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DAILY *manna*

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2008

GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

We praise God for your daily visit with the Word of God through the help of Daily Manna. It is our prayer that you will find the company of Daily Manna helpful in your spiritual walk.

The importance of daily reading the Holy Scriptures can never be over emphasised. The Word of God has been variously described as nourishment for the soul, a hammer to break the sinner's hardened heart, fire to burn away the spiritual dross and a two-edged sword for spiritual discernment. Our Lord Jesus says, "Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" [John 5:39].

This quarter we will be reading from Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Psalms in the Old Testament and from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in the New Testament. In the Old Testament prophetic books, we see the faithfulness of God despite the unfaithfulness of His people. What comfort it brings to our hearts to know that our Lord never forsakes His elect. "... Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" [Jeremiah 31:3].

May this blessed promise strengthen and move us to press on for Christ Jesus.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you will find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. Daily Manna highlights practical lessons from each day's Bible passages to make your reading through God's Word a meaningful experience. It aims to provide you with a bird's eye view of the Bible, with a focus on personal application. Each day's assigned readings comprise a Morning reading and an Evening reading. Depending on your preference, you may combine the Morning and Evening readings in one session.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in Daily Manna.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in Daily Manna and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

In His grace,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

READ

Jeremiah 1

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Born for a purpose

VERSE 5

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

The Book of Jeremiah is a collection of sermons and poetry, interspersed with historical events in the national life of Judah. Although the events in Jeremiah are not recorded chronologically, there is, however, a moral declension. The religious and moral mood of Judah was getting from bad to worse. Jeremiah's ministry covered a time of great religious revival under the reign of Josiah to great religious apostasy under the reigns of his sons. But God in His mercy sent His prophet to urge Judah to repent or face dire consequences.

Jeremiah means "Jehovah exalts". He was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, which meant that Jeremiah was born a priest. But Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet.

There are four verbs that describe God's calling of Jeremiah [v. 5]. God formed Jeremiah. God created him for a specific purpose. God knew Jeremiah. God's calling of Jeremiah was not a haphazard decision. God did not pick Jeremiah out of a list of names. God called Jeremiah specifically. God sanctified Jeremiah, which meant that God had set apart Jeremiah for this ministry. As a final assurance to Jeremiah, God ordained him.

THOUGHT The purpose of man is to know God's will and do it.

1 JULY

READ

Matthew 14

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jesus withdrawing to solitude

VERSE 23

And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone.

This chapter records several events: the beheading of John the Baptist at the command of Herod, the feeding of the multitude and the calming of the storm. These events were linked by our Lord in prayer

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, He withdrew to a solitary place, perhaps to mourn for His herald and cousin. A lesson for us is that sometimes we need to deal with our grief and sorrow alone.

But we must note that Jesus did not dwell on His grief for a long time. He quickly returned to His ministry. He preached and later miraculously fed 5,000 people from five loaves and two fishes.

In verse 23, after Jesus had dismissed the crowd, He went up to a mountainside alone to pray. While our Lord was in the mountains, at His place of prayer, His disciples were caught in a terrible storm in the Sea of Galilee. They were in danger but our Lord was in prayer. This is an apt description of our lives. We have a God Who watches over us. Take comfort. Our Lord is praying for us in heaven.

THOUGHT Jesus made room in His busy preaching schedule to be alone with the Father in prayer. What about you?

READ

Jeremiah 2

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Broken cisterns

VERSE 13

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.

In Chapter 2, Jeremiah preached about God's faithfulness and the people's forgetfulness. Israel and Judah had a covenant relationship. God had blessed her with His mercies and kindness.

There was a time when the people reciprocated His love [v. 2]. He remembered their holiness and fruitfulness [v. 3]. But now, the Jews had departed from God and turned their backs on Him [v. 5]. Their backsliding was seen in their walking after vanity [v. 5], their failure to enquire about God [v. 6] and their defiling the land [v. 7].

God laid two great indictments for the children of Israel [v. 13]. They had forsaken Him and spurned the fountain of living waters for their own broken cisterns. The water supply of the Jews came from the melting snow of Mount Hermon. As winter ended and the mountain snow melted, the water that flowed from Hermon was clean, refreshing spring water. The supply was abundant—"the fountain of living waters". But instead of trusting God, the people turned to idols. They made cisterns to collect water.

How absurd it is that God's people would rather drink from broken cisterns than from God's fountain.

THOUGHT "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ..." [John 4:14]. Have you drunk of the living water?

2 JULY

READ

Matthew 15

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jesus teaching about inner purity

VERSE 8

This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.

The Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to check on Jesus' activities and teachings. They demanded to know why the disciples did not wash their hands before meals. They were concerned not so much with hygiene but the observance of a Jewish tradition. Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah's words to denounce the religious teachers as hypocrites.

The Pharisees knew a lot about God but they did not know God personally. Likewise, we need to examine ourselves. If we worship God but our hearts are far from Him, our worship is nothing. It is not enough to study about a religion or even to study the Bible. Our actions and attitudes must be sincere and reflect our beliefs.

Not all traditional practices handed down from our forefathers are good. We must be discerning. We need to bear in mind that tradition is something external while God's Word is internal. His Word should penetrate our hearts and change our lives. People obey man-made traditions to please men but, as Christians, we must obey the Word to please God. Tradition deals with rituals while God's Word deals with reality.

THOUGHT God wants us to give Him our hearts, not just lip service.

READ

Jeremiah 3

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Return, backslider

VERSE 12

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

The Christian's life is fraught with many trials and temptations. As portrayed in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the spiritual journey is never a smooth one. There are times when we are discouraged or distracted by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches that lead to backsliding. The people of Judah were in such a condition. They were unfaithful to God [v. 6], stubborn in their sins [v. 7], defiant in their evil [v. 8–9] and insincere in their repentance [v. 10–11].

Despite the persistent unfaithfulness of Israel, God still said, "I am married to you" [v. 14]. What longsuffering! What manner of love that God has for sinners that He should extend it to those whose hearts are far from Him. Instead of exercising His righteous judgement, God extends His hand of mercy and calls on sinners to return to Him. What hope we have in a God Whose mercy is eternal and Who will not keep His anger forever [v. 12].

The desire of God is that every backslidden Christian return to Him and find forgiveness, mercy and favour in Christ Jesus.

THOUGHT For [God's] anger endureth but a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. – Psalm 30:5

3 JULY

READ

Matthew 16

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Demanding for a miracle

VERSE 1

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired Him that He would shew them a sign from heaven.

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. Although Jesus could have easily acceded to their requests, He refused. He knew that no miracle would convince them that He was the Son of God because they had already hardened their hearts.

Since Jesus began His ministry, He had been healing the sick, raising the dead and feeding thousands miraculously. Still, the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted Him to prove Himself further. These religious teachers did not lack evidence; what they lacked was honesty and humility. Like those Jewish teachers, many today still demand to see miracles before they believe in God.

Do you expect God to prove Himself to you? Remember, we have so many miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments. With so much evidence laid before us, if we still refuse to believe in God, we are either too proud or too stubborn. All we need to do is step forward in faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. We will begin to see the greatest miracle of all—the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

THOUGHT We must follow God in truth, not in proof.

READ

Jeremiah 4

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Heart check

VERSE 14

O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

The children of Judah knew that what they did was not pleasing to God. Then Jeremiah prophesied concerning the fall of Jerusalem. Instead of turning to God in repentance, they tried to find security behind fortified cities. They thought they could find salvation in Zion [v. 5–6]. Be warned, there will never be any refuge in the company of sinners.

The kings and princes could not protect them [v. 9]. The priests were of no help either, even though they continued to preach that there would be peace [v. 10].

Peace comes not from the wisdom of princes or the empty preaching of priests. Lasting peace comes from the Prince of Peace. He is the sinner's hope. His prescription for peace is not to do more Christian things. It is not to get baptised, join a church or be a better person. Rather it is "wash thine heart ... that thou mayest be saved" [v. 14].

That is a step of faith as well as a step of humility. It requires the sinner to come to God in the way that He has prescribed. It is a step of humility because the sinner must accept God's judgement of him.

THOUGHT There is forgiveness and mercy at the foot of the Cross but it requires you to come humbly on your knees.

4 JULY

READ

Matthew 17

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Lack of faith limits

VERSE 20

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

A man brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus because His disciples were unable to heal him. The disciples could not understand why they had failed to cast out the demon. Jesus pointed to their lack of faith. Faith, even as small as a mustard seed, would have been sufficient for the disciples to heal the sick. But Jesus was not condemning His disciples for their weak faith. He was trying to show how important faith would be in the ministry.

The nine disciples who failed to heal the sick were the ones who were not called by our Lord to the mount of the Transfiguration. During Jesus' absence, they began to neglect prayer and their faith weakened. When the big test came, they were not up to it. We cannot serve God without prayer. We cannot live a victorious Christian life apart from prayer.

Even a little faith—one the size of a mustard seed—can achieve great things for God. If we feel weak and powerless as a Christian, we should examine our faith and life. We need to make sure that we are trusting in God's power and not in our own abilities to produce results.

THOUGHT God honours even a little faith.

READ

Jeremiah 5

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The search for a godly man

VERSE 1

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgement, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

God told Jeremiah to search for one man who is just and truthful, and He would pardon the nation. Who is this man whom God is looking for?

He is committed to justice. A godly man is one who deals justly with others. He is committed to the truth. A godly man is one who means what he says and says what he means. A godly man is one who is committed to God's truth. He is teachable [v. 3–5]. A godly man is also one who will receive God's correction.

In Genesis 18, God also told Abraham that He would spare Sodom and Gomorrah if Abraham could find 10 righteous persons. In Jeremiah's case, the result of his search was more tragic because God was not looking for 10 men in the sin cities but only for one in Jerusalem—the city of God and His Temple, and the residences of kings and priests. But the kings and princes were crooked and the priests and prophets were corrupt. There was not one man in Jerusalem who had any regard for uprightness. All Jeremiah needed was one just and truthful person. But sadly there was none to be found in Jerusalem.

THOUGHT God is still looking for a just and righteous and godly person. If He were to look into your heart, will He find a righteous person in you?

5 JULY

READ

Matthew 18

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Disciples jostling for positions

VERSE 1

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Which one of us is the greatest?" was a repeated topic of discussion among Jesus' disciples. They had become preoccupied with an earthly kingdom and had lost sight of Jesus' divine mission. Instead of seeking a place of service, they sought positions of power. Jesus rebuked them for their pride and desire for worldly greatness. He taught them that humility is essential for unity and harmony among God's people.

Jesus used a child to help His self-centred disciples understand the meaning of humility. Children are dependent and powerless, and trusting by nature. A child has the characteristics that make for humility: a desire to please, an absence of boasting or selfish desire to be greater than others.

Why do some of God's children have such difficulty getting along with one another? Why is there so much division and dissension among Christians? The chief cause is pride—thinking ourselves more important than we really are. The disciples wanted to know who was the greatest. But Jesus warned them that they would not enter His kingdom if they were not humble, much less be great in His kingdom.

THOUGHT Are we struggling with childishness? Are we making progress with childlikeness?

READ

Jeremiah 6

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The old paths and the good way

VERSE 16

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

We live in a world where everything new seems to command a premium. New things and new ideas are generally more attractive. However, not all new things are good. It takes much godly wisdom to discern what is merely new and what is really good.

The Word of God has this to say about man: our human nature is depraved, we are totally helpless in redeeming ourselves. In God's prescribed way of salvation, we have to look for the old paths and the good way. Charles Spurgeon wisely observed that there is nothing new in theology except that which is false.

The children of Judah were tired of the old paths, and looked for new experiences. But God told them to "stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" [v. 16].

Stand! Stop for a moment! Take a time-out and do a spiritual stock-take. See! Consider your present situation before you march headlong into another dead end. Ask! If you are lost, ask for help. Seek God in prayer. Walk! If you know the old paths and the good way, then walk in obedience.

THOUGHT It is not just knowing where to go but also walking in the way that will get you to your destination.

6 JULY

READ

Matthew 19

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Seeking rewards

VERSE 27

Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?

The disciples had given up a great deal of earthly goods to follow Jesus. Peter asked Jesus what kind of rewards they might receive. Jesus assured them that in the life to come, they would receive a hundredfold of what they had sacrificed.

In the Old Testament, God often rewarded His people, like Abraham and Isaac, for their obedience. However, obedience and material rewards are not proportionately linked. If they are, good and obedient people will be rich and suffering, a sign of disobedience or sin. This is obviously not the case.

As believers, our rewards come in the form of grace, mercy, blessings and power through the Holy Spirit. Jesus has assured us that anyone who gives up something valuable for His sake will be repaid many times over.

Riches and power are valued highly in this world. But how many of the rich and powerful achieved their status because they are humble and self-effacing? Not many. But Jesus said that in the life to come, "many who are first [first in this world in terms of wealth and status] will be last, and many who are last [the faithful] will be first".

THOUGHT Are we willing to make sacrifices now for greater rewards later?

