his crimes and confess his lies regardless of whether the person injured knew or not, God knows. While repentance makes us to be at peace with God, restitution makes us to be at peace with man. God

expects all those who are repenting from sins and all those already in the Kingdom irrespective of their status in the church to make restitution.

Some people delay or postpone making their restitution because of fear of man, shame, loss of reputation, ridicule or fear of negative result this may generate in their lives. Such people are disobedient to the word of God and are liable to the judgment of God except they amend their ways before it is too late. Besides, such people carry in their hearts continually the guilt of unconnected past lives which strengthens the devil, the accuser of the brethren in his bid to hinder their prayers and of course, their spiritual progress in the Kingdom.

Restitution should be made in humility, with a contrite heart and in the fear of God. It should be done not as if we are doing God or the injured person a favor. However, restitutions that may implicate or bring injury or harm others require God's wisdom and careful handling. In such cases, we should seek guidance and counseling from mature and spirit-filled Christian teachers or pastors who believe and teach the whole counsel of God.

The blessings of obedience to this commandment of God will bring upon you untold blessing. These include peace of God within your heart, sweet and uninterrupted fellowship with God, assurance of answer to prayers and many more. Arise and make your restitution today, and all those blessings shall be yours.

1. (a) What is Restitution?

---

(b) Mention the categories of people who are required to make restitution in the Church

---

---

2. From the following passages, identify the various areas where restitution was required by God?

(i) Genesis 20:7 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Leviticus 6:25 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Ezra 10:11 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Ezekiel 33:15 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Matthew 5:23,24; Acts 23:1-5

---

3. (a) How should we handle delicate restitution?

---

(b) When should we do our restitution and what is the consequences of delaying it?

---

(c) State some blessings which follows obedience to the command to retribute our lives

---

---

## **STUDY 04**

### **PARTAKING OF HIS DIVINE NATURE**

**TEXT: 2 Peter 1:1-9.**

The greatest privilege of a believer is to be like Christ, to partake of His divine nature which is pure, holy, and righteous. This also was the original moral state of man when he was created but which he lost when he fell into sin and became evil and wicked in thought, in action and disposition to the extent that **“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5). Yet God’s love, grace and mercy, planned and offered salvation to man. Through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. God’s ultimate purpose is not only to cleanse the man from his sins of hatred, malice, pride, covetousness, immorality, craftiness and carnality etc., but also to destroy the very root of sin, purify the heart and stamp once again His very image deep on our hearts.

Partaking of God’s divine nature therefore goes beyond merely abstaining from smoking, drinking, cursing, fighting, nor does it mean regular church attendance. It is being completely transformed. **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”** (2 Corinthians 5:17). He is free from sin; no more the willing slave of sin; no more is he under the dominion of sin. He is totally set free from the control and power of sin, the flesh, the world and the devil; so that as Christ during His life here on earth was righteous and holy, true and without guile, humble and meek, merciful and compassionate, forgiving and obedient to the Father, so must every believer that has the nature of God imparted unto him. God wants us to talk and

love like Christ. He wants our temper and emotion to be like His.

God has promised the transformation of life to all believers: **“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God”** (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

We do not therefore attain this experience by self-discipline or because we are naturally good. It is made possible by the supernatural power of God through Christ Jesus, through whole-hearted desire for it and through prayer of faith.

1. What do you understand by “divine nature” of God?

---

2. (a) Mention five characteristics of someone who has lost the divine nature of God. (i)

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Mention five characteristics of a Christian who has attained the divine nature of God.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

3. To attain the divine nature of God, what do we learn in the following Bible references?

(i) Ezekiel 36:26. \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Jeremiah 32:17 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Jeremiah 29:13 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Jeremiah 33:3 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Hebrews 12:14 \_\_\_\_\_



## **STUDY 05**

### **RIVERS OF LIVING WATER**

**TEXT: John 7:37-39.**

Jesus Christ, in His characteristic benevolence made several provisions for man so that we might possess of His blessedness. Jesus' call in Matthew 11:28, "**Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,**" is a call unto salvation.

The next provision is the second work of grace called sanctification, which Christ died for that we might obtain (Hebrews 13:12).

A third Christian experience which is the subject matter of this study is the Holy Ghost baptism experience that God had promised in the Scripture (Joel 2:28).

Christ's call on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles in our text was not for the Jews only, though it was at a Jewish feast. Verses 37 and 38 clearly reveal that, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water". This confirms the fact that any man of every race and in every generation from the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy can experience the "rivers of living water". The meaning of this is made known to us in verse 39, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive ... "

However, from our text, there are certain conditions for receiving the Spirit baptism. Firstly, there must be a thirst for it (verse 37). This means that the sanctified believer who wants the Holy Spirit baptism must have an ardent, eager, keen and consuming passion for the Spirit of God. Secondly, the seeker must completely surrender his life to do the whole will of God as revealed. This is what Jesus means when He says in

verse 37: "... come unto me". Thirdly, the expectant sanctified saint must, after coming to Christ, "drink". This means that the sanctified believer must be ready to whole-heartedly receive into his life the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, the believer should now trust God for giving him the experience since He has promised and He cannot fail. Take these necessary steps now, believing and the experience will be yours.

1. From our text, what is meant by "rivers of living water"?

---

2. (a) Name the two basic Christian experiences a person should have before asking for the Holy Spirit baptism.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) From our text and study, mention the necessary steps to receiving the Holy Ghost baptism experience.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What do we learn from the following scriptures?

(i) Joel 2:28 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Acts 1:8 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Acts 2:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Acts 2:39 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 06**

### **HOME CARING FELLOWSHIP - KEY TO EVANGELISM**

**TEXT: Acts 2:41-47.**

The Home Caring Fellowship takes its root from the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses advised him on the establishment of group leadership as a way to ease the administration of the Church in the wilderness. (Exodus 18:13-27).

In the New Testament, Christ during His earthly ministry practiced the basic principles of the "home fellowship". He preached, taught, healed, delivered, cared for people, and a few times, He too was cared for. (Matthew 13:36-52; Mark 9:33-50; 10:10-12; Luke 7:36-50).

In the Early Church too, homes were used as places of worship, caring, teaching, preaching and the study of the Word of God. Just as there was temple worship, so was home worship: **"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart"** (Acts 2:46). While the apostle ministered the word and prayed, the lay-leaders took charge of the welfare. The result was that **"the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"** (Acts 6:7). If our house caring fellowship will practice the evangelistic role it is to play, our local churches will grow tremendously.

For this growth to be attained: (i) Every member should participate in the program, (ii) Each leader should put all his weight and energy behind the program, (iii) Every member must be enthusiastic and zealous about it; (iv) Every aspect of the home caring

fellowship format must be followed to the letter i.e. prayers, visitation, follow-up, testimonies, praises etc.; (v) All messages, studies and discussions must be taken seriously; (vi) Whatever is learned at each fellowship meeting must be put into practice regularly and promptly; (vii) Every member must preach and invite people into the fellowship regularly; (viii) Regular reports must be written; (ix) Everybody must submit to leadership and cooperate one with another to ensure progress; (x) The Spirit of God must be allowed to rule the church all the time.