READ

<i>Jeremiah 7</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Temple of God or den of robbers

VERSE 11

Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

God not only told Jeremiah what to preach. He also told Jeremiah when to preach and where to preach. Jeremiah was to stand at the gate of the Lord's house as the people were going into the Temple to offer their sacrifices and he was to preach against the sins of the people. The Jews thought going to the Temple made them more religious.

This temple theology is based on the error that as long as the Temple was standing, God was with them, and Judah would be blessed and safe. This theology is also ritualistic, founded upon animal sacrifices and burnt offerings. But while the people were doing all the religious things, they broke six of the Ten Commandments [v. 8–9]. This is the epitome of hypocrisy.

By their double lives, they had turned the house of God into a den of robbers. The lesson is this: It is the people who go to church that makes the character of the church. The warning is that God would never bind Himself to one people or one place. If the people would not repent, God would do to the Church what He did to Shiloh and the Temple.

THOUGHT For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God ... – 1 Peter 4:17

7 JULY

READ

<i>Matthew 20</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The parable of vineyard workers

VERSE 15

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

A landowner hired workers for an agreed wage at different times of the day. At the end of the day, each worker was paid a penny, regardless of the number of hours he had put in. Obviously, workers hired early in the morning complained that they were unfairly treated.

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like what the landowner did. God is sovereign and He dispenses His gifts and blessings to whom He will. This parable speaks to believers who have an unwarranted "sense of superiority" because of who they are in the church and what they have done. But in God's kingdom, man's merit and ability are put aside so that grace becomes the overruling principle.

Do you resent God's acceptance of the despised, the outcast and the sinners who turn to Him for forgiveness? Do you begrudge fellow believers who seem to receive more blessings than you? Are you jealous of the blessings that God has given to those whom you consider "undeserving"? Reality check: all that we are and have comes "from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" [James 1:17].

THOUGHT Focus on God's gifts for you and be thankful.

READ

Jeremiah 8

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

They refuse to return

VERSE 5

Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

A man who falls will naturally pick himself up and move on. A person who is lost will change his course. Not so with the people of Judah. Despite God's pleadings to repent, they held fast to deceit [v. 5]. They denied that they had sinned and tried to justify themselves.

"What have I done?" [v. 6] is a statement of denial of their sins. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar [1 John 1:10].

"We are wise" [v. 8] is a statement of self-conceit. The Jews thought that just because they had the law of God, they were wise. The Word of God is useless in the hands of one who is unskilful in its use [Hebrews 5:13]. To be wise is to know what the Word of God says, and to do it [Matthew 7:24].

"Peace, peace" [v. 11] was a lie perpetuated by the priests to delude the people. The message of a false peace lulled the people into a state of false security. When they realised their sinfulness, the enemy was at the gate. But had God's saving grace passed them for good? Never! There is still hope while our Lord tarries in His return.

THOUGHT At the foot of the Cross where Christ bled, you will find the balm of salvation. Where Christ is, you will find a physician.

8 JULY

READ

Matthew 21

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

A fruitless fig tree withers and dies

VERSE 19

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree? It was obviously not a thoughtless or angry act but a visual sermon acted out by our Lord Jesus to show His anger at people who proclaimed faith without any evidence of fruit-bearing. The fig tree symbolised the nation of Israel. Just as the tree had much leaves but no fruits, so Israel had a mere show of faith without fruits.

Jesus used the fig tree as a visual aid to teach His disciples a practical lesson about faith and actions. Israel as a nation was chosen to show God's graciousness and greatness. But they were disobedient and fruitless. We believers, too, must be aware of the peril of fruitlessness.

The presence of leaves on a tree usually indicates the presence of fruits. While the fig tree looked good from a distance, it was fruitless. Similarly, a believer may look impressive externally, but his or her activities may not honour God. If we only "appear" to have faith without putting it to work in our lives, we are like the fruitless fig tree that would wither and die. God wants His people to produce fruits because fruits are the product of a faithful life.

THOUGHT Genuine faith bears fruits for God's kingdom.

READ

Jeremiah 9

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The bending tongue

VERSE 3

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not Me, saith the LORD.

The world does not place a very high premium in telling the truth. Lying has become the norm today. Deceit has been redefined as cleverness. Spinning the truth has been developed into a fine art by politicians and reporters. Exaggeration is a skill valued by advertisers.

The Jews, too, were adept in bending their words [v. 3a]. To bend the truth like a bow has the intent to hurt a person. The best example of one who bends the tongue is the devil [Genesis 3:1, 4].

They were “not valiant for the truth” [v. 3b], meaning that they did not exert their moral fortitude in being truthful. They lied for the sake of convenience. Abraham was not valiant for the truth when he said that Sarah was his sister [Genesis 20]. They were also “utterly supplant”. Literally, to supplant is to “take by the heel”. It means to cheat. Jacob is known as the supplanter because he cheated his brother’s blessing.

The sins of the tongue are evil but they are made worse because they are committed against brothers and neighbours [v. 4]. Christian, “lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” [Colossians 3:9].

THOUGHT When there is no truth in the home or the Church, they are neither places of safety nor love.

9 JULY

READ

Matthew 22

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Speculating about the future

VERSE 29

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

The Sadducees who did not believe in the doctrine of resurrection wanted to discredit Jesus before the people. According to Old Testament law, when a woman’s husband died without leaving her a son, her late husband’s brother(s) had to marry her. When the Sadducees asked Jesus the question about the widow who kept remarrying each of her dead husbands’ siblings, Jesus declared that they were ignorant. They knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

We sometimes like to dream up ideas of what eternal life in heaven will be, based on images and experiences of our present life. We must not assume that our future life will be a continuation of our present one. Nor can we assume that what we do not yet understand is therefore implausible. The glory of heaven will undoubtedly be far beyond our greatest imaginations.

The Bible does not tell us everything about eternity and heaven. It is therefore futile for us to speculate about our future life. Answers to questions about the future must rest solely on the authority of God’s Word.

THOUGHT We must not think about heaven in human terms.

READ

Jeremiah 10

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The Lord is the true God

VERSE 10

But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.

In Chapter 10, Jeremiah contrasted idols against the true God. When man rejects the knowledge of the true and living God, he does not remove his need for God. There is a spiritual vacuum in every man's life. God "hath set the world (eternity) in their heart" [Ecclesiastes 3:11]. This vacuum must be filled with the true God or a god of man's own making.

Jeremiah presents several forms of idols. They may be signs of heaven [v. 2]. God made the stars as evidence of His creation [Genesis 1:14] but man has perverted it and used stars to divine the future. Astrology teaches another truth other than God's divine revelation.

Idols may also come in the form of desires [v. 3–5]. The Jews decked their idols with silver and gold because that was what they desired. Businessmen worship the god of prosperity because that is their desire. Idolatry is the worship of our own desires, which become our gods.

Contrast idols with the "true God ... the living God, and [the] everlasting King" [v. 10]. "Learn not the way of the heathen" [v. 2]. Come to the Saviour.

THOUGHT You may not worship the gods on the shelves but are you worshipping the gods of the self?

10 JULY

READ

Matthew 23

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jesus condemning the hypocrites

VERSE 12

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The Pharisees were religious teachers who taught the Jews how to interpret and apply the laws. The error of the Pharisee is that they made no difference between God's laws and man-made traditions. They knew the Scriptures but did not live by them. They enforced laws to make themselves look good rather than honour God. Their desire for power and status made them lose sight of God. Their spiritual blindness was spreading to the nation of Israel. The Lord Jesus exposed their hypocritical attitudes. He condemned the leaders who served themselves rather than God and their fellowmen.

Like the Pharisees, many believers today know the Bible but refuse to obey it completely. We claim that we love Jesus but we do not love Him whole-heartedly. Therefore, we must pray to God that, by His grace, we will match our beliefs with our actions.

Being meticulous about the details of ceremonial cleanliness, the Pharisees had lost their perspective on inner purity. Take a hard look at yourself: Are you living your Christian life "on the outside" or "on the inside"? The former is like washing a coffee cup on the outside while the stains remain inside.

THOUGHT Not being a hypocrite is to be honest with yourself and with God.

READ

Jeremiah 11

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The covenant of God

VERSE 3

*And say thou unto them,
Thus saith the LORD God
of Israel; Cursed be the
man that obeyeth not the
words of this covenant,*

Though Jeremiah had been preaching for many years, the people of Judah remained unrepentant. So Jeremiah reminded them of the covenant that they had made with God. A covenant is a contract between two parties. There are covenants in the Bible in which God assumes full obligation [e.g. Genesis 15]. There are also covenants that are rooted in God's deliverance of Israel, and these stress the obligation of the people of Israel to obey [Exodus 24:1–3; Deuteronomy 28; Joshua 24:14–24].

Salvation falls under the covenant of grace because there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves. It is a gift of God [Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8–9]. The relationship between law and grace is like this. No one is saved by keeping the Law (Ten Commandments). Our righteousness is in Christ alone. However, we keep the commandments not so that we can be saved but because we have been saved.

Obedience to God and His Word is the sign that we belong to Him. "Obey My voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be My people, and I will be your God" [Jeremiah 11:4; John 14:15].

THOUGHT While we may not be faithful, God is always faithful. He will never break His covenant with us [Psalm 89].

11 JULY

READ

Matthew 24

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Watch and be ready

VERSE 42

*Watch therefore: for ye
know not what hour your
Lord doth come.*

Jesus said that He knew not the hour of His second coming; only His heavenly Father knew. Our Lord wants us to do His work while waiting. Verses 45–51 show us that the faithful servant was rewarded and the unfaithful one punished when the master returned. Similarly, the Lord will hold us accountable for what we have—or have not—done.

It is for our good that the date of our Lord's return is not revealed to us. If it is, we will likely be complacent in our work for Him. Worse still, we may be tempted to live like non-believers until the last minute. AT Robertson gives this warning: "It is useless to set the day and hour for Christ's coming but it is folly to neglect it." Take heed.

The Lord said that if a house owner knew the exact time a thief would break into his home, he would stay up and keep watch diligently at the appointed hour. As we have no idea when Christ will come again, we must therefore be ready at all times. His return will be unannounced. There will be no opportunity for last-minute repentance and conversion. Live each day for Christ.

THOUGHT Our Lord wants us to be ready for His return. Are you ready?

READ

Jeremiah 12

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Running with the horses

VERSE 5

If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

Jeremiah had been God's faithful servant for many years, but his labours had little to show for it. The Jews hated him and his message [Jeremiah 11:21]. Jeremiah was discouraged. In his despair, Jeremiah asked God: Why do the wicked prosper?

This question is not new [Psalm 73; Job 10:3]. It focuses on the issue of how can one reconcile God's power and love in a world of evil. When Jeremiah asked the question, he was expecting God to deliver him from his trials. God did not answer Jeremiah's question. Instead, He asked Jeremiah, "If you cannot handle the normal and ordinary problems in life, how will your faith hold up in times of crisis?"

God puts us through trials for several reasons. First, trials refine our Christian character [Job 23:10; James 1:2-4]. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" [Proverbs 24:10]. Second, trials refocus our life's purpose. Just as God had a purpose for Jeremiah's life, He also has a purpose and ministry for you. Third, trials cause us to rest on God's strength. We can be sure that God's "grace is sufficient for thee" [2 Corinthians 12:9].

PRAYER I am no longer my own, but Thine. Let me be full, let me be empty; Let me have all things, let me have nothing; Put me to doing, put me to suffering; But put me to what Thou wilt.

12 JULY

READ

Matthew 25

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The parable of loaned money

VERSE 29

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

In this parable, a master entrusted his servants with different amounts of talent. Each was given according to his ability. No one received more or less than what he could handle. If he failed in his assignment, he had no excuse. Failure to accomplish the assignment could only mean that he was either lazy or felt no obligation towards his master's instructions.

The talents mentioned in verses 14 to 30 represent the abilities and resources God has given us. The Lord expects us to use or invest them wisely. We are responsible to make full use of our God-given talents and resources. The focus is not on how much God has given us but how well we have used them. In other words, we are to use our time, money and abilities diligently to do God's work.

Our time, money and abilities are not ours in the first place. God gives them to us. We are but caretakers—not owners—of these resources. Be careful not to neglect, abuse or squander what we have been given. God will deal with us for being lazy, heartless or greedy. Remember: God rewards faithfulness.

THOUGHT Being diligent can simply mean doing our daily work out of love for the Lord.

READ

Jeremiah 13

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Can the leopard change his spots?

VERSE 23

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

In Chapter 13, Jeremiah was told to act out his sermon. He was told to take off the girdle and bury it under a rock in River Euphrates [v. 4]. The girdle is an undergarment. It symbolises the closeness between God and Judah. The buried girdle symbolised that the relationship between God and Judah no longer existed. Judah had defiled itself with sin. Just as Jeremiah's buried girdle became useless, the city and the temple, which the Jews were proud of, would be ruined [v. 7].

Wine is a symbol of joy, and to be filled with wine is sign of prosperity. The bottles represented the Jews. God would fill them with drunkenness not so that they could rejoice, but as His judgement so that they would be helpless against their foes. God would smash the bottles to show His judgement on them. The flock of Israel would be like sheep taken to the slaughter by the invaders because of their sin and pride.

Verse 23 shows how impossible it was for people who are too accustomed to doing evil to change their ways. Only God can change the human heart. He never rejects anyone who sincerely turns to Him.

PRAYER O God, mould me to be more and more like You.

13 JULY

READ

Matthew 26

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Disciples deserting the Lord

VERSE 35

Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

When Jesus told His disciples that they would soon deny and desert Him, Peter declared without hesitation that he would rather die than to disown Jesus. All the other disciples said the same [v. 35]. A few hours later, when our Lord was arrested by the Romans, they all deserted Him [v. 56]. As Christ had prophesied, Peter denied Him three times before the rooster crowed [v. 75].

It is easy to say we are devoted to the Lord in good times. But our claims are only meaningful when they are tested in hard times. How strong is our faith? Is it strong enough to hold up under trials?

Peter first denied the Lord before the crowd, saying: "I know not what thou sayest" [v. 70]. Then, he denied with an oath: "I do not know the man" [v. 72]. Finally, he cursed and swore [v. 74]. The intensity of Peter's agitation increased with each denial.

Be warned that denying our Lord comes in small steps but with increasing pressure. A subtle denial can turn into an outright denunciation of our Saviour.

THOUGHT Pray to God for strength to shore up our defences.

READ

Jeremiah 14

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Beware of false prophets!

VERSE 14

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

God promised that if the people would keep His commandments, He would water Canaan with rain from heaven [Deuteronomy 11:10–12]. But if they sinned, there would be no rain, and the land would not yield its fruit [Deuteronomy 10:17].

In Chapter 14, Jeremiah describes Judah's distress [v. 1–6]. He confessed Judah's sins [v. 7–9] and pleaded for relief for the people. However, the Lord said that there would be no relief. The people would be destroyed by the Babylonians. They not only brought the sword but, as a result of its devastating invasion, there would also be famine and pestilence [v. 12]. Jeremiah argues that the fault lies with the false prophets who promised deliverance and peace [v. 13].

God agreed that the prophets were leading the people astray through their false visions and lies [v. 14]. He assured Jeremiah that they would suffer for what they had done [v. 15–16].

However, the people would be judged because they listened to the false prophets, who told them what they liked to hear. Anyone who speaks contrary to the Word of God is a false prophet [Isaiah 8:20]. Thank God for the preaching of sound doctrine in our church.

PRAYER Help me to be spiritually discerning.

14 JULY

READ

Matthew 27

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Nature testifying to gravity of Jesus' death

VERSE 51

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

Jesus' death was accompanied by several miraculous events. During the six hours when Jesus was nailed to the cross, darkness came over all the land [v. 45]. At the moment Jesus gave up His spirit, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and rocks split. Dead saints rose from their graves [v. 51–52].

The darkness on that Friday afternoon symbolised the judgement that Jesus had endured when He was "made a curse" for sinners. It was both a physical darkness at Golgotha and a spiritual darkness in the hearts of the Jews.

The splitting of the veil is particularly significant to all believers. Leviticus 16 records that within the Temple is the "Holy of Holies" where only the High Priest could enter once a year to atone for the sins of Israel. The veil at the entrance to this most holy place was torn in two upon Christ's death, symbolising that the separation between God and man was removed. All believers are now free to approach God directly because Jesus, by His sacrifice, has opened the way for us. We have no more need of priests or sacrifices to serve as "middlemen" between God and us.

THOUGHT Our Lord had died for our sins on the cross.

READ

Jeremiah 15

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

I will deliver thee

VERSE 21

*And I will deliver thee out
of the hand of the wicked,
and I will redeem thee out
of the hand of the terrible.*

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses warned them that God would remove them from the land if they disobeyed Him. By the time of Jeremiah, the sins of the people were so great that God kept His promise by using the Babylonians to drive out the people of Judah.

Two responses are recorded. First, note the Lord's response to Jeremiah's prayer. God had made up His mind that He would answer the prayers of the people of Judah. In the past, Moses and Samuel had interceded for the people. God heard and answered their prayers. In this case, God was weary of the people's repenting [v. 6].

Judgement upon Judah would come in four ways: death from disease, war, starvation and captivity. In fact, the judgement would be so severe that God Himself lamented over the suffering that would come upon His people.

Second, note Jeremiah's response to the Lord's answer. Jeremiah was angry, hurt and afraid. He told God that there was neither end nor relief to his sufferings [v. 17–18]. However, the Lord reassured Jeremiah of His deliverance. Likewise, we can be assured of our deliverance by God in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER Thank You, Lord, for delivering me from the sin of death.

15 JULY

READ

Matthew 28

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jesus' resurrection

VERSE 6

*He is not here: for He is
risen, as He said. Come,
see the place where the
Lord lay.*

The last chapter of Matthew is a record of victory. The angel who brought the good news of Christ's resurrection to the women gave them four messages: (a) Fear not ye: the reality of the resurrection brings joy, not fear. (b) He is not here: Jesus is not dead; the women should not look for Him among the dead. (c) Come, see the place: the tomb was empty then, and it is empty today. Jesus has conquered death. (d) Go quickly, and tell: the followers of Christ are to spread the good news of His resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection was causing a stir in Jerusalem. A group of women was moving quickly through the streets looking for His disciples to pass on the good news. At the same time, a group of religious leaders was plotting how to cover up the news of this miracle. Even today, the stir caused by Christ's resurrection has not subsided. The world believes that Jesus is still dead. The world denies and tries to disprove the resurrection story.

To believers, Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. If it were false, we would have a hope that is also false. But Hallelujah, Christ is risen indeed.

THOUGHT Death is not the end; we have a future life with Christ.

READ

Jeremiah 16

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Take refuge in God

VERSE 19

O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.

God gave Jeremiah three prohibitions. He must not marry, take part in any funeral and attend feasts. All Jewish men were expected to be married by the age of 20 and have children, failing which it was deemed a curse. Considering all the trials Jeremiah endured, he was probably better off to be single. This prohibition was a symbolic act of God's judgement, for the children in the Jewish families would either die or starve to death in the coming Babylonian invasion.

In Jewish culture, it was unthinkable that a person be forbidden to show grief in funeral rites or participate in joyful events. This prohibition shows how seriously God views sin. The imminent judgement would be so terrible that the people would neither be able to express their grief nor celebrate at wedding feasts. When Jeremiah was asked about his restrictions, he declared God's warnings of the coming captivity.

In times of discouragement, God is working out His purpose. So take refuge in Him. Let Him be your strength when you are weak, your fortress when you are attacked, and your refuge when you need to retreat from life's pressures.

PRAYER God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble [Psalm 46:1].

16 JULY

READ

Mark 1

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Doing the right thing

VERSE 9

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan.

The author, John Mark, wrote his Gospel for Gentile Christians, that is, you and me. He presented Jesus as the Servant of God [Mark 10:45] and often used the word "immediately" or "straightway" to describe the attitude of one who is ever ready to obey his master and meet the people's needs [v. 10, 12, 20–21]. Christ was portrayed as a Servant on the move, instantly responsive to the will of the Father by ministering to those in need, through preaching, teaching and healing.

Our Lord voluntarily presented Himself to John the Baptist for baptism [v. 9]. He did this because He wanted to identify Himself with the sinful people He had come to save and to "fulfil all righteousness" [Matthew 3:15]. This shows His humility and submission, and He was commended by God the Father and the Holy Spirit [v. 10–11]. The baptism was the inauguration of His public ministry.

Water baptism is one of two sacraments ordained by God. If you have not been baptised, it will be good to follow in our Saviour and obey His command to be baptised and to publicly declare your faith in the Servant-Redeemer.

THOUGHT Honour God and He will honour you.

READ

Jeremiah 17

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The blessed man

VERSE 7

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

God's people continued to sin even though they had the law and warnings of the consequences of sin from God's prophets. In this chapter, Jeremiah names six sins that they had committed: idolatry, which is the worship of images; unbelief, which is trusting in men rather than God; greed, which drove the rich to exploit the poor so that they could become richer; forsaking the Lord; rejecting God's servant; and profaning the Sabbath. As a result of their sins, God removed His blessings from them.

The Jewish people have a history of unbelief. The sin of unbelief kept them out of the Promised Land [Numbers 13–14]. Likewise, it was unbelief that caused them to worship idols and brought forth the chastening of God during the period of the Judges.

Jeremiah faithfully delivered God's message to the people. He interceded for the people but they still resisted God's truth.

In the eyes of men, Jeremiah's ministry was a failure, but in God's eyes he was a success. We need men and women of Jeremiah's spirit to serve in the church today, to preach the truth no matter what. We must be prepared to pay the price for preaching the truth.

PRAYER The only way to receive blessing is to trust in the Lord.

17 JULY

READ

Mark 2

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Calling all sinners

VERSE 17

When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Compare the reaction of Jesus with that of Peter in Galatians 2:12. Our Lord stood by what He did though the scribes and Pharisees were offended while the Apostle Peter quickly withdrew himself from fellowshiping with Gentiles so as not to offend the Jews. Jesus justified His action by proclaiming that the spiritually sick needed the Saviour just as the physically sick needed a doctor. The apostle Paul also declared, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" [1 Timothy 1:15].

This self-revelation of our Lord is precisely what His forerunner, John the Baptist, had set out to do. His role was to proclaim the coming of the Messiah Who would not call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance [v. 17]. This is the good news of salvation freely offered to all. The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees were outside the door of salvation. Have you believed in Jesus as your Saviour and passed the good news to your loved ones?

What would you do in a similar situation [v. 16]? Would you prefer the respect of man or do the will of God to propagate the Gospel?

CHORUS Christ Jesus came into this world, to save us sinful men;
Of all sinners I am the chief, and yet He pardoned me.

READ

Jeremiah 18

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

How to handle false accusations

VERSE 23

Yet, LORD, Thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from Thy sight, but let them be overthrown before Thee; deal thus with them in the time of Thine anger.

The parable recorded here was probably written during the early years of Jehoiakim's reign. Jehoiakim had no love for God and His prophet. He was not interested in what Jeremiah had to say about spiritual things.

Jeremiah was instructed to go to the potter's house. There, the Lord gave him a message for the people. Jeremiah saw that, as the potter worked on the clay vessel, it was ruined, but the potter patiently re-kneaded the clay and made another vessel. This parable illustrates God's sovereignty over the nation of Israel. Just as the potter had absolute control over the clay, God is sovereign over His creation. Just as the potter alone decides what to make, what to keep, what to throw away, likewise, God has the power to reshape nations and transform individuals to conform to His will.

The message and actions of Jeremiah rebuked the people's sins. Instead of repenting, they plotted a smear campaign against him [Jeremiah 9:3], which probably included quotations from his message that suggested he was a traitor.

Jeremiah asked God to deal with them. God's people do not enjoy opposition, but we must expect it [John 16:33].

PRAYER Help me to forget all false accusations against me.

18 JULY

READ

Mark 3

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Spiritual kinship

VERSE 35

For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

This verse is most comforting for all true believers. We see the love of Christ and His deep affection for His disciples. When Jesus called them, they forsook all and followed Him. Now He gives an illustration of His own teaching that we ought to forsake parents, friends, houses and lands to be His followers. Our commitment to God must take priority, even over family.

Who are His spiritual kindred? Those who do the will of God the Father are His spiritual children and thus become related to Christ. Kinship in the spiritual kingdom consists of fidelity to the will of God, not in ties of earthly relationship. Our Lord mentioned three human relationships (brother, sister and mother) but not father because He has no earthly father.

Jesus has given Himself to do God's will. All who acknowledge Him as Saviour and Lord must be committed to do likewise. It is this spiritual commitment to do the will of God that binds all true believers together as a family of God, and that is the greatest kinship. The disciples had left their families to follow Him, and now He has reciprocated their love by being their Friend.

THOUGHT Which family do you belong to?

READ

Jeremiah 19

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Beyond recovery

VERSE 15

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear My words.

The parable of the potter continues with another “action” sermon from Jeremiah. The Lord commanded Jeremiah to make a second trip to the potter’s house. This time he went as a customer and took with him some of the Jewish leaders. He bought an earthen bottle and went to the east gate where broken pottery was discarded. This place overlooked the valley of the son of Hinnom. This was the garbage dump of Jerusalem (Gehenna).

It was the place where children were sacrificed to Molech. Jeremiah used the gate as a pulpit and declared God’s impending judgement because of what the kings of Judah had done. They had forsaken God, worshipped idols, desecrated the Temple, murdered the innocent and offered their children as living sacrifices to Baal.

To demonstrate the divine judgement, Jeremiah broke an earthen bottle in front of the men. Judah was beyond discipline [Jeremiah 2:23], beyond prayer [Jeremiah 7:16] and now beyond recovery.

A clay vessel, once hardened, cannot be re-formed and can only be discarded. Judah had arrived at that stage. They were beyond restoration. Be warned! People with hardened hearts will not be spared from God’s judgement.

PRAYER Lord, make me teachable for Your use.

19 JULY

READ

Mark 4

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Speaking in riddles

VERSE 10

And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable.

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Our Lord Jesus used the things of nature or everyday life to illustrate spiritual truths. He used parables or word-pictures to teach people about the kingdom of God. His intention was to whet their spiritual appetites and provoke their thoughts to do some deep searching of the heart and soul.