1. In what way is the home caring fellowship a key to evangelism?

---

2. Mention four activities or responsibilities of the members in the home caring fellowship that can help church growth.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

3. From Acts 2:41-47 and Acts 6:7, name three direct benefits of the home caring fellowship.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 07**

### **GREATEST BARRIER TO SALVATION**

**TEXT: John 3:1-21.**

The central personality of the Bible is Jesus Christ, the Savior of the whole world. Him has God offered for the salvation of man from sin. The wall of partition between man and God had been broken down through Christ's atonement at Calvary. And whoever wills, can be partaker of God's kingdom through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No other love is greater than that which God has shown to this sinful world, **"for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16).

How can man benefit from this provision? The simple step is faith in God, simply accepting God's offer of his salvation. Unbelief is the greatest barrier to salvation. Many people remain unsaved today because of misdirected faith. They put their faith in religious activities such as philanthropy, regular church attendance, long prayer and fasting, giving of tithes and offerings, high standard of morality etc. None of these things can save any man from sin.

Many there are too who strive fruitlessly to make themselves so clean as to be acceptable to God. They are ignorant of the fact that no matter how clean they may seem to be, they are not clean enough for the thrice-holy God. Many sinners believe the lies of the devil that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that God is too merciful to cast anybody into hell. In another category are those sinners who want God's salvation but are not willing to part with their besetting sins. They want God to agree to their terms and strike a compromise with them so that they profess to serve God while holding on to the pleasures

of sin. No folly can be greater than this. Whenever such hears the gospel, they are sober because of the fear of hell, but they feel they are not done with sin yet. Many are deluded by Satan that they still have time, and that they will repent and make right their ways by and by. All these are the tricks of the devil to keep men eternally separated from God.

To get saved however, a sinner needs to remove unbelief in whatever form it appears. He must repent of his sins, confess them to God and forsake them all. He must reject every lie of the devil and hang his faith on Christ's atoning death and God's faithfulness to forgive all sins (1 John 1:9). This does not exempt sinners who have been long in the church, or who have already become involved in the work of God like singing in the choir, ushering, leading Home caring fellowship etc., while yet they remain in secret sins of adultery, lying, deceit, abortion and covetousness. Such people need to truthfully face the fact of sin in their lives, and of God's sure judgment for **"...the lawless and disobedient, the ungodly and sinners, the unholy and profane, murderers ... mans-layers, whoremongers, they that defile themselves with mankind, men-stealers, liars and perjured persons..."** (1 Timothy 1:9,10). They also need to overcome the barrier of pride and shame in order to be truly saved lest they end up in the lake of fire.

Sinners who repent genuinely, God's grace enables them have a fresh start with Him. To remain saved, the believer will find regular study of the Bible and prayer indispensable. He also needs to deny himself of all ungodliness, worldly amusements and evil associations. He must as well share his testimony with sinners on a continual basis and bring them to Jesus Christ who has saved him.

1. (a) Who is the central personality of the Bible?

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) What role has He played in the salvation of man from sin?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Make a list of ways in which unbelief has hindered people from getting salvation through Jesus Christ.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What do we learn from the following scriptures?

(a) Isaiah 59:1,2 \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Acts 4:12; Colossians 1:14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(c) Hebrews 2:3 \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Proverbs 28:13 \_\_\_\_\_

(e) Romans 10:8-10 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 08**

### **“HARDEN NOT YOUR HEART”**

**TEXT: *Hebrews 3:6-15, 17-19; 4:6,7.***

In our text the writer by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost admonished the Hebrew believers to guard against hardness of heart which led to the destruction of a large number of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Israel's example serves as warning for the believer today whose heart is not right with God (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

To harden one's heart is to turn a deaf ear to the message of the gospel preached to us from time to time. It also means to continue in unbelief and sin and disobedience to the commandment of God.

Many so-called believers in the church manifest the same characteristics which made Israel to lose the promise of entering into God's rest. A lot of people parade themselves as “born again Christians” but live in rebellion. Though they hear the undiluted preaching of the word of God regularly on the necessity of repentance from dead works, restitution, holiness, eternal destiny of sinners, etc., yet they willfully continue in their sins of fornication, adultery, lying, stealing, backbiting, gossiping and many others. They are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They profess to know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate (2 Timothy 3:7; Titus 1:16).

Of this sort are the unrepentant sinners and backsliders in the local church who oppose the truth and going about to establish their own righteousness. They disobey constituted authority, resist corrections and cause disunity in the church. By their lives, they



mislead new converts and feeble minded believers in the church.

The consequences of disobeying the gospel message is grievous. **“Wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I Swear in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest”** (Hebrews 3:10,11). **I tell you, Nay, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3,5).

Anyone whose heart is hardened against the word of God, will spend endless eternity in hell fire except he repents. Open your heart today and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your soul. Christ died to rescue you from the pangs of death and hell. Turn to Christ today in repentance and forsake all your sins and you will receive pardon from God. (Isaiah 55:6,7). Today, if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation (Hebrews 3:15).

1. (a) What does it mean to harden one's heart?

---

(b) Give biblical examples of people who hardened their hearts and the consequence.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

2. From the following references, identify the characteristics of hardened hearts,

(i) Hebrews 3:10,12 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Proverbs 29:1 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Matthew 7:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Romans 2:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) 2 Timothy 3:7,8 \_\_\_\_\_

3. (a) How can a hardened soul be saved from the  
impending judgment of God?

---

---

---

- (b) What is the consequence of remaining in  
hardness of heart?

---

---

---

## STUDY 09

### THE PERFECT WALK

**TEXT: Genesis 17:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.**

When God called Abraham and said unto him “Walk before me, and be thou perfect”, it was to call him unto holiness of life, a life without blemish. This is also the life God has called all believers to. **“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness”** (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

For various reasons many contend against the teaching of sanctification, holiness of life, either because of their ignorance of God’s provisions concerning this experience, or their determined heart not to believe the Scripture. For others, it is their unwillingness to pay the price, or the desire to keep a large church at the expense of sound doctrine. For anyone to preach or teach against the necessity of holiness of life to our walk with God is to perpetually close the gate of heaven against his hearers that believe such fallacies. “For without holiness no man shall see the Lord”

Holiness of life is a command from God to all His children. **“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation”** (1 Peter 1:15). The sanctification experience is therefore not optional but imperative for all who desire to live with God eternally.

A perfect walk with God is a walk in holiness, a walk in perfect love, in humility and lowliness. This walk cannot be done in the human strength or wisdom. It requires a heart that has been circumcised and made pure. The circumcision of the heart called sanctification, enables us to love God with a perfect heart and frees us from all internal struggles and unholy ambitions. We are then able to love others with

a pure love and walk in humility and lowliness before God and all men.

To make this experience possible for us to obtain, God has made adequate provision for it. First, He has given us His unfailing promises. God's promises on sanctification are as valid and potent as those on salvation, Holy Ghost baptism, healing and others in the Scripture. The same faith we require to obtain salvation or healing is the same faith we need to obtain the sanctification experience.