The purpose of the parable is to both reveal and conceal the truth. It served the first purpose in the case of the disciples, and the second in the case of the stiff-necked Jews [v. 11]. The Jews had a bias against our Lord Jesus and had made up their minds not to believe in Him even before they heard the parables.

The mystery of the kingdom of God is open to the humble and trusting person who readily acknowledges his need for God and His truth. Do you have an open mind and heart to receive His teachings and to submit to God’s Word? Let us be like those who sought after Jesus to “ask of Him the parable” for a better understanding of the hidden truth.

THOUGHT Are you a ready and cheerful recipient of God’s Word?

READ

Jeremiah 20

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Count your blessings

VERSE 18

*Wherefore came I forth
out of the womb to see
labour and sorrow,
that my days should be
consumed with shame?*

The chief governor, Pashur, had Jeremiah arrested, beaten and put into stocks, which secured Jeremiah's feet, hands and neck. Jeremiah was bound in a prominent place in the temple area in order to add shame to pain.

God gave Jeremiah a message and a new name for Pashur: Magor-missabib, meaning "terror on every side". This change of name was symbolic of future events during the Babylonian captivity.

The Babylonian invasion came in three phases. The first took place in 605 BC. Pashur was probably exiled to Babylon during the second phase in 597 BC, when Jehoiachin was taken captive. The final phase came in 586 BC. Pashur's treatment of Jeremiah would receive just recompense, for he and his family would die in Babylon. For a Jew to be buried in a foreign land was considered a judgement, because Gentile lands were considered unclean.

Jeremiah had received nothing but sorrow and persecution from his enemies. He wished that he had never been born! When we speak this way, we seem to forget the good and wonderful blessings we have enjoyed throughout our life. In times of trouble, let us remember God's goodness.

THANKS Recall your blessings thankfully.

20 JULY

READ

Mark 5

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Taking Him at His Word

VERSE 36

*As soon as Jesus heard the
word that was spoken, He
saith unto the ruler of the
synagogue, Be not afraid,
only believe.*

What compassion Jesus had on Jairus. He comforted the grieving father over the death of his daughter. This shows the humanity of our Lord. He feels for us and is always ready to alleviate our sufferings [Hebrews 4:15]. Our Lord Jesus not only took care of the spiritual need here but the physical need as well. He requested for food for the ruler's daughter after bringing her back to life.

Mary and Martha lost hope when their brother, Lazarus, died. Jesus has power over the dead as well as the living. He commanded Lazarus to come out from the grave through the power of His words [John 11:43-44]. Jesus told Jairus: "Be not afraid, only believe." These are precious words of unlimited power from the lips of the God of the impossible.

Look at the different approaches of Jairus and the woman with an issue of blood. Jairus humbly fell at the feet of Jesus and pleaded with Him to go to his home and heal his daughter. The woman was too embarrassed to face Jesus but went behind Him to merely touch His garment for healing. Our Lord responded to both with His great love and amazing power.

THOUGHT All things are possible; only believe.

READ

Jeremiah 21

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Two ways: life or death

VERSE 8

And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

These events probably occurred when the Babylonian army was camped around the walls of Jerusalem. Allied with Egypt, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, rebelled against Babylon by refusing to pay tribute [2 Chronicles 36:13]. In desperation, he sent Zephaniah the priest and Pashur to seek help from Jeremiah for God's guidance [v. 2]. The king was hoping for a miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem [2 Kings 18–19].

Jeremiah delivered three messages. The first message was to King Zedekiah and promised God's judgement on them [v. 3–7].

The second message was to the people [v. 8–10]. God offered them a choice between the way of life and the way of death [v. 8]. Since God was the hand that moved Babylon to invade Judah, to surrender to Babylon was the way of life. It meant confession of guilt and submission to the will of God. Rebelling against the Babylonians was rebellion against God. That was the way of death.

The third message was a pronouncement to the house of David [v. 11–14]. Jeremiah was not a popular preacher but he preached the Word of God faithfully. Those who heeded him lived, those who refused to accept the Word died. Which way would you choose?

PRAYER Thank God that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

21 JULY

READ

Mark 6

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Unbelief versus faith

VERSE 3

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.

The people at the synagogue were amazed at Jesus' great wisdom and power to work miracles. However, they looked at Him with cynical eyes and brushed Him off as just an ordinary obscure carpenter whose family were mere common folks. They took offence at His humble birth and indigent family circumstances. They were too proud to be taught by one whom they looked upon as inferior because of His parentage, work and lack of education.

The prejudice and unbelief of the Jews proved to be their undoing because Jesus did not perform many miracles in His hometown of Nazareth. Compare their unbelief to the faith of the Gentiles such as the centurion [Matthew 8:10], the Syrophenician woman [Matthew 15:28] and the woman of Samaria [John 4:25].

Can you hear the sneer and scorn of the question in verse 3? How did our Lord respond? He dismissed it as something that is common for He proclaimed that a prophet is not honoured in his own country, city and family [v. 4]. As the saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt". This is precisely the reason why it is more difficult to witness to our loved ones.

THOUGHT Ponder over Jewish unbelief and Gentile faith.

READ

Jeremiah 22

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Obedience

VERSE 4

For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

Through Jeremiah, God ministered to four kings of Judah. Zedekiah, the last king, reigned for 11 years. Jeremiah repeated God's message [Jeremiah 21:12] for the king and his nobles. They were to execute justice by not exploiting the poor and shedding innocent blood. Obedience would result in deliverance. Otherwise, Zedekiah's palace would be destroyed and the dynasty of David would have no king until the Messiah's coming.

Shallum reigned for only three months. He did not follow the good example of his father, Josiah. He would be taken to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho as a prisoner. Jeremiah announced that he would never return but would die in Egypt.

Next, Jeremiah's message was to Jehoiakim. During the international crisis, Jehoiakim was more concerned with building his own palace than a righteous nation. His sin was covetousness, exploiting the poor and needy. Jeremiah predicted his ignominious death.

The last message of Jeremiah was to Coniah. God cursed Coniah's childlessness, regarding him as useless, fit only to be thrown away. When we do not learn from the past and obey God in the present, He will destroy our future.

REMINDER If ye love Me, keep My commandments.

22 JULY

READ

Mark 7

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Defilement from within

VERSE 15

There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

"You are what you eat," so the saying goes. This is somewhat true to a certain extent. We need to consume food and drink to live. These are external things that do not defile a man. What we eat and drink goes into our digestive system and passes through our body. It does not enter the heart to defile it but lustful and excessive appetites come out of the heart [v. 21–23].

The disciples could not understand that there is no connection between what we eat and spirituality. The heart is the source of man's spiritual being. It reveals our true character and determines our conduct. The prophet rightly says in Jeremiah 17:9 that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked". God alone knows the hearts of all men [Acts 1:24].

Note the progress of sin within the heart of man. It begins in the depraved human nature: "within, out of the heart". It develops in the human mind: "proceed evil thoughts". It is expressed in human acts: "adulteries, fornications, murders" [The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible].

Guard your heart and mind with all diligence.

THOUGHT Purify your heart through faith [Acts 15:9].

READ

Jeremiah 23

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Beware of false prophets!

VERSE 16

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

The leaders of Judah at that time were mercilessly exploiting the poor and needy. Furthermore, they led the people astray into worshipping idols. They had failed in their responsibilities so God had decreed harsh punishment on them.

In contrast to the unrighteous kings, Jeremiah announced that one day, God would send the perfect King (the Messiah) to establish His Kingdom. The perfect King would come from the line of David to rule over Israel. He is called a righteous Branch “because He will sprout up from David’s dynasty” [Isaiah 11:1]. He will secure righteousness for His people.

What God said about the false prophets and the priests in Jeremiah 14:14 was repeated here. They led the people in idol worship, they offered the people a false hope, they invented their visions and declared them as oracles from God. They mocked Jeremiah by asking, “What is the burden of the Lord?” If they would not obey what God had already commanded, why should God tell them more?

Make sure that the people who give you spiritual guidance are called by God, walk in His way and obey His Word.

PRAYER Lord, give me discernment to know truth from error.

23 JULY

READ

Mark 8

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The cost of discipleship

VERSE 34

And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

What Jesus had to say concerned anyone who followed Him. Hence He called the multitude with His disciples. Herein is the cost of discipleship—a deliberate will, a deliberate choice and a determined resolve to follow Christ. This is not a passive act but an active commitment and walk to follow Christ all the way, no matter what the cost. To deny self is to let Christ rule and reign in our life—every aspect of it.

Discipleship has a cost. Those who follow Christ must be prepared to bear their crosses, and be prepared for persecution, suffering and even death. As followers of our Lord Jesus, we must follow Him all the way, denying worldly lusts and renouncing the pleasures and profits of this world. We must patiently bear every affliction and self-denial for His glory.

A Christian brother shared that it was a privilege to be called into fulltime ministry and leaving his lucrative job was not a sacrifice at all. How about you? How much are you willing to give up to serve your Lord?

THOUGHT The world behind me, the cross before me.

READ

Jeremiah 24

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Return to the Lord

VERSE 7

And I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart.

In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar deported King Jeconiah with many nobles and key citizens, leaving behind only the poorer people [2 Kings 24:14–16]. It was the beginning of the end for Judah. To encourage Jeremiah, the Lord gave him a vision of two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord.

One basket contained very good figs but the other rotten ones. Then the Lord explained that the good figs represented those who had been deported to Babylon and prophesied their return to the Promised Land. The rotten figs represented King Zedekiah and his officials, including those who had remained in Palestine and those who had fled to Egypt. They would not be restored.

According to 2 Chronicles 36:20–21, God punished Judah for 70 years because that was the number of sabbatical years not observed by them [Leviticus 25:1–7]. The people did not rest on the weekly Sabbath [Jeremiah 17:19–27]. They did not give the land rest every Sabbatical year [Leviticus 26:27–35]. In exile in Babylon, the people would now have time to think, repent and return to the Lord.

When we keep to ourselves what belongs to God, we eventually lose it, and suffer in the process.

PRAYER I am Thine, O Lord.

24 JULY

READ

Mark 9

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

True greatness

VERSE 35

And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

On the way to Capernaum, the disciples disputed among themselves as to who was the greatest. The argument took place after the inner circle of disciples (Peter, James and John) witnessed the glory of our Lord Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. When Jesus inquired about their strife, they were ashamed and could not answer Him. They kept their peace and our Lord seized the opportunity to teach them the lesson of true greatness.

The two conditions of true greatness are humility and service—not to be the servant of friends, or kindred, or of a class, or even of church members, but to all, just like our Lord Jesus. The Cross truly reflects the ministry of Jesus—humility, service and sacrifice. The way to greatness in the kingdom of God is to be a servant of all. This the self-denial and sacrifice that every disciple of Christ must be prepared to endure.

Is there strife in your place of work or at home? Or even conflict in the church? The remedy to all these discords is to be a servant.

Let us be mindful to practise humility for the glory of God. Remember, the first shall be last and the last, first.

THOUGHT Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time [1 Peter 5:6].

READ

Jeremiah 25

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Hearken to God's warnings

VERSE 7

Yet ye have not hearkened unto Me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

Jeremiah delivers two messages—one to the Jews [v. 1–14] and one to the Gentile nations [v. 15–38]. God would soon send His “servant”, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, to punish them for their sins and rebellion.

In the case of the Jews, they had stubbornly refused to listen to God’s messengers, including Jeremiah, who had warned of great judgement if they did not repent and turn to Jehovah. Four times in this message, Jeremiah pronounces the solemn indictment, “Ye have not hearkened” [v. 3, 4, 7, 8]. Because they disobeyed the Law, worshipped idols and rejected God’s servants, the people had deliberately provoked God to anger, and the day of His wrath was fast approaching. Babylon had already exiled a number of the populace. More disasters were ahead. The rest of the people would be exiled to Babylon for 70 years. These predictions came to pass in 587 BC, when Babylon conquered the land and destroyed Jerusalem.

This is a grave lesson for Christians and the Church. As signs of the Lord’s Second Coming multiply, we are warned repeatedly in the Bible to lead godly lives. Heed these warnings.

PRAYER Lord, give us attentive ears that we may say like Samuel, “Speak; for Thy servant heareth” [1 Samuel 3:10].

25 JULY

READ

Mark 10

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Hindering possessions

VERSE 17

And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

This rich young ruler was eagerly seeking eternal life—something rare in young people of every age. We can sense his sincerity as he ran after Jesus and knelt down in humility, inquiring how he might have eternal life. Note that he came to the right source—Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

“What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” From this question, we can conclude that this man had a religion of works, not of faith. He believed that his acts of morality and good works made him acceptable to God. He claimed to have kept the Commandments regarding duties to man [v. 19–20]. When Jesus lovingly told him to sell all that he has, give to the poor and follow Him, the young man rejected Christ and “went away grieved”.

The young man’s ruin was his “great possessions”. He was not willing to give up treasures on earth for treasures in heaven. Remember Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

CHORUS I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold.

READ

Jeremiah 26

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

True and false prophets

VERSE 13

*Therefore now amend
your ways and your
doings, and obey the voice
of the LORD your God;
and the LORD will repent
Him of the evil that He
hath pronounced against
you.*

Although the events of this chapter occurred more than 2,500 years ago, they hold important lessons for twenty-first-century Christians. Here we see a single true prophet of God pitted against a horde of false prophets.

Jeremiah preached exactly what God commanded him to preach and did not alter the message in order to please the people. He warned of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The false prophets, on the other hand, preached what the people wanted to hear. Jehovah would not allow the Holy City and His holy temple to fall into the hands of the heathen the way the Ark at Shiloh fell into the hands of the Philistines [1 Samuel 4]. Since God's covenant with David protects the city and the Temple, Jeremiah was actually denying the covenant and deserved to die for leading the people astray.

Today, we live in similar times. Many false teachers have crept into the churches and preach a false gospel that denies most of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, such as the existence of a real physical hell. Like the Jews of Jeremiah's day, many Christians are rushing headlong into disaster by following these false teachers.

QUESTION How can we identify false teachers?

26 JULY

READ

Mark 11

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

**Faith that moves
mountains**

VERSE 22

*And Jesus answering saith
unto them, Have faith in
God.*

God is faithful. He has promised that He will answer our prayers that are offered according to His will. The disciples were astonished to see the fig tree withered by a mere word from Jesus just the day before. Our Lord told the disciples to have faith in God so that they would be able to accomplish things that appear difficult with the greatest of ease.

In verse 23, Jesus assured His disciples that any difficulty could be overcome by faith. To remove a mountain denotes the power of surmounting any difficulty. He used the analogy to illustrate the fact that God can do anything, even that which seems impossible. This is the power of faith in God through prayer.

It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven but to get God's will done on earth. Jesus subjected Himself to the will of the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane [Luke 22:42] and He was empowered to overcome the agony of the Cross.

What are the mountains confronting you right now? Have faith in God and trust Him to help you through the obstacles of life.

THOUGHT Faith is believing what Gods says He will do.

READ

Jeremiah 27

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The sovereignty of God

VERSE 5

I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me.

The Almighty God has a divine plan for this earth. Nobody can question and go against this plan. His plan involves setting up “His servant” Nebuchadnezzar as the superpower of his day, the “head of gold” in Daniel 2.

But several nations, including Judah, wanted to join in a confederacy to rebel against Babylon. God in His mercy sent His servant Jeremiah to warn them of the dire consequences. They were to submit to Nebuchadnezzar or be destroyed. They should not listen to false prophets like those in Judah who said that not only would Babylon not conquer Jerusalem, but those items previously taken from the Temple would be returned. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, chose to disobey God and listen to false prophets. The sad consequences are detailed in 2 Kings 25.

Like Zedekiah, we want to be in charge of our own destinies; and do what is right in our own eyes. Like Zedekiah, we have two choices. Either we enslave ourselves to Satan, the Prince of this world, or we willingly trust in Christ and open ourselves to abundance, grace, forgiveness and life eternal.

PONDER There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. – Proverbs 16:25

27 JULY

READ

Mark 12

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

True giving

VERSE 44

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

The Scriptures record that on a certain day, Jesus sat opposite the treasury, watching how the crowd dropped their money into it. “Many that were rich cast in much” [v. 41b]. What interested the Lord was not so much who came by to give or what amount they gave, but how they gave. There were many rich people who gave large sums of money. They gave out of their abundance.

It was not the rich with their large gifts who caught Jesus’ attention but a poor widow. She parted with her last two coins, the smallest coins in circulation in Palestine. The amount she gave was much more in God’s eyes than those of the rich, whose amounts far exceeded the widow’s two mites. Jesus praised the widow who “of her want did cast in all that she had” [v. 44]. She loved and valued God more than her own future. It is clear that this woman gave out of a sincere and truthful heart.

In 2 Corinthians 8:1–5, Paul described true giving, for the Macedonian believers had given beyond their abilities because they first gave of themselves. Imagine the influence we could have if we practise giving our all.

THOUGHT If Jesus is indeed our Lord, we must give our entire being to Him.

READ

<i>Jeremiah 28</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God deals with a false prophet

VERSE 16

Therefore thus saith the LORD: Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

While Jeremiah wore the yoke and called on the nation to submit to Babylon, the false prophet Hananiah delivered a completely different message. In the name of the Lord, he declared that within two years Babylon's power would cease. The vessels taken from the Temple would be returned and the exiles and their deposed king, Jeconiah, would come home. In dramatic fashion, he removed Jeremiah's yoke and broke it before the people.

Naturally, the people with "itching ears" preferred Hananiah's words even though what he prophesied contradicted with all that the prophets before had predicted.

Just as our Lord had prophesied [Matthew 24], there are many false prophets today who continue to preach messages that believers like to hear instead of God's truth. Although God does not strike people dead in spectacular manner nowadays, He is still the immutable God Who will not "keep His anger forever" [Psalm 103:9]. These prophets will be judged. As for us, we should heed repeated warnings in the Bible to be vigilant and sober so that we "may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" [2 Peter 3:14].

PRAYER Pray that God will send faithful preachers to declare "all the counsel of God" [Acts 20:27].

28 JULY

READ

<i>Mark 13</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Be watchful!

VERSE 33

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Jesus makes it clear that nobody knows when the day of His return will be. However, we are commanded to be ready, always on the watch in expectation of His imminent return. This call to remain alert is reflected throughout the passage, emphasizing the fact that no one knows the day or hour [v. 32], the critical moment [v. 33] or when the lord of the household comes [v. 35]. This is not a call for vigilance at the time Christ returns but for vigilance during the years and decades of waiting.

The "watch" includes prayer. We are to guard against being distracted from our service to God by the things of this world. We must keep our focus on God and His Kingdom. It is prayer, daily communion with the Lord, that helps us do this.

Christ's imminent return to this earth benefits us as Christians in many ways. It helps us to be ready and watching for the Lord, to be obedient, to be faithful, to bear spiritual fruit and to prepare. It is also a purifying truth that gives us hope [1 John 3:3].

Are you watching and praying for Jesus' return? If you know it would be today, would you be ready?

THOUGHT Since Jesus may come at any time, we must be ready all the time.

READ

Jeremiah 29

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Wise counsel from a loving shepherd

VERSE 14

And I will be found of you, saith the LORD; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

Jeremiah wrote letters to the Jews who had been exiled to Babylon earlier. He encouraged them concerning their present circumstances, warned them against false prophets and instructed them on what to do.

The false prophets said that the exile would end soon and they could return to their homeland. Jeremiah told them that God's plan was for them to be in exile for 70 years. However, they should not be discouraged. God loved them and had only good thoughts for them [v. 11]. At the end of the 70 years, God would bring them back. In fact, they would fare better than their countrymen who remained in Judah. Meanwhile, they should simply trust in the Lord, settle down and set up homes so that when the time came to return, there would be enough Jews to repopulate the land.

Such godly advice is applicable even to modern Christians living in peaceful and prosperous societies. We are "exiles" in Satan's "Babylon". Our response, like the Jewish exiles, is to trust in the Lord, know His perfect plan for our lives, share the Gospel and help bring along as many lost sheep as possible when the time comes to return home.

READ Read Daniel's touching response to Jeremiah's message in Daniel 9.

29 JULY

READ

Mark 14

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Act of love

VERSE 3

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head.

The chief priests and scribes were looking for any excuse to arrest and crucify Jesus [v. 1]. Judas was looking for a convenient way to betray Him [v. 11]. A woman, Mary of Bethany, expressed her love for the Lord [John 12:1–3].

Mary came to Jesus and broke an alabaster flask of costly oil, poured it on His head and prepared His body for burial. She gave lavishly and lovingly, showing her love openly for Jesus while He was still alive.

The disciples, led by Judas, criticised Mary for wasting her money but Jesus said that her loving and sacrificial deed would be remembered forever. Mary was a blessing to Jesus and to the household of Simon as the fragrance permeated the house. Mary's village would be remembered by the early Church because of what she did. Mary has been a blessing to the whole world—and still is! The Lord's words have certainly been fulfilled.

Mary gave her best in faith and love. Judas gave his worst in unbelief and hatred. Like Mary, may we have hearts that always say to our Saviour, "I love You, Lord."

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

READ

Jeremiah 30

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Precious promises for the chastened

VERSE 22

And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.

After 29 chapters of nearly unrelenting negative preaching, Jeremiah comforted the suffering Jews with precious promises from their God. In this and the following three chapters, he describes the glory of the dawning of a new day for the people of Israel. Yes, they would suffer terrible trials at the hands of the Babylonians. They would wear the Gentile yoke, bear the wounds caused by their sins, and endure the storm of God's wrath. But God would eventually deliver them, break the yoke, heal their wounds and bring peace after the storm.

The exiles from both Israel and Judah would eventually return to their land as a united people. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah would be rebuilt and the fortunes of the people would be restored. All these is a foreshadowing of what will happen to the Jews in the end times as they go through the Tribulation, meet their Messiah-King and enter into God's kingdom.

Our God is holy and just. Though longsuffering, He will correct His children when they sin against Him. But like any loving father, he pities His children because He knows our frame and remembers that we are dust [Psalm 103:13–14].

Prayer Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

30 JULY

READ

Mark 15

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Bearing His Cross

VERSE 21

And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.

Badly beaten with blood streaming down His face, our Lord Jesus, like all criminals, had to carry his own cross to the place of execution.

So weak was our Saviour that the soldiers had to call one Simon of Cyrene and forced him into service. Simon had no personal connection with Jesus, except to bear His cross. These words are reminiscent of the words of Jesus in Mark 8:34. Simon was compelled to do literally what all of Jesus' followers must do spiritually. It is possible that he and his family believed in the Saviour. Simon had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and he ended up meeting the Passover Lamb!

Simon, who helped to carry Jesus' cross, had the honour to have his name mentioned in the Word of God. Wherever the Gospel is preached, this shall be told in memory of him. When we walk with Jesus and "take up the cross" [Luke 9:23] we, too, will experience the ridicule of the world for identifying ourselves with the Saviour. However, like Simon of Cyrene, our lives will be transformed and our testimonies will have an influence on the lives of our families and friends.

THOUGHT Jesus is King of our lives, so let us serve Him all our lives.

READ

Jeremiah 31

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

A new covenant

VERSE 31

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.

Jeremiah continued to encourage the captives, assuring them that God would restore them to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again. They would be restored to peace and honour, and joy and abundance. Their sorrow for the loss of their children would be at an end. They would repent of their sins and God would graciously accept them in their repentance. They would be multiplied and increased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been.

Most important of all, God would make a new covenant with them. This new covenant would replace the old Mosaic covenant, which could only direct their conduct but not change their heart. God's Law would be written on their heart. They would want to love Him and do His will.

This New Covenant is fulfilled in Christ. Because the Church today partakes in Israel's spiritual riches, anyone who puts his faith in Jesus Christ shares in this New Covenant. It will come into effect "after those days" [v. 33] and following the "time of Jacob's trouble" [Jeremiah 30:7], at the end of the Great Tribulation and at the start of the glorious millennium.

THOUGHT Thank God that you have a part in His New Covenant.

31 JULY

READ

Mark 16

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God will move the stone

VERSE 4

And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

The women left early on Sunday morning to anoint the body of Jesus. Their errand was one of gracious love but also of unbelief as the Saviour had promised that He would rise on the third day. They were anxious as well as sorrowful, wondering how the heavy stone would be removed so they can get into the sepulchre. Their fears were groundless since the stone had been rolled away. Those who are carried by a holy zeal to seek Christ diligently will find the difficulties that lie in their way strangely removed.

We often worry needlessly over prospective difficulties that God graciously removes or helps us overcome. Let us exercise greater faith in facing obstructions on the pathway of duty. We can be sure of the Lord's assistance in such matters when we press on in His name and for His glory.

Go forward in service, undaunted by possible future obstacles. Let your heart be cheered by the certainty that whatever difficulties you may face, God will remove them.

Praise God for His victory over death. With God on our side, let us persevere in our Christian living.

PRAYER Lord, let me live today with the constant thought that You are alive!

READ

Jeremiah 32

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Faith with works

VERSE 15

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

It was the tenth year of Zedekiah's rule. Jeremiah had been imprisoned for warning that Jerusalem would shortly fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. But Jeremiah had also prophesied that God would restore Israel after 70 years of captivity. To demonstrate his faith in God's promises, he did something seemingly stupid; he purchased a piece of land from his cousin, Hanameel.

Jeremiah himself did not know how God would give him his property. But he trusted that nothing was too difficult for God [v. 17–25]. In response, God reaffirmed what He had told him earlier—that in spite of Israel's repeated sins, He would forgive them and restore the nation. He would give them new hearts and an everlasting covenant.

Jeremiah teaches us what true faith is all about: obeying God in spite of what we see, how we feel and what may happen. His countrymen would probably laugh at him and even think he was insane. Likewise, many of our unbelieving friends and relatives may laugh at us for spending our precious time serving for free in the church, even giving our hard-earned money. But be of good cheer. God is faithful.