Second, Christ's death at Calvary was not only for our salvation but for our sanctification as well. **"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate"** (Hebrews 13:12). We will be denying ourselves the full benefits and provision of Calvary if we fail to launch into this experience. It is God's will for us to be sanctified, hence all that is needed was provided for us. Even though provision has been fully made for a perfect walk with God, yet the holiness experience that is required for such a walk is only made available to the thirst and hungry soul who with a trusting and believing heart seeks the face of God in prayer. When we take such a step, there is assurance that we shall receive; for "faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

1. (a) Explain what you understand by a perfect walk with God \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) What is the experience required for a perfect walk with God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. From the following passages, why is holiness of life essential?

(a) 1 Thessalonians 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_

(b) 1 Peter 1:15,16 \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Hebrews 12:14 \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Hebrews 13:12 \_\_\_\_\_

(e) John 17:17 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Explain how one can obtain the experience of sanctification:

---

---

## **STUDY 10**

### **PREPARED INSTRUMENT FOR SOUL-WINNING**

**TEXT: 2 Timothy 2:19-26.**

Soul-winning is the noblest duty any believer can do on earth. God's only begotten Son came down from His heavenly abode to seek and save us from sin. He gave His life for this same purpose and commanded all His followers to get involved in the business of rescuing the perishing, saying, **"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). This all-important commission therefore calls for prepared men. Before Christ began His earthly ministry, He engaged Himself in proper spiritual preparation. (Matthew 4:1-2,17). God never uses an unprepared instrument for His work. Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Isaiah, Paul, Peter, Timothy are few examples of men used by God who were divinely prepared.

A primary prerequisite for all prepared vessels is the experience of salvation. They must have answered God's call out from sin into salvation; from the world into His kingdom. It was said of the Wesley brothers that they preached and practiced the strictest rules of religion for many years. They were however joyless and fruitless until they met the Moravians who taught them the place of grace and faith in salvation. They got converted and found peace of God. That marked a new beginning in their lives. God could now work on them and through them. We become divinely qualified after we have received salvation through faith in Christ's atoning blood.

Men whose business will be to win the never-dying souls of men into God's kingdom must firstly be men of transparent lives of inward and outward purity. Those who seek to call sinful men to the thrice-holy

God, must themselves be holy men of God, whose messages are accredited by the lives they live (Psalms 24:4; 1 Timothy 4:12). Secondly, such men who will engage in spiritual warfare over souls must be men of prevailing secret prayer. They must be intercessors who can tarry often and long, in the gap between man and God (Ezekiel 22:30,31). Thirdly, the vehicle of saving grace is God's word. Those who will speak for God must be men filled and saturated with the scriptures. They must not be novices in the use of God's word (Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15). Fourthly, they must likewise be Spirit-filled. Spiritual life is imparted by the power of the Holy Ghost. If the carnal soul will become saved and spiritual, soul-winners must operate in God's Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18; Romans 5:5). Fifthly, Christ-like love is imperative in the heart of the soul-winner. Only this sacrificial love can disarm and conquer the vilest sinner. Christ, by this means works His way into the heart of sinners today (Matthew 9:36). Compassion in the heart will put the commission constantly on the wheel of progress. Sixthly, those who will win the hardened world must possess the wisdom of God. Satan, the god of this world has chained the minds of men unto himself, and, it is only by the wisdom and power of God that they can be unfettered. Seventhly, such prepared men have not only conquered sin, and self, they have also offered themselves in the altar of consecration. Indeed, their entire lives must have been given unto the Lord (Galatians 2:20).

1. Why must believers especially be prepared for soul-winning?

---

2. Mention some Bible characters who were successful in their ministries because they were divinely prepared.

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Identify in the following references spiritual ingredients that make a prepared soul-winner.

- (i) Psalms 24:4 \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) Ezekiel 22:30,31 \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) 2 Timothy 2:15 \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) Ephesians 5:18 \_\_\_\_\_
- (v) Matthew 9:36 \_\_\_\_\_
- (vi) Proverbs 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_
- (vii) Galatians 2:20 \_\_\_\_\_



## **STUDY 11**

### **PROMOTING CHRISTIAN LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP IN THE HOME CARING FELLOWSHIP**

***TEXT: 1 John 1:1-7; Romans 12:9-18.***

The Home Caring Fellowship has its foundation in the Scripture (Acts 2:46; Exodus 18:21,25). In the early Church and in contemporary times, it is aimed at gathering believers of like precious faith together. To nurture, edify and equip them for fruitful service within and outside the body of Christ. In order to achieve these salient objectives, not only should true Christian love and fellowship be present in the HCF, they must be kept aglow constantly.

Such love must be Christ-like, and must be manifested in the fruit of the Spirit in the believers' lives (Galatians 5:22,23). The fellowship or communion must be such that it allows for contribution (Romans 15:26), distribution (2 Corinthians 9:13), and communication (Hebrews 13:16).

We can promote this Christ-like love and Bible-based fellowship when members of the HCF are genuinely born again. Therefore, as sinners come in, no effort must be spared in assisting them to have encounter with the Lord.

Secondly, the full-orbed truth of God's word must be preached and taught every time in the HCF. This does not only put out the fire of false and strange doctrine, it helps to strengthen brethren and build them up into stable, fruitful, dependable and committed members of the church.

Thirdly, prayer of faith must be encouraged in the HCF, and every member trained to see the HCF as the habitation of God. They are to see it as a clinic where

their problems are attended to and rolled away by God. The HCF. leader must be a veritable champion of such faith that believes that God is, and always attending to prayers offered in the HCF. (Hebrews 11:6).

Fourthly, constant education of the brethren on the need for being one another's keeper must be a priority in the fellowship. Practical caring such as supplying the material and financial needs of brethren, rejoicing with those who rejoice, comforting those who are bereaved, identifying with those that are being persecuted, and uplifting those that are discouraged must be the habit of every member in the HCF.

Fifthly, profitable visitation that seeks to vitalize all members' lives must be encouraged. A free uninhibited communication must exist among the brethren too.

Sixthly, cancerous practices when noticed in the fellowship, must be quickly nipped in the bud. The strange fires of murmuring, gossiping, evil speaking, hatred, envy, pride, unforgiving spirit, selfishness, malice, carnality and sin must be put out immediately they want to creep in.

Finally, every member must be helped to progress constantly in spiritual experience and be guided to identify his God-given talents and use them for the good of all in the HCF.

1. Mention three cardinal objectives of the HCF.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

2. From the following references, what must be the peculiar characteristics of members of our HCF?

(i) Romans 12:10 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Romans 12:11 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Romans 12:12 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Romans 12:13 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Romans 12:16 \_\_\_\_\_

3. What key factors will help to promote Christian love and fellowship in the HCF?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 12**

### **MENDING THE FAMILY BROKEN WALL**

**TEXT: *Ephesians 5:21-33.***

The family is an institution that is of great importance to God. Having instituted it, He gave clear commands in the Scripture concerning it. These commands reveal His original plan for the family and how it should be preserved to continue to fulfill that plan. It is the departure from these clear commands that is responsible for the break ups of many families. Many that have not disintegrated are just “enduring their marriages” but not “enjoying their marriages”. When God’s commands are broken, His blessings cannot be claimed or enjoyed.