THOUGHT Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven ... – Matthew 5:12

1 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 1–2

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The blessedness of the godly man

PSALM 1:1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

This psalm is the key to blessing and a warning of divine judgement against the ungodly.

The word “blessed” in Hebrew is “asher”, the name of one of Jacob's sons. Its plural usage would read as “O the happinesses! O the blessednesses!” If we want this kind of happiness and blessedness, we must heed the instructions that God has given to us.

As a father warns his son not to keep bad company, our heavenly Father has words for us that will keep us from trouble and not miss out on His blessings. We are not to follow the ways of ungodly people who have no fear of God. We are to keep away from sinners and avoid scoffers—those who mock religion and make jest of sin.

To have true blessedness, we are to delight in and love the Word of God. We are to meditate upon it day and night and to keep it always in our minds. As a tree needs to be constantly nourished by water, we need to abide in God's Word to be fruitful. God's promise to us is that we will not wither but prosper in all our ways.

QUESTION What kind of company are you keeping?

READ

Jeremiah 33

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God keeps His promises

VERSE 14

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

God was speaking to Jeremiah, who was imprisoned in Jerusalem for proclaiming that the Babylonians would overrun the city. God reminded him that He is the maker of heaven and earth. He is able to do whatever is necessary to make His promises come true.

He would heal Israel—both the land and the people’s sins. The disgraceful city would bring joy and renown to the Lord and be a testimony to all nations. In particular, He will keep His promise to David whose heir will reign forever in righteousness [2 Samuel 7:1–17]. As long as the created order exists, the Lord will keep this covenant. Furthermore, He will keep His covenant with Abraham to multiply his seed as the stars of the heaven [Genesis 15:1–5].

Christians should be thankful that through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary, we shall be partakers of these glorious promises. We are even assured that our service for Him will not go unrewarded. Not only has He reserved for us a “crown of righteousness” [2 Timothy 4:8], He will also lay up for us “treasures in heaven” [Matthew 6:20].

THOUGHT Let us be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

2 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 3–4

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God’s protection amidst trouble

PSALM 3:8

Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: Thy blessing is upon Thy people.

This is the first psalm that is attributed to David. It is also the first time that the word “psalm” is used. The Hebrew word “mizmor” means “to pluck strings”. It is also the first time that the word “Selah” is used in Scripture, signalling a pause, a moment of silence and meditation.

David wrote this psalm after he had fled Jerusalem when his son, Absalom, turned against him. Absalom had stolen the hearts of the people and led a rebellion against David. Why did God permit this disgraceful uprising? It was part of God’s chastening for David’s sin of adultery and murder. God had forgiven David when he confessed his sin but David had to bear the consequences.

The situation was discouraging but David had full confidence in God to deliver him and restore him to the throne. Amidst all his trouble, he cried to the Lord to save him.

David’s brilliant strategy foiled his enemies, but he refused to take credit for it. Even as Jonah cried out, “Salvation is of the Lord”, David recognised the hand of God during his trials. This is a good lesson for us to remember that God will always protect His children.

THOUGHT God Who has not forsaken us in the past will not forsake us in the future.

READ

Jeremiah 34

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The people break their promises

VERSE 16

*But ye turned and polluted
My name, and caused
every man his servant, and
every man his handmaid,
whom ye had set at liberty
at their pleasure, to return,
and brought them into
subjection, to be unto
you for servants and for
handmaids.*

According to the Law of Moses, a Jewish master has to free his slaves at the end of seven years of service. For years, they had not done this. But now, as the Babylonians besiege the city, King Zedekiah and the people made a covenant with the Lord in the Temple to free all the Jewish slaves. Obviously they wanted to impress God with their obedience in order to win His favour and hope that He would deliver them from invaders.

However, there was a lull in the siege and Nebuchadnezzar went off to confront the Egyptian army. Immediately, the Jewish masters went back on their vows and forced the slaves back into servitude. The nation was “faithful” only when it was convenient. Their hypocrisy was evident, and their punishment was inevitable.

Lest we be quick to condemn the Jews of Jeremiah’s day, we really should pause and do some self-examination. Aren’t we often guilty of the same sin? Many a time, when trials come our way, we make promises to serve God and walk close to Him. But not long after things improve, we forget those promises and go back to our old ways.

PRAYER Forgive us, Lord, for our unfaithfulness.

3 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 5–6

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Holy fear and reverence

PSALM 5:7

*But as for me, I will come
into Thy house in the
multitude of Thy mercy:
and in Thy fear will I
worship toward Thy holy
temple.*

Having the right concept of God is important for our worship of Him. Unlike a Levite priest, David could not enter the tabernacle. However, he came to the Lord with the same sense of awe and reverence that the priests displayed. In the worship of our great God, there is no place for casualness, curtness or even flippancy.

Before the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, the Lord instructed Moses to sanctify the people. They were to wash their clothes and abstain from certain activities for three days. A border was also set around the mountain and anyone who touched its sides would be struck dead. When the Lord appeared on the mountain, there were great thunderings and the earth quaked [Exodus 19].

The believer’s entrance into the presence of God is paid for by the life of Jesus. To treat this privilege lightly is to cheapen that sacrifice. Remember always that our God of love is also a consuming fire. So worship Him with a sense of holy fear and reverence.

How do you get ready for worship service on Sunday? True preparation begins on Saturday night, without any late-night activities that will tire us.

THOUGHT Let all things be done decently and in order. – 1 Corinthians 14:40

READ

Jeremiah 35

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Obedience is better than sacrifice

VERSE 16

Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto Me.

Jeremiah narrated an event that took place 18 years earlier, during the reign of Jehoiakim. The Rechabites were tent dwellers who had come to Jerusalem because of the Babylonian invasion of Judah. Their gypsy lifestyle was in obedience to their ancestor, Jonadab, who commanded them not to live in houses, not to have farms or vineyards, and not to drink wine.

Jeremiah used them as an object lesson. If the command of a mere man is respected and obeyed by his family for over two centuries, why couldn't the people of Israel and Judah obey the command of the Almighty God—a command that His prophets had repeated over and over again? After all, didn't Israel's first prophet teach them that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"? [1 Samuel 15:22]

This is also an important lesson for us. Often the world put us to shame with their devotion and discipline to personal pursuits. Likewise, worshippers of false gods and idols often demonstrate greater devotion than we who worship the true living God. May the example of the Rechabites cause us resolve to serve our God with greater zeal.

THOUGHT Are there any idols in your life?

4 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 7

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Refuge in the Lord

VERSE 1

O LORD my God, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.

Cush the Benjamite was one of the evil men from Saul's tribes who reported about David during the years when Saul was out to destroy his rival. Saul had bribed his leaders into serving as spies. These spies sought the king's approval and rewards, even to the extent of inventing lies about David. Whatever lies Cush had told, Saul the king believed them.

David was concerned enough to cry out to God for deliverance and vindication. He fled to the Lord for refuge and trusted Him to protect and save him. When people falsely accuse us and create problems for us, we should follow David's example and seek refuge in the Lord.

However, let us be sure that we are suffering for a just cause and not for our own sins, foolishness or disobedience. In the Beatitudes, Jesus taught: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" [Matthew 5:11–12]. Thank God that He is our protector and deliverer.

THOUGHT For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. – 1 Peter 3:12a

READ

Jeremiah 36

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God's Word cannot be destroyed

VERSE 31

And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

God is longsuffering towards sinners and not willing that any should perish. Hence, He gives us His inspired Word to warn and admonish.

It was the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. The Lord had sent Jeremiah to preach to the people and their leaders. Because he was restricted from going, he dictated his sermon and asked Baruch to read it in the house of the Lord. The message was powerful and the temple officials took the book to the king. Not only did the king not repent; he cut it up and tossed it into the fire. The Lord simply told Jeremiah to write another scroll, to which he added more material, including a special judgement on King Jehoiakim [v. 27–32].

Through the centuries, the enemies of God have tried in vain to destroy His Word and keep it from His people. Like Jehoiakim, they have failed. The frightening pronouncements on King Jehoiakim came to pass shortly afterwards. Likewise, the pronouncements of God's revelation will shortly befall this sinful earth. At that time, kings and princes will ask the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God. Needless to say, they will not escape.

THOUGHT Blessed are those who read and keep the prophecies in God's revealed Word [Revelation 1:3].

5 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 8

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

What is man?

VERSE 4

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

What is man? It is one of life's most important questions. To Charles Darwin, man is but a highly-developed animal. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, said that man is an under-developed child. To Karl Marx, he is only an economic digit. Plato's depiction of man is that he is a being in search of meaning. Mark Twain mocked God by saying that He made man on the sixth day because He was tired!

Man's view is important, but what about God's? In Psalm 8, David declares that man is being crowned by God with glory and honour. He takes a very high view of man. Man is created by God. Psalm 100:3 declares that He made us and not we ourselves. Man was also created in God's image and for His glory. "I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" [Isaiah 43:7b].

Man was created to be God's helper and to have dominion over His creation. However, man lost his throne and crown because of the sin of disobedience.

Thanks be to God that the second Adam, Christ, died to make us kings again!

QUESTION Are you a king and living like one? Only those who put their trust in Christ can.

READ

Jeremiah 37

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Beware of self-deception

VERSE 9

*Thus saith the LORD;
Deceive not yourselves,
saying, The Chaldeans
shall surely depart from
us: for they shall not
depart.*

Judah's last king, Zedekiah, wavered between seeking advice from Jeremiah and fearing the people. He did not take Jeremiah's advice, yet he asked the prophet to pray for the nation's deliverance. When the Babylonians had withdrawn from Jerusalem to face Pharaoh's army, the king thought that the worst was over. They continued to live on false hope even though Jeremiah told them that Nebuchadnezzar would return, that the armies of Babylon would be back again.

Here, we also see the account of how Jeremiah first became a prisoner. He was accused of defecting to the enemy, beaten by the princes and put into prison [v. 12–16]. When King Zedekiah found out that Jeremiah was in prison, he took him into his house on the pretence of investigating him but instead asked Jeremiah, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Once again, Jeremiah told him the truth. Whether in jail or in freedom, the prophet kept faith with the people and with God, even though it cost him dearly.

Is there something that the Lord is calling you to act on or issues in your life that God wants you to deal with?

THOUGHT To obey is better than sacrifice.

6 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 9

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God the Righteous Judge

VERSE 17

*The wicked shall be
turned into hell, and all
the nations that forget
God.*

In this psalm, David praises the Lord for His marvellous works. It is God Who had made him victorious over Israel's enemies. David also praises God because He is a righteous judge and a refuge.

David offers whole-hearted praise to the Lord for delivering him and his army from the enemies that attacked Israel. His aim was to honour the Lord and not to glorify himself. The name of God used in this psalm is "El-Elyon" or "God Most High". It was also the name Abraham used after God gave him victory over the kings [Genesis 14].

God turned the enemy back and, upon retreating, they stumbled and perished before the Lord. God did this so that David would continue to be King of Israel and accomplish God's purpose in this world. Israel's calling was to bear witness to the nations that Jehovah is the only true and living God and that all the wicked and all the nations that forget God will be turned into hell [v. 17].

Let us heed the warning in today's key verse and not take it lightly. God, being righteous by nature, will definitely fulfil His Word.

THOUGHT Turn now to Jesus and be saved.

READ

Jeremiah 38

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Fearing man more than God

VERSE 19

And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hands, and they mock me.

Jeremiah's continued counsel of surrender to the Babylonians made the princes very angry. They sought Zedekiah's approval and had Jeremiah imprisoned in an old well. This was the lowest point in Jeremiah's career. Down in the mud and gloom of that damp, dark pit, with no food and no water, no adequate clothing, he was left alone to die. As far as Jeremiah was concerned, he thought he would die.

But God did not forget His prophet. Jeremiah's predicament tells us that it is foolish to think that just because we are faithful to God's ministry, He will guarantee that we will be delivered from all troubles. Here is Jeremiah, who was faithful to do what God had said, but God allowed him to be put into the dungeon.

Jeremiah thought it was all over for him, but God sent Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch, to petition to Zedekiah for Jeremiah's release. The king asked Jeremiah for counsel yet another time. Jeremiah assured him of safety if he would only surrender to the Babylonian army. Fearing that he would be mocked and killed by his people, Zedekiah did not heed the prophet again.

THOUGHT Do you fear people more than you fear the Lord?

7 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 10

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Why do the wicked prosper?

VERSE 17

LORD, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear:

Psalm 10 speaks of people who claim to know God but their lives prove otherwise. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" [Titus 1:16].

What does the wicked say? "There is no God" [v. 4]. Believing this, the wicked are free to do whatever they please; they become their own god [v. 2]. "I shall not be moved" [v. 6a]. This arrogant attitude comes from an ignorance of the laws of God because unconverted people have no understanding of the Bible. "God doesn't see me" [v. 11]. The wicked are sure that the law will never catch up with them, and that God will not notice what they do. "God will not judge me" [v. 13]. The wicked boast that God will not judge them.

The fact is that God does see, and He knows. The day will come when He will call on the wicked to give an account and He will surely judge them. Sometimes we wonder, "Where is God amidst the suffering in this world?" The wicked seemingly prosper and the righteous are continuously persecuted. Do not despair. God is in control of the situation.

THOUGHT Vengeance is of the Lord.

READ

Jeremiah 39

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jerusalem destroyed, the faithful delivered

VERSE 18

For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the LORD.

Finally, the hour of judgement came. The city was taken. The women were ravished and the temple burnt. The king's eyes were put out.

Here, we see a certain poetic justice that is always characteristic of the judgement of God. The temple that burnt incense to idols was itself burnt. The king who would not see had his eyes put out. The people who kept their slaves captives were themselves led into captivity by the Babylonians. This is always the way God works. His judgement is to give you exactly what you ask for, to let you finally have your way.

The Lord had promised Jeremiah that he would not be killed by his enemies [Jeremiah 1:17–19]. God kept that promise. He moved upon Nebuchadnezzar to release the prophet and treat him kindly [v. 11, 12]. God also spared the life of the Ethiopian, Ebed-melech. Both faithful men learned that God protects those who trust in Him.

In our comfort and security, let us be mindful that God will remove us from our place of privilege, if we are not true to Him.

PRAYER Holy Spirit, help me not to be conformed to this world; but to be transformed by a renewed mind, daily doing Thy holy will.

8 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 11–12

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Walking by sight or by faith?

PSALM 11:1

In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

The historical background of this psalm is difficult to determine, but we know that David was in danger. It could be the time when King Saul threw a javelin at him or the time when David was running away from his son, Absalom. When David was running away from Saul, he had to seek protection from the enemies of Israel.

There are times when it is wise to run. But during the time of crisis described in this psalm, David did not flee. Instead, he stayed put, trusting the Lord to protect him.

Whatever the crisis, the lesson for us is that we must choose between fear (walking by sight) and trust (walking by faith), listening to human counsel or obeying the wisdom that comes from the Lord. David's counsellors advised him to leave Jerusalem and head for the safety of the hills. It is right to flee when temptation comes, as Joseph did, but for a leader to abandon his post during a crisis only makes him a hireling and not a faithful shepherd. Beware of listening to unwise counsel. Put your faith and trust in the Lord. He will protect you and direct your paths.

PRAYER Lord, help me to walk by faith and not by sight.

READ

Jeremiah 40

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jeremiah chooses to be with his people

VERSE 6

Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

Jeremiah was given his freedom after the Babylonians had captured Jerusalem but was counted with the captives in their long march to Babylon. By God's grace, he was released and given the choice of going to Babylon to be cared by the king or remaining in Judah. Jeremiah chose to obey God's call to be a prophet and stayed with the poor and the despised in the land.

Would you have opted for the good and comfortable life or, like Jeremiah, be faithful to your calling and face the difficulties and challenges ahead, trusting that God will see to your needs?

Babylon appointed Gedaliah governor over what remained of Judah. He encouraged the people to harvest their crops, make the land fruitful and submit to the Babylonians. For a time, it appeared that things were going well. People who had been driven out to other lands earlier began to come back to Judah. One of the captains, Ishmael, out of pride and selfish ambition, plotted to murder Gedaliah, rebelled against the Babylonians and left the people to suffer.

God had punished the nation but even this severe punishment did not change their hearts of evil.

THOUGHT When your heart is not submitted to God, sin abides.

9 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 13–14

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The practical atheist

PSALM 14:1

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

During the reign of King Saul, the spiritual level of the nation was very low. Many followed the bad example of Israel's first king.

The English word "fool" comes from the Latin "follies", which means "bellow" or "windbag". The Hebrew word here is "nabal", meaning "a brutish person who is like a stubborn animal". It was the name of an uncouth man who refused to help David [1 Samuel 25].

The man who says that there is no god is not necessarily lacking in normal intelligence but in spiritual wisdom and insight. He is one who has a moral problem in his heart. Fools are self-righteous and don't need or want God. They live as they please, as though there is no judgement. They are not ignorant; they are defiant.

Paul quoted this passage in Romans 3, where he indicts all men, making them guilty before God as they are without excuse. Human depravity does not mean that all humans are as wicked as they can be or that all can ever do anything good. It simply means that all have a fallen nature they cannot change. Apart from the grace of God, none can be saved from eternal judgement.

THOUGHT There are no atheists in foxholes.

READ

Jeremiah 41

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Ishmael murders Gedaliah

VERSE 3

Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war.

Johanan warned Gedaliah that Ishmael, who was in league with the Ammonites, had planned to murder him. But Gedaliah did not believe it. Ishmael was full of lies and deception. He and 10 men came to Gedaliah on the pretext of peace and fellowship. Then they killed Gedaliah, all the Jews who were there and the Chaldeans. He spared not even those who came to worship God. Ishmael took all the hostages and made plans to flee to Ammon.

Ishmael was a member of the royal family, a descendant of David. But he was more like an Absalom than a David. Like Judas, who would betray Jesus Christ, Ishmael betrayed Gedaliah.

Those who had been forced as prisoners of Ishmael to flee with him rejoiced when they saw Johanan coming to their rescue [v. 13]. Don't we also long for the appearance of our strong Deliverer? We do not want to be taken away to some strange land by worldly liars and murderers. Our Redeemer will return and He will bring us home. He was courageous even unto death in His first coming, and there will be no denying Him in His second coming.

THOUGHT He is God. He is King. He is our Redeemer. He is the best answer to all of our prayers.

10 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 15–16

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The conqueror of death

PSALM 16:10

For thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Psalm 16 is a very personal hymn of joy that focuses on the goodness of the Lord. David's joy is expressed in words like "delight", "pleasant", "pleasure" and "glad". It is also a Messianic psalm. Peter quoted from this psalm in his message at Pentecost. Paul also quoted from it in his sermon in Antioch.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" was Paul's argument. Faith would be useless if there were no resurrection. Jesus conquered death and, through faith in Him, we have a glorious living hope. When David wrote, "My flesh also shall rest in hope" [v. 9b], he was referring to the Messiah and not himself. Jesus arose from the dead and did not see corruption.

David could face death with a glad heart. He could die in hope, knowing that one day he, too, would have a glorified body. Do you have this blessed hope?

All believers need not fear death because Christ has conquered it. We have the assurance of eternal life when we have Christ as our Lord and Saviour. With Christ in us, there is endless hope, but without Christ, a hopeless end.

PRAYER Thank You, Lord, that Thou art the risen Saviour and that we serve a living God.

READ

Jeremiah 42

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The people ask, God answers

VERSE 3

That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.

With Gedaliah and the Chaldeans in Judah dead, the people now faced the problem of dealing with the Babylonians. Should they flee to Egypt for protection or stay and accept the consequences?

In desperation, the people turned to Jeremiah for God's Word. They swore they would do whatever God said. Jeremiah told the people that God wanted them to remain in Judah and promised that if they did, God would protect, prosper and guide them. If they rebelled and fled to Egypt, they would suffer and die. The choice was clear.

Yet Jeremiah was aware that despite their professed allegiance to God, they would not heed the Word of God. They had not obeyed in the past; there is no reason they would obey now. They were determined to go with their own wisdom. Jeremiah assured them that they would die in the place where they were going to live.

It is always a hard thing for sinful men to hear that God's plans are not their plans. We claim to come to Him with a commitment to follow Him, but when our loyalty is tested, we find it to be quite a struggle.

THOUGHT We need to seek God's plan with a pure heart, "Not my will, but Yours, be done."

11 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 17

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The resurrection of the dead

VERSE 15

As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.

David distinguishes himself from the unbelievers. His future is glorious because he will see God, and he will be like God. The unbeliever, on the other hand, can only be satisfied in this life. This is one of the few texts in the psalms that touch on future life. The other passages are Psalm 16:10–11 and Psalm 73:23–26.

"Awake" is a metaphor for the resurrection of the human body. David seems to be saying, "Even when I die, the Lord won't desert me; for I shall be awakened and given a glorified body. I shall see His face and be satisfied."

In Daniel 12:2 we read, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Paul also assured the Thessalonians of the believer's resurrection, and that reality ought to impact our perspective on life and death. Christians do not sorrow as others who have no hope.

Are you ready for that resurrection day? Do you look forward eagerly to our Lord's imminent return? Only believers can behold God's face in righteousness, so be sure that you are a child of God.

PRAYER Thank You for that blessed hope.

READ

Jeremiah 43

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The people reject God's Word

VERSE 4

So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

Jeremiah's message was not what the people wanted to hear. So intent were they on going to Egypt that they accused Jeremiah and Baruch of lying and being traitors.

God instructed Jeremiah to perform one last symbolic act. The prophet took some stones and set them before Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes. Then he declared that the king of Babylon would place his throne over these very stones. Babylon would conquer Egypt and they would endure terrible suffering and death.

Egypt is the place from which they were rescued through powerful miracles many centuries before. How strange, then, when those who had been rescued from the bondage of sin by the powerful redemption of our Saviour were determined that they wanted to return to their old ways. The Word of God is clear for us. We have been set free from sin and death. We have been granted our good standing as sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Lord has rescued us. He will keep us free. Let us not become enslaved again to sin. Our hope is in Christ, Who assures us that He will be with all those who call upon His Name.

THOUGHT We cannot patiently wait for Him when we dream that our security is in our own resourcefulness.

12 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 18

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Loving remembrance

VERSE 1

I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

This magnificent triumphal hymn was composed by David in celebration of his deliverance by God from his enemies. It is a replicate of 2 Samuel 22, except for a little change and fitted for the Church in the worship of God. What a lovely way to begin his opening address to the Lord. He expresses his love to the Lord and his determined continuance in it. This opening verse is not found in 2 Samuel 22 but it is a most precious addition, placed above all as love is the crowning glory of all graces.

Love is only worthily placed on a living person. When we love a person, we love not so much the actual person but rather an ideal person. Their merits and charms exist to a large extent in our imaginations. But God is the all-perfect One. All perfections exist actually and absolutely in Him. Nothing must we love above God, or as much as God, much less against God.

The Lord is to be loved because He is altogether lovely. Let us love Him because He first loved us. Let the first verse of every chapter in our life be, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength."

THOUGHT Interest in the person loved is the lover's delight.

READ

Jeremiah 44

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God rejects idolatry

VERSE 3

Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers.

We see here a very sad state of affairs. God's people not only turned back to Egypt against God's instruction, they also worshipped other gods. Still, God spoke to them through Jeremiah. He asked them to remember the disaster that had so recently come upon Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah. The destruction was from God's hand because of the evil that they had committed.

He further reminded them of the role of the prophets over the centuries in bringing the Word of God to His people. God warned them that they would be consumed by the sword, famine and disease if they insisted on going against His will. But the people were blinded by a female deity they called the "queen of heaven" and they offered special cakes to her.

The contest was on. Who would win? It was the Word of God against the word of a rebellious people. Our hope is not in our own response to Christ or in our own obedience to the Law. Our hope is in Christ alone. He is the Living Word—the Word that we can safely receive and follow.

THOUGHT Isn't it still the case that we easily ignore the revealed will of God, and yet we claim that we are seeking the will of the Lord?

13 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 19

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Natural revelation and divine revelation

VERSE 14

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

David penned this psalm and committed it to the chief musician in the sanctuary for the assembled worshippers. He represents the universe as a grand cathedral in which the sun, moon and stars are apostles, ever declaring the glory of the Creator. Nature declares the wisdom, power, love and faithfulness of God and men are left without excuse. [v. 1–6] Although the heavens are not endowed with the power of human speech, the silent witness they bear is definite and distinct to all. The whole world is nothing else but God expressed.

Though creation bears an unmistakable testimony to the existence of the Creator, it is insufficient to reveal God's character and His will. The Word of God is the singular means to know God. It shows our sinfulness and misery in departing from God, and the necessity of our return to Him. By them we discover our need of a Saviour, and learn how to adorn his Gospel [v. 7–10].

The same Almighty hand that has given the Sun its light-giving, life-sustaining power in the physical world also gives the son of righteousness with life eternal and light to sustain us in the spiritual world.

PRAYER Lord, keep me eternity conscious!

READ

Jeremiah 45

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God's exhortation to Baruch

VERSE 5

And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

Baruch had a brother in the king's official staff who could have secured him a good job in the palace. But he chose to be with Jeremiah to do the will of God. Baruch helped Jeremiah write the Word of God. Baruch was at the point in his life where he was discouraged and depressed [v. 3].

The Lord, however, encouraged him. He cautioned him not to build his hopes on the future of Judah, because everything would be destroyed in the Babylonian siege.

Is it right for Baruch (and for us) to lament? It is. Even God laments. What is wrong is when we have no perspective on our lament. Baruch sought great things for himself when God was bringing destruction on the land. Through these words we learn to measure our lamentations according to the scale of the Lord's holy lament. This will help us in our trials and encourage us in the way of faith and holiness.

God assured Baruch that his life would be spared. More than that, Baruch was granted eternal life, through faith in the One to come, Who suffered our hell, that we might know His heaven.

THOUGHT Consider the suffering of Christ, the Son of God. What did Christ and our heavenly Father have to face in order to bring about our redemption?