God’s commands are broken when we exalt tradition or custom above God’s word; hold on to opinions and views of men on marriage rather than the precepts and principles given in the Scripture, and when we regulate our family life by our personal perspective and philosophy of marriage even though they may be selfish and unreasonable. No matter how old a tradition or custom may be, it cannot be as old as God’s command. Man’s opinion and views will fail the test of time but God’s word abides forever. Our perception and philosophy are limited by our knowledge, but God’s knowledge is infinite. If we want to mend our broken family walls, we must hand over everything back to God. He is the perfect builder.

To come back to God’s original plan, the first thing to do is to identify the areas of friction and problems that causes break-down in marriage. In doing this, there must be sincerity and readiness to own-up to our faults and wrong doings. There cannot be true reconciliation without accepting responsibility for any wrong deeds of the past. Closely following this, is

repentance and restitution. Pardon and forgiveness cannot be received from God without genuine repentance for breaking His commands. This is required for restoration of true fellowship with God and with each other in the family. There must be humility to retribute to each other. This will not only fulfill God's demand, but also restore confidence in each other.

Third, God's word and prayer must be given their rightful place. To have God's approval upon the family and enjoy His daily presence and guidance, there must be regular study of God's word and quality time spent in prayer. Decisions in the family are to be made in accordance with God's word. Fourth is submission of the wife to the husband; love of the husband for the wife and respect for each other. When these exist among couples, there will be understanding and cooperation. Akin to this is God's command to speak the truth to each other in love. Fault-finding and critical attitude destroy the fabrics of the family. Corrections that are made in love strengthens the tie, while compromise or covering up of sin for the sake of love sooner than later breaks the tie.

Lastly, when issues arise in the family that appear difficult to resolve, we should not fail to seek counseling from our pastor or mature Bible believing leaders in the church. **"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors, there is safety"** (Proverbs 11:14).

1. How has God revealed His plan and purpose for the family?

2. Mention five things that had caused the wall of some families to break down.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_
- (v) \_\_\_\_\_

3. From the following references how can we mend the broken walls in the family?

- (a) Acts 17:30 \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Malachi 2:14,15 \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) Ephesians 5:22,25 \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) Colossians 3:13 \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) 1 Peter 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 13**

### **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

**TEXT: 1 John 1:5-7.**

Light symbolizes what is good, pure and holy. Darkness on the other hand represents sin and evil. The Scripture says, “God is light”. This means that He is an embodiment of absolute purity and perfect holiness.

‘Walk’, also connotes our attitude, actions, behavior or conduct. To walk in the light, therefore, means that our character, life-style, and conduct must be holy, pure and Christ-like. The unregenerate who does not know the Lord lives his life in disobedience and sin, and the word of God describes him as walking contrary to God, in “lasciviousness, lusts ... and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3). The backslider too, like the unregenerate sinner, has left the path of righteousness to walk in the way of darkness. This ungodly character will lead the sinner to eternal punishment in hell if he dies in sin (Proverbs 14:12).

When we give our lives to Christ, we strip off the filthy rags of our old life and put on the robe of righteousness and our life is characterized by compassion, humility, kindness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and above all, charity. With the experience of sanctification, all tendencies towards the works of the flesh are completely uprooted, and the fruit of the Spirit is clearly manifest in our lives. We become further empowered to promptly obey the word of God. No wonder we are able to have fellowship with God and with fellow believers.

To maintain our walk in the light, firstly, we must watch against the influence of unbelieving friends and relatives. Secondly, we must seek to be renewed in our

spirit by studying, meditating and applying the word of God to our lives. Thirdly, we must be angry against sin. That is, our countenance against anything or person who wants to lure us away from righteousness unto sin must not be inviting. Finally, we must not be ignorant of the devices of the devil to want to pull us down from the faith through false doctrines and false teachers.

1. (a) What does it mean to “walk in the light”?  
(b) What Christian experiences will enable us to walk in the lights

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What Christian virtues will characterize our lives as we walk in the light?

(i) Ephesians 4:31,32

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Philippians 2:5

\_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Galatians

5:22,23. \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) 1

Corinthians

13:1. \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Matthew

5:13. \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do we maintain our walk in the light”?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_



## **STUDY 14**

### **ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM**

**TEXT: *Matthew 28:18-20: Mark 16: 15,16.***

The parting charge of our Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples and by extension to all believers today, is to preach the gospel to the lost souls in all nations. We are to proclaim the truth that Christ died to save the whole world from sin and to reconcile them back to God.

Christ himself gave the example during His earthly ministry. He made evangelism His major pre-occupation. His life style and message brought multitudes of sinners to the Kingdom of God. Believers must follow the footprints of Christ. We must learn from the Master Soul-Winner, Jesus Christ.

The first essential, is that of personal encounter with Christ. Since a blind man cannot lead another blind man, the soul-winner himself must have a genuine experience of salvation from sin. Peter, Paul and others preached and won souls after their own encounter with Christ. The second essential, is Christ-like love and compassion for lost souls. The soul-winner must have concern for the state of lost people, and lead them to the Savior in love. Thirdly, the soul-winner must maintain a consistent prayer life. The power of prayer will break-off the power of sin and soften the sinner's heart. Fourthly, a mastery of the Scripture is also essential. The word of God has great effect on the sinner; hence the soul-winner must study to show himself approved unto God. (2 Timothy 2:15).

The fifth essential is godly wisdom which the soul-winner must possess for effective soul-winning. Christ manifested wisdom in His earthly ministry to the lost. Wisdom enables the soul-winner to respond appropriately to the need and feelings of the sinner.

Sixth, the soul-winner must also have vision for the lost souls, for where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverb 29:18). Seventh, the soul-winner must always seek to bring the sinner to a point of deciding for Christ without forcing him. His focus must be the salvation of the sinner. Finally, the soul-winner should be friendly, courteous, and zealous for souls, patient, bold and courageous. He should be able to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 2:3,4). Every believer must consecrate and get involved in the ministry of soul winning, for great shall be our joy and reward now and in eternity.

1. (a) What is the believer's responsibility to sinners around him? \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) Mention two successful soul-winners in the Bible, and explain the secret behind their success. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How can we effectively evangelize our community for the Lord according to the following references:
  - (i) Acts 26:15-18 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) Isaiah 52:11; 2 Timothy 2:19 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) Matthew 9:36; John 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) Mark 1:35; 22:39-44 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (v) 2 Timothy 2:15 \_\_\_\_\_
3. What must be the consecration of every believer today? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 15**

### **VANITY OF WORLDLY PURSUITS**

**TEXT: *Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.***

Solomon, in his search for the good life that really satisfies using his own effort unaided by a divine revelation turned to pleasure, wine; embarked on building mansions, planting vineyards, gardens and parks. He purchased slaves, herds, and flocks; amassed great quantities of silver and gold; hired singers and resorted into unprecedented polygamy. In spite of all these, he did not find happiness, and his conclusion of his search was that life is empty and meaningless.

In our world today, many have joined Solomon in search for happiness through their own effort. Driven on by inordinate ambition, pride and self-exaltation they hunger for power, for praise of men, material possession, pleasure and popularity. The result always contradicts their expectation. Others have taken to drinking, smoking, polygamy, immorality, parties, worldly music and amusements. The effect of these is loss of happiness, joy, peace and satisfaction. They lead to misery, depression, poverty, untimely death, sorrow and in the end, if they die unrepented, eternal regret and anguish in the lake of fire. No wonder prophet Jeremiah lamented, **“Be astonished, O ye heaven, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water”** (Jeremiah 2:12,13).

Sin and backsliding will create desire for the things that are temporal, things of no eternal value. But if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and hunger and thirst after holiness and purity of heart, we will be able to say as Solomon said at about the close of his life in an attitude of sobriety, humility and repentance, that everything in this world apart from God, is empty, hollow, meaningless and vain.

1. What is the root cause of seeking after the things of this world?

---

2. What are the worldly pursuits in the following references?

(i) Daniel 4:29,30 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) 1 Kings 21:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Matthew 23:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) 2 Samuel 15:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Luke 15:11-13 \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) Luke 16:19 \_\_\_\_\_

3. (a) What are the effects of pursuing the things of this world?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) What is the cure for lusting after the things of this world? (Matthew 6:31-33)

---

## **STUDY 16**

### **THE GOAL OF CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**TEXT: *Philippians 3:3-15.***

Christianity is more than mere religion. There are many people who erroneously think that the essence of being a Christian is only in regular church attendance, participation, financial and material contribution to programs and projects of the Church, and engaging in various activities in the Church even though they may not be free from sin.

We begin our Christian journey when we surrender our lives to Christ. From that time onward, Christ expects that we live our lives daily free from sin. Jesus Christ says, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Being born again therefore confers upon us membership of God’s kingdom, **“as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name:”** (John 1:12).

An essential aspect of Christian living is restitution. This is the act of restoring to the rightful owner, things we have wrongfully and deceitfully acquired. This brings us into peace with God and with our fellowmen. Moreover, God expects that every serious Christian must be separate but not isolated from the world. Our love must be reserved for God, and not for the things of this world. It is by so living that we will make Heaven.

God reckons sanctification an absolute necessity in our Christian living. Here is the removal of adamic nature that manifests in selfishness, bitterness, pride, greed, self-centeredness etc., from the heart, and the enthronement of pure love for God and man such that the believer is able to live a radiant and Christ-

honoring life at home, in the church and in the place of work. This is the prerequisite for the believer to live with God in eternity, **“follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14).

The Scripture admonishes us **“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...”** (Hebrews 10:25). Regular fellowship with fellow believers not only provokes us to good works but also challenges us to earnestly contend for the faith as we see the coming of the Lord approaching. True Christian living demands that believers be steadfast in the way of righteousness, **“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”** (Hebrews 3:14).

The goal of our Christian living therefore is not only that we will be children of God and do those things that are pleasing to Him always, but also that we love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength and with all our mind; and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. Consistent Christian living to the end, will guarantee for us enough grace to go with Christ when the trumpet sounds, to live ever with Him in eternity.

1. Mention some erroneous notions about Christian living by nominal Christians.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mention five aspects of Christian living.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the importance of the following references to Christian living?

(i) Luke 19:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Matthew 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) John 17:14 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Matthew 18:20 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Revelation 3:11-12,21 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 17**

### **BELIEVERS' SOURCE OF STRENGTH**

**TEXT: 1 Samuel 7:1-14; 1 Kings 19:4-8.**

Our first text reveals the children of Israel at a time they became prey to their enemies as a result of sin and rebellion. They had lost their property and cities to the Philistines. But when they acknowledged their sinfulness and repented, God gave them victory through the prayer of Samuel, the man of God. Like they, the sinner lives without strength because he is separated from God. He is an easy prey for the devil and his agents. He needs to turn to God in repentance and receive strength to live the righteous life and have victory over all life's storms **"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"** (Romans 5:6).

After salvation, the believer still needs to realize that life is full of turbulence and that all human beings are subject to physical and emotional frailties. There are many difficulties that try our spiritual nerves day by day, and only wishful thinking will cause us to desire a trouble-free life.

In fact, the Christian life has been likened to running a race which requires firmness of purpose and perseverance. This is because when we are off our guard, we could easily become side-tracked by those discouraging circumstances which we daily face. These may be in form of lack of daily necessities, delay in answer to prayer, wrongs and offences from brethren, bereavement, bodily weakness etc. Discouragement may also come at times when we have whole-heartedly done our best for Christ's cause as in the case of Elijah. All of these trying experiences are allowed by God to make us better and stronger Christians. But the devil can take hold of these circumstances as



opportunities to make us deviate from the path of righteousness if we neglect our source of strength through ignorance. In our ignorance we sometimes resort to fleshly armor in fighting spiritual battles or, we give in to complaints, criticisms, fear, dejection, blaming God or other people for our lot in life. At such times too we start desiring the flesh pots and cucumber which we left behind in Egypt (Number 11:4,5). These are all negative reactions that lead to defeat in life's battles.

The right course of action for a true believer when passing through tough times is first to resign to God's will and rejoice in the fact that the Lord knows our frame and allows the events of our lives for our eternal good. He jealously guards us on our pilgrimage to heaven. And whenever the enemy assaults and lays siege against us, He swiftly rises to our defense. Moreover, the blood of Jesus is ever available to protect us in the battle. The word of God is for us to use as the sword of the Spirit to fight every unbelief and contrary voice within. God's redemptive names and promises are sure means of victory and strength for us. What is more? The Spirit of God assists us in praying; and Jesus our great High Priest intercedes for us continually.

Believers should realize that God is our strength, and rise up with boldness and effectual fervent prayers coupled with staggering faith to prevail. Moreover, victory will come through regular fellowship with God and by standing on His promises. When there is delay in answers to prayers we must remain importunate till the answers come. When we are faced with sore temptation, we must fix our eyes firmly on Him who once endured the contradiction of sinners, yet without sin. Holiness of life gives direct access to the Almighty God. A believer should not allow doubt in any form because God cannot lie.

1. (a) Why does a sinner lack strength?

---

(b) How can a sinner receive strength from God for his life?

---

2. List the provisions God has made for believers strength,

(i) Revelation 12:11 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Exodus 17:14,15 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Philippians 2:10 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) John 16:13 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Ephesians 6:17 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Mention three things a believer must do so as to continually enjoy strength from God.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 18**

### **“HOW IS IT THAT YE HAVE NO FAITH”**

**TEXT: Mark 4:35-41.**

The believer's life is full of storms. The experience of the disciples of Christ in our text, is symbolic of what happens in the lives of believers today. Most times, we forget the several promises of the Lord for His saints. We forget that as long as the Captain of our “Christian life boat” is still at the hinder part (which is the right position of the Captain of a ship), no storm of life can overwhelm us.

The Scripture says that **“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper”** (Isaiah 54:17), **“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ...”** (Isaiah 43:2). **“Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob...”** (Number 23:23). And **“greater is he that is in you, than, he that is in the world”** (1 John 4:4). These and other promises are heritage of God's children. Claim them.

The expression, “How is it that ye have no faith” (Mark 4:40b), came out of the lips of Jesus Christ in His apparent surprise at His disciples' unbelief concerning what He told them in verse 35b of our text - “ Let us pass over unto the other side”. But “there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was full”. When God gives a promise, it will surely be fulfilled even though negative circumstances may arise. Paul said, **“...I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me”** (Acts 27:25). Jesus has the last say in the life of a believer. Drop your unbelief now and have faith in the Lord who can still all storm and change all negative circumstances in our lives.

1. What is the basic aim of this study?

2. Mention five situations in which a believer is expected to exercise faith in God.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What do we learn from the following references?

(i) Hebrews 11:6 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Matthew 19:26 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Luke 1:37 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Philippians 4:13 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 19**

### **DANGER OF DELAY**

**TEXT: John 4:31-38.**

Soul-winning can be likened to a farmer's business of cultivation. A prudent farmer neither deems his work concluded nor his joy consummated until he brings his harvest into the barn. Once the fruits are ripe for harvest, all else is put aside by the wise farmer in order to deploy all his resources into harvesting. He does this so that the fruits will not be wasted. Should the farmer go to sleep, however, at the appointed weeks of harvest, he is bound to mourn because the fruits will be wasted (Jeremiah 5:24).

The souls of men in the world are ripe for urgent reaping. Every Christ-minded believer must urgently brace- up himself to gather souls into God's kingdom. A little delay will be attended with unfortunate consequences.

Firstly, delay will grieve God's heart, and His angels in heaven will miss the rejoicing that greets the entrance of every repented soul into God's Kingdom (Luke 15:10). Secondly, careless slumber of reapers will create an opportunity for the devil to harvest the souls of men who would otherwise have become instruments in God's hand.

Thirdly, delay results in eternal ruining of souls. If the sinner dies, he will eternally regret in the lake of fire (Luke 16-24). Fourthly, unnecessary suffering and oppression punctuate the lives of men unreached by procrastinating soul-winners (Psalms 107:17). On the part of the procrastinating soul-winner, as long as he delays, God sees him as a sinner (James 4:17). God also withdraws His mercy from men who neglect to show mercy to the needy (Proverbs 21:13). Except the

lazy soul-winner repents, he will be called to answer for the souls that perished because of his negligence.

With evident urgency, the Lord Jesus threw the Gospel hook and net dexterously into the sea of the world during His earthly ministry (John 4:34,9:4). Apostle Paul toed His footsteps. He hazarded his life in the course of the Gospel work (Acts 15:25-26). John Knox in contemporary times saw the over-ripened harvest of Scotland and in the travail of his soul cried unto the Lord: "Give me Scotland or I die". John Hyde looked at the ripened field of the world so much that an unusual burden came upon his soul for the perishing. This drove him to his knees and was gripped in an amazing travail which caused his heart to shift from the left to the right side. Their commitment resulted into the salvation of many souls.

Unfortunately today, many Christians are dragging their feet at the Lord's harvest field. Some for fear of men fold their arms. Others are preoccupied by personal, worldly cares and ambitions. For some, the love of money had taken their hearts away from the harvest field while the mouths of others had been sealed by secret sins.

The lost zeal however can be restored. Heart-examination and repentance from lethargy is the first pre-requisite to restoration. The second step will be for the soul-winner to give himself to God in consecration. Finally, he will need to go to the Lord in earnest prayer to open his eyes to the ripened field and his heart to be melted in order to reach out to perishing souls.

1. What happens to the fruits when farmers go to sleep at harvest times? \_\_\_\_\_
2. (a) Mention four practical consequences of delay in the harvesting of souls.

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) What is the state of the procrastinating soul-winner before God? \_\_\_\_\_

3. From the following references, how can fainting soul-winners be revived and restored to former zeal?

- (i) Lamentation 3:40 \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) Romans 12:1 \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) Hosea 10:12; Luke 19:41 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 20**

### **CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**TEXT: 2 Peter 1:3-11.**

Many a times when we recall or read about the lives of Joseph, Daniel, Enoch, Elijah, Paul, John the apostle etc., we are often challenged and wonder whether it is possible to walk consistently before God in our Christian life as they did. These men were subject to like passions as we are. The grace of God that they enjoyed is still the same. If we fail to walk consistently as they did, it is either because we fail to appropriate what God has made available to us or fail to pay the price they paid.

God does not delight in our falling. He has not only made His grace available to us, He has promised to **“...keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy”** (Jude 24). As long as we abide in Christ and His word abides in us, He will continue to put at our disposal, all the heavenly resources we require to put the devil to flight and obtain consistent victory.

To live a consistent Christian life, we have a price to pay. First, there must be perfect love for God and His word. There cannot be absolute yieldedness to God without a perfect love for Him. The more we yield to God, the more we are conformed to the image of His Son. God's desire and priorities become our desires and priorities when we truly love Him and His word. His will becomes our will and thus we are able to live a life well pleasing to Him and walk consistently before Him.

The Christian life cannot be lived without fellowship with God. He speaks to us through the scriptures, and we communicate with Him through prayer. To skip



fellowship with God in a day is to seek failure for that day. Consistent fellowship with God ensures consistent fruitfulness in our Christian life. The study of the Scripture and prayer must not be limited to the Quiet Time period. Quality time must be spent on prayer and the study of God's word. This is where the strength of the Christian pilgrim lies. Along with these, there must also be fellowship with other believers. As the Scripture says, "**Iron sharpeneth iron...**" (Proverbs 27:17). We need the fellowship, exhortation, counsel, admonition etc., of Ministers of God and other Bible believers.

Faith in God's promises and in His ability to do what He has promised is what will keep us going in face of the tirades of opposition, persecution, trials and difficulties which we must of necessity experience. It is at such times that the depth of our love for God is revealed. We need the type of faith that will not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief if we are to live consistent Christian life. Self-discipline and watchfulness are also required. We must consistently keep our body under subjection because the flesh consistently wars against the Spirit. We must watch over our souls, and ensure that anything defiling or corrupting does not gain entrance into our life. This is the reason total separation from the world and all its attachments is very vital. The heavenly-minded Christian is never worldly minded. His affection is consistently on things above and not on things of this earth. Worldliness in any form and in any area of our life will make it impossible for us to walk consistently before God.

Last but not the least is the need to put on the whole armor of God at all times. We need the whole armor at all times to be able to withstand in the evil day. Never for a second put it off. Be vigilant, be sober.

1. Mention five people who walked consistently with God in the Scripture.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What provision has God made available to us for our consistent Christian living? (verse 4)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the things required of us in the following texts to have consistent Christian living?

(i) Deuteronomy 6:5

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Joshua 1:8 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) 2 Corinthians 6:17 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) 1 Peter 5:8,9 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Ephesians 6:13 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 21**

### **WALKING IN THE SPIRIT**

**TEXT: *Galatians 5:16-22.***

The experience of salvation through Jesus Christ brings a sinner into a brand new life in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). He becomes a child of God with his name written in the book of life. God desires that such a believer remain in His kingdom. But this only happens when he does his part to shun all evil and walk in the Spirit. He has to Keep himself from any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. He walks as a child of light (Ephesians 5:11).

One of the secrets of victorious daily living is daily walk in the Spirit. This entails total yieldedness to the Spirit's leading and complete renunciation of the desires of the flesh. The Spirit and the flesh stand in bold contrast just as light dissociates from darkness. The works of the flesh are gross transgressions against God's commandments. A man is defiled and separated from God through yielding to them. A sinner is a slave to sin, controlled by the flesh, and his end is eternal damnation in hell fire. But to every believer God has given His Spirit to lead him in righteousness and true holiness.

Walking in the Spirit is clearly evident in a believer's life as he becomes emptied of self, filled with love for God and for all men. He is totally resigned to God's will - every contrary voice within is silenced. In addition, he is dead to the world - its fancies and attractions. He is alive to God and yielded to His full control. He does not grieve the Holy Spirit through frivolous talking and licentious living. For the Spirit-controlled believer, there is peace in tempests, turmoil and trials. There is joy unspeakable even when God's will crosses his. There is zeal for the service of God and commitment to

the salvation of sinners. In times of persecution or opposition there is great calm within that excludes all forms of retaliation or revenge. Instead, there is intense praying for the persecutors. In any need or problem, there is faith to always approach the throne of grace for supply and solution and, patience to inherit the promises after praying.

Walking in the Spirit is a spiritual state that can only be maintained by constant, fervent prayers, daily reading and meditation on God's word, and regular fellowship with the people of like precious faith.

1. (a) What does it mean to "walk in the Spirit"?

---

(b) What is another name for "the works of the flesh" and how can a man be free from them?

---

---

2. From our text, make a list of "the works of the flesh"

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) \_\_\_\_\_

3. From the following passages what are the marks of walking in the Spirit?

(a) Ephesians 5:11

---

(b) Colossians 3:2

---

(c) Ephesians 5:9

---

(d) 2 Corinthians 5:19

---

(e) Ephesians 4:30

---

## STUDY 22

### THE NARROW WAY PILGRIM

**TEXT: Hebrews 11:8-16; Matthew 7:13,14.**

Two things every believer should constantly keep in mind are one, that we are pilgrims here on earth; our eternal abode is heaven. And two, the path we are treading towards heaven is narrow. There is great danger when for a moment we forget any of these mileposts. There is the possibility of being swept off and getting lost!

The path to the narrow way for the heavenly-minded pilgrim is through the narrow gate. The pilgrim who enters the narrow gate must enter alone. He cannot enter with anyone else or anything else. It is the gate of self-denial through which we cannot carry the baggage of sin and self-will. The gate of pride, self-righteousness and self-satisfaction is the wide gate of the world, not the narrow gate to God.

The narrow way pilgrim constantly delights himself **“But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night”** (Psalm 1:2). He has his eyes constantly fixed on Jesus who is able to supply all the strength and grace he needs for the way. His companions are those who, like him, have jettisoned self and have taken up their cross to follow the *Lord* at all cost.

The “road may be rough, the trials may be terrifying, the problems may be perplexing, the persecution may be persistent, yet the heart of the heaven-bound pilgrim is never bowed, but burns constantly with zeal and love for the Master. He remains undaunted in his consecration and commitment because he knows fully well that without the cross there can be no crown.

He constantly refreshes his spirit and encourages himself with the narrow way pilgrim song:

*"I must needs go home by the way of the cross  
There's no other way but this:  
I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light  
If the way of the cross I miss.*

*The way of the cross leads home (2ice)  
It is sweet to know as I onward go  
The way of the cross leads home".*

Heavenly bound pilgrims never think of going back into the world. They seek a country, a better country, an heavenly which God has prepared for them. As pilgrims, we are not to be fascinated or enticed by the glamour and vanity of this world to the extent of developing a competitive spirit with the men of the world. Our treasures are not to be laid up here on earth **"where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"** (Matthew 6:19,20). Heavenly pilgrims hold the things of this world with a loose hand.

Being conscious of the short time we have here on earth, we touch as many lives as we can with the gospel and with what we have. Our goal and focus in life will be to offer the best of our service to the Lord knowing that men shall be remembered by only what they have done.

The heart desire of the heaven-bound narrow way-pilgrim is expressed by the psalmist **"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple"** (Psalm 27:4).

1. (a) What is the major difference between the broad way and narrow way?

---

(b) How does one enter into the narrow way?

---

2. What are some of the things that had made many to reject the narrow way or forsake it?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Identify the characteristics of the narrow-way pilgrim from the following references:

(i) Hebrews 11:10,14,16 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) 1 Peter 2:11,12 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Philippians 3:7,8 \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) 1 Timothy 6:11,12 \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Galatians 6:14 \_\_\_\_\_



## **STUDY 23**

# **DEALING WITH PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY NEW CONVERTS**

***TEXT: Proverbs 27:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.***

The soul-winner's responsibility towards the new convert is not completed until he is fully matured and grounded in the faith. As mothers care for new born babes from birth to adulthood, so must the soul-winner as spiritual mothers, give attention to the problems and needs of the convert in order to conserve them and lead them to spiritual adulthood.

New converts are often faced with so many problems or confusion regarding their new found faith. The soul-winner therefore should be vigilant enough to discover the problem of the new convert early enough, and offer prompt assistance to him in order to prevent backsliding. Some of the peculiar problem of new converts are, assurance of salvation, knowing the difference between sin and temptations, overcoming temptations, maintaining the right attitude during persecution, trusting God for daily needs, meditating daily on God's word, making restitution, separation from the worldly societies, how to relate with sinners without compromising their faith and lots more. If these problems are not prayerfully and carefully handled, it may lead to the loss of souls.

In handling new converts' problems, the soul-winner must manifest love, patience, tenderness, godly wisdom and a prayerful spirit at all times. Let us consider the following steps:

One, He must be able to lead the convert to assurance of salvation through the word. Two, he needs to explain to the convert the fact of temptation and how to overcome it. Three, teach the convert how to

separate a time apart each day to receive from God's word and to talk to Him in prayer. Four, counsel him on the need to make his restitution and how to go about delicate ones such like matters on marriage, possession of magical arts, etc. Five, how to depend on God for all needs and problems. Six, how to share his testimony with others, and, Seven, to separate themselves from Sinners and evil associations.

The Soul-winner must also be prepared to answer the new convert's questions on some sensitive issues such as television viewing, use of jewelry and Christian dressing. In addition to regular visitation to the convert, the soul-winner should provide suitable messages on cassettes, tracts, magazines, books and other literature materials from the church that can provide adequate solution to the convert's spiritual and physical problems. Converts should also be encouraged to attend all fellowship meetings as a means of receiving more knowledge and grace from God and enjoying the love and care of other believers in the local church.

Above all, the soul-winner must lift up the new convert in prayers always concerning specific needs and problems in his Christian life. If these responsibilities are faithfully and carefully carried out, our converts will be conserved in the church and in the faith. Our district churches will be filled with strong believers who will be able to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints till the coming of the Lord.

A lot of blessings, await all diligent soul-winners both in this time and in eternity. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed towards His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister. We must also remember that negligent soul-winners will face the judgment of God on the last day (Jeremiah 48:10).

1. (a) Who is a convert? \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Mention five characteristics of genuine converts.
  - (i) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (v) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Identify five common problems of new converts and explain how you would handle such problems:

| Problem     | Solution |
|-------------|----------|
| (i) _____   | _____    |
| (ii) _____  | _____    |
| (iii) _____ | _____    |
| (iv) _____  | _____    |
| (v) _____   | _____    |

3. In handling new converts problems, what are the essential Christian virtues the soul-winner must demonstrate according to the following references:
  - (i) 2 Corinthians 12:15 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) 2 Timothy 2:3,4 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) Ephesians 1:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (v) 1 Timothy 4:12 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 24**

### **ETERNITY**

**TEXT: Luke 16:19-26.**

Eternity is the endless continuity of time. It is the life-span of the never-dying God. It is also the span of the life of every soul.

At death, the soul is ushered into a 'Great Divide' where there is a final, eternal separation between the righteous and the unrighteous, the godly and the ungodly (Matthew 13:30: Luke 16:26). The righteous are ushered into heaven, their eternal abode in the presence of the Almighty God. The unrighteous are welcomed into their eternal habitation to keep an endless company with the devil and his fallen angels (Matthew 25:33-34,41).

The moment a man is born into this world, eternity begins with him. He begins a journey of endless existence which even death cannot terminate. At the point of death man's spirit returns to the Maker who had given it, while the body returns to the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The timelessness of eternity coupled with the fact that the immortal souls of all men will one day face the consequences of the kind of lives lived on earth should make us think soberly of eternity, and where we will spend it.

With whom will you pitch your tent in eternity? Will you be with the rich man who fared sumptuously but lived sinfully, or with Lazarus who was poverty-ridden but feared God? Will you be with covetous Judas Iscariot, the disciple who stole from the bag and sold his Master, or with John the beloved who leaned on his Master's bosom and knew His Lord's will and did it? Your decision while now on earth will determine your eternal destination.

Eternity is endless. Saints and sinners must respond to this solemn reality. All saints are to daily examine their lives in the light of the scriptures and be determined to live above sin. They must set their hearts on things in heaven and keep their hands on the plough; serving the Lord. Sinners and backsliders, must repent of their sins, and receive by faith Christ's supreme sacrifice for their sins. They must daily rest on the grace of God to keep them from sin's allurements

1. (a) What \_\_\_\_\_ is eternity?\_\_\_\_\_

(b) What \_\_\_\_\_ is the life-span of a soul?\_\_\_\_\_

2. From the references below, where will the following categories of people spend eternity?

(a) The Righteous

(i) John

14:3.\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Matthew

25:46.\_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Luke

23:42,43.\_\_\_\_\_

(b) The Unrighteous

(i) Psalms

9:17.\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Matthew

25:41.\_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Revelation

21:8.\_\_\_\_\_

3. What must be the response of saints and sinners to the tact of the endlessness of eternity?

(i)

Saints. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(ii)

Sinners. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 25**

### **RIGHTEOUS LIVING**

**TEXT: Romans 6:11-22.**

The understanding of many on what the Christian life is all about differs from what the Scripture teaches. The Christian life to many is not more than living good regular participation in church activities and serving in one capacity or the other in the church. Unfortunately, the emphasis in many churches today on worship, giving and spiritual gifts had blinded the eyes and hearts of many to the basic foundation of the Christian life which is conversion. The ideals of the Christian life cannot be lived without the transformation of the heart. Conversion is the starting point for anyone to live a life pleasing unto God.

Again, among those who profess to be converted is a general misconception on the holy living of the Christian. To some none can live righteously here on earth. To others righteous living commences with the sanctification experience. To deny the possibility of a righteous life here on earth is to describe the Scripture as untrue, and to declare God a liar and denounce the sacrificial death of Christ on Calvary. True enough, when we are sanctified, our heart is purified; the adamic nature, that is, the root of sin is destroyed, and we are able to love God with a perfect heart. Inwardly and outwardly, we become holy. Our thoughts and motives become pure.

However, the uniform teaching of Scripture is that righteous and holy living commences at salvation if we are genuinely saved. It is the center heart of the Christian life. Christ was sent so “that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, **“In holiness**

**and righteousness before him, all the days of our life”** (Luke 1: 75).

Our text clearly states the difference Christ makes to our lives when we receive Him as Lord and Savior. In the past, we were servants of sin and yielded our members “servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity”. But having been made free from sin, our members should be yielded as “servants to righteousness unto holiness”.

Holy or righteous living is not a hit and run affair for the believer. It should be our consistent life pattern. The Lord demands it as a requirement to walk with Him; and our community expects it as a complement to our witness. Our worship and service will be worthless without it, and our witness and supplication will be weakened without it.

The vicissitudes of life, the persecution of men, trials of faith and affliction of life do not prevent true children of God from living righteously before God.

The Scripture testifies of Zacharias and Elizabeth, in spite of their problems, that “**...they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless**” (Luke 1:6). If they did, we could!

1. How does our text describe:

(i) Our old life (verse 17) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Our new life (verse 18) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is our responsibility if we are to live righteously?

(i) Verse 11; Galatians 6:14 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Verse 12 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Verse 13 \_\_\_\_\_



3. From the following references find out what it means to live righteously:

(i) Titus 2:11,12 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Luke 1:5,6 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Psalms 1:1,2 \_\_\_\_\_

## **STUDY 26**

### **EXEMPLARY PARENTHOOD**

**TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:1-6.**

It is usually said that “attitudes are caught, not taught”. The most powerful tool in shaping the lives of children is the example to which they are exposed.

Many a child has gone astray in life missing the plan and purpose of God for their lives. The Bible records that Ahaziah the son of Ahab **“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, ... for he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done”** (1 Kings 22: 53). In like manner, there are other persons who were positively influenced for God through the godly lives of their parents. The life of faith of Moses, Samuel and Timothy must have had their origin in the exemplary lives of their parents.

It is a mistake to feel that as long as we have provided the natural needs of our children we have met all our responsibilities. The mandate for all Christian parents therefore is first of all to live before their families in such a way as to commend to them the truth of the word of God.

Parents must endeavor to apply the scriptures in all circumstances of life: in time of lack, crisis, failure, success, and in the time of making important decisions in the family. Moreover, Christian parents must live a life of constant holiness, prevailing prayer, commitment and entire yieldedness to God and consecrated service to the Lord. Their relationship with each other; must be characterized by love that overlooks the weaknesses and shortcomings of each other, unity, mutual care and fulfillment of their God-given individual responsibilities in the home.

The result of living exemplary lives before our children will be to prepare them spiritually, socially and intellectually to face the challenges of life.

1. Mention some children who were positively influenced by their godly parents.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What Christian virtues must parents inculcate in their children through their exemplary lives?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What do we learn from the following scriptures:

(i) Proverbs 4:3,4,10,11 \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Matthew 14:8 \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Proverbs 20:7 \_\_\_\_\_