14 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 20–21

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Kingly petition

PSALM 20:7

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

This is evidently a liturgical psalm originally intended to be sung on behalf of a king who was about to go forth to war against his enemies. As the king stands within the sanctuary, offering his sacrifice, the assembled worshippers lift up their voices in prayer that Jehovah would graciously accept those sacrifices and send him help and victory from above [Preachers' Homiletic Commentary].

War is a time of trouble, both to the king and the people. Considering the vicissitudes and sufferings at the battlefield, it is wise to implore God for help. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" [1 Timothy 2:1–2].

Prayer should have reference to future emergencies. The world trusts and relies on war-planes, rifles and other military might but the Church is taught to trust in the spiritual. The material fails but the spiritual never because the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds [2 Corinthians 10:4].

THOUGHT Today's prayers can help tomorrow's problems.

READ

Jeremiah 46

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Judgement on Egypt

VERSE 13

The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt.

What can we learn about Egypt that can help us understand God's wrath? Egypt was proud. She thought that she ruled the world. She rose like the Nile and could overtake everyone around her. When she covered the earth, no nation would be able to escape. She would destroy cities and kill their inhabitants. She had great warriors from many nations under her command.

The Lord knew the sins of Egypt. He knew the pride of her heart and the wickedness of her life. He called out her false gods by name. Her mighty ones would be put down in the ground in defeat. Her young women would be put to shame. Her gods would be of no use to them.

The Lord God Almighty would bring the Babylonians into a position of supremacy above the Egyptians. In contrast, those who followed the Lord's instruction to go to Babylon as exiles would be brought back to begin a new life [v. 27–28].

God is not impressed with the pride of worldly men. Let us not take refuge in the might and methods of the world as the best solution for the progress of the kingdom of God.

THOUGHT How dangerous it is to count God out when we make plans for His Kingdom.

15 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 22

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The suffering Messiah

VERSE 1

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?

This psalm testifies of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. It is the account of our Lord's saddest hours—the record of His dying words and the shedding of His last tears. It contains the deep, sublime and heavy sufferings of Christ, agonising in the midst of terror and pangs of divine wrath and death. It surpasses all human thought and comprehension.

Martin Luther said: "I know not whether any psalm throughout the whole book contains matter more weighty, or from which the hearts of the godly can so truly perceive those sighs and groans, inexpressible by man, which their Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, uttered when conflicting for us in the midst of death, and in the midst of the pains and terrors of hell. Wherefore this psalm ought to be most highly prized by all who have any acquaintance with temptations of faith and spiritual conflicts."

Oh, for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this psalm. – Spurgeon

PRAYER Lest I forget Thee, lead me to Calvary.

READ

Jeremiah 47

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Judgement on Philistia

VERSE 2

*Thus saith the LORD;
Behold, waters rise up out
of the north, and shall be
an overflowing flood, and
shall overflow the land,
and all that is therein;
the city, and them that
dwell therein: then the
men shall cry, and all the
inhabitants of the land
shall howl.*

The Philistines were great enemies of the Israelites for centuries. They came to the Mediterranean coast of the Promised Land from Crete and settled south of Tyre and Sidon. They regularly battled the Israelites for land and power.

Jeremiah announced that a great judgement would come upon the Philistines. Egypt would be the nation to defeat them, but it was the Lord Who sent the Egyptians. Like flood waters that rise up out of nowhere, the cities of the Philistines would face an overwhelming presence of invading armies. The punishment was so devastating and would last until God's Word has been completely fulfilled.

God's punishment is a frightening thing. But what is amazing is that when the sword of His own justice was coming upon His covenant people, He came in the person of His Son and stood in the way. He came and received the mortal wound for us, so that we may live.

There was no hope for the Philistines, and there is no eternal security that comes from our citizenship in any earthly land. Let us be found in Immanuel's land through faith in Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Him alone.

PRAYER Thank you, Lord, for going forth in our place to take the sword of God's punishment on the Cross.

16 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 23–24

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The Shepherd Divine

PSALM 23:1

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.*

David wrote no sweeter psalm than Psalm 23. Having been a shepherd himself, he knew what it was to do all the duties of that office. Herein, he depicts Jehovah as the Good Shepherd. This delightful song is sweet and its spirituality unsurpassed.

This psalm falls into two halves. The first sets Jehovah as a shepherd and we the sheep. He is the provider, protector, guide and unfailing companion of His people. Between them exists a most tender relationship—unfathomable affection on the one side and calm unlimited confidence on the other.

The second half sets Jehovah as the bountiful Host and we the guests at His banqueting table and the dwellers in His house. It suggests the closest intimacy with God and ceaseless enjoyment of His favour in His presence.

Where else do we find a whole psalm expressive of personal confidence, joy and triumph from beginning to end? God's people have their seasons of darkness and their times of rejoicing. Oh, that we may enter into the spirit of the psalmist as we read it and experience days of heaven on earth! It has charmed more grief to rest than all the philosophies of the world.

THOUGHT Psalm 23 is the pearl of psalms.

READ

Jeremiah 48

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Judgement on Moab

VERSE 7

For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together.

The people of Moab were descendants of Lot through the sin of incest with his daughter. The Moabites had often sought the destruction of Israel. In 582 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's army invaded Moab, destroying the people and the cities. The reason for this judgement is Moab's pride and complacency. The Moabites were certain that their god Chemosh would protect them and no enemy could scale the heights to reach their fortress on the secure plateau.

We read of the sorry state of the Moabites—a mighty sceptre broken, stout men acting like women in labour, a nation like a broken vessel, and their false gods failing them. The nation would be filled with signs of ritual pagan mourning. This would be the great sadness of Moab in the year of punishment, when so many sons and daughters would be taken away into captivity.

Let us be wary of human pride and idol worship. They have given us nothing good. The Lord God Almighty has given us His only begotten Son. The restoration that any people will enjoy in the latter days can only come through Jesus Christ, for there is no other name by which we can be saved.

THOUGHT God does not enjoy judging, but is willing to do so in order to wipe out the terrible effects of idolatry.

17 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 25

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Knowing God's secret

VERSE 14

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant.

This is the first of the Davidic psalms written in alphabetical order. The first word of every verse begins with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It may be to engage the attention to what is said or to assist the memory in laying it up and retaining it there.

David's holy trust, his many conflicts, his great transgression, his bitter repentance and his deep distresses are all here. We see the very heart of "the man after God's own heart".

It is the righteous that is God's friend. It is to him that God is joined in a loving familiarity. It is to him that God reveals His secret. How honoured is he in whom God would confide his secret [John 15:15].

Walking with God is the best way to know the mind of God. Noah walked with God, and God revealed a great secret to him—of destroying the old world—and saving him in the Ark. Abraham walked with God, and God made him one of his privy council: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Have you observed personally the gracious designs of God in your life, for your good and His glory?

HYMN What a Friend we have in Jesus!

READ

Jeremiah 49

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

**Imminent doom
prophesied**

VERSE 38

*And I will set My throne
in Elam, and will destroy
from thence the king and
the princes, saith the Lord.*

In this chapter we read of God's pronouncement of impending doom and judgement on Israel's enemies. The Ammonites, the Edomites, the Syrians, the Kedarenes and the Elamites would be judged for their arrogance, idolatry and lack of allegiance to God alone. However, God would still show mercy on all these nations.

Just as these prophecies of doom came to pass in due time, one day all unbelievers will be judged for their sin of unbelief. God in His long-suffering mercy and love has been very patient in His dealings with mankind. His judgement will be sure and final during His second coming.

Warning after warning in the Bible has been given to all sinners to repent and turn to God for forgiveness. The days of the Flood and the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah are just a few examples of God's wrath at work.

Thank God that He vindicated Israel by setting them free from the Babylonians. Likewise, He is waiting to do the same for you. Will you choose to flee from the wrath to come? Don't try the patience of God for too long. Come to Him now and seek deliverance from your sin.

CAUTION Read Hebrews 10:31 and be warned.

18 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 26

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Longing for God's house

VERSE 8

*LORD, I have loved the
habitation of Thy house,
and the place where Thine
honour dwelleth.*

The sweet singer of Israel appears before us in this psalm as one reproach, encouraging him to carry the burden of slander to the throne of grace. An appeal was made to God by the psalmist for his innocence and integrity.

The psalmist expresses his love for this place, the congregation of God's people. He showed his great regard for it by his constant attendance out of pure love to the worship of God with real pleasure and delight, and not through custom or mere form.

An aged woman, almost deaf, said of her constant attendance at public worship, "Though I cannot hear you, I come to God's house because I love it, and would be found in His ways; and He gives me many a sweet thought upon the text when it is pointed out to me: I am in the best company, in the more immediate presence of God ... I am not satisfied with serving God in private; it is my duty and privilege to honour Him regularly in public."

What a reproof this is to those who have their hearing, and yet always come to a place of worship late, or not at all.

THOUGHT O, that all our days were Sabbaths!

READ

<i>Jeremiah 50</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Seeking the Lord

VERSE 5

They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

The destruction and fall of Babylon was prophesied years before the event took place. God had to deal severely with them due to their overbearing attitude and treatment of His people. Coupled with the ruin of Babylon was the redemption of Israel.

What the Babylonians experienced must serve as a warning to us not to take God's Word lightly. Romans 12:19 teaches that vengeance belongs to the Lord. All of us will get our "comeuppance" one day if we resist God's love and forgiveness.

If you are a child of God, thank Him for His mercy and love. When you witness to your unsaved family members and friends, don't be disheartened if they ridicule you. Just remember that they are opposing God and not you personally. All the unsaved are blinded by Satan who want to lead them astray. Can you recall your own excuses before you found salvation in the Lord?

However, if you are still outside the kingdom of God, read verse 5 again. Be like the Israelites and seek the Lord while He may be found. John 14:6 shows the way to God in heaven through the Lord Jesus. Eternal life is yours by faith in Christ Jesus.

THANKS I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

19 AUGUST

READ

<i>Psalms 27</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

This one thing

VERSE 4

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 inquire in His temple.

We may deduce from this psalm of David that he was pursued by his enemies [v. 2–3], shut out from the house of the Lord [v. 2], just separated from his father and mother [v. 10] and subjected to slander [v. 12].

Under such painful and difficult circumstances, we might expect David to desire repose and safety. Instead, he set his heart on one thing: to dwell in the house of the Lord that he may behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple. This is so infinitely sweet that it was the psalmist's only desire and the sum of all his desires. He longed to be constantly engaged in them as his lifelong pleasure.

Here is an exercise for earthly and heavenly worshippers. We must not enter into a worship service in order to see and be seen, or merely to hear the preaching of God's Word. We must focus on the object of learning more of the gracious loving Father, more of the glorified Jesus, more of the mysterious Spirit, in order that we may more lovingly admire and more reverently adore our glorious God.

THOUGHT Am I attracted to the Lord's beauty?

READ

Jeremiah 51

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Declaring God's work of salvation

VERSE 10

The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

Continuing with this theme on the fall of Babylon, God used object lessons through Jeremiah to fulfil His prophecy. This symbolic act of a rock tied to a prophetic scroll and thrown into the Euphrates River showed the sinking of Babylon.

Since God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, Israel has been preserved from harm and total destruction. Remember how God mercifully saved His people from Egyptian bondage? Even in using Babylon as a chastising instrument upon Israel, our Lord was still merciful and would not allow Babylon to go "overboard" in her treatment of the Israelites.

How tender-hearted our Lord is in His dealings with us. Psalm 103:10 reveals His merciful kindness and forgiving nature. Where would we be if God had chosen to deal with us according to our sinful deeds?

Have you been declaring God's work of salvation to the unsaved? Not all can be preachers or missionaries. However, a changed life is a powerful sermon in itself. When others see this difference in you, they will be attracted to the God Whose Name you bear.

CHORUS The Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad.

20 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 28–29

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The great attraction

PSALM 29:2

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

David must have penned this psalm during a thunderstorm. Composed and cheerful, even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, he heard the voice of God. If Psalm 8 should be read at night, when the sky is bright with stars, and Psalm 19 by day, when the sun is high in the heavens, then Psalm 29 ought to be studied when thunder rolls and lightning flashes. It is then that we can best realise its grandeur and beauty and be nearer to God.

The psalmist admonishes us to give God His rightful praise and worship Him in the beauty of holiness. In our worship of God we must have an eye for His beauty. We must adore Him, not only as infinitely awful and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable and to be loved and delighted in above all.

Holiness is the beauty of God Himself. It is the beauty of angels. It makes them so glorious as they are. It is the beauty of the saints. It makes them like unto Christ. O, for grace ever to worship with holy motives and in a holy manner!

POEM How beautiful Thy sight! In depths of burning bright!

READ

Jeremiah 52

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Sharing the king's portion

VERSE 34

And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This sad ending to the chapter on prophecy details the blinding of evil King Zedekiah [v. 1–11], the desecration of Jerusalem [v. 12–23], the exile of the Israelites [v. 14–30] and the special treatment given to Jehoiachin [v. 31–34].

Though this prophetic chapter ends on a sad note with the fall of Jerusalem, we still see a ray of hope. God will definitely fulfil His promise of judgement on our unrepentant attitudes. Yet there is hope for those who are willing to seek God and ask for His forgiveness.

History has witnessed continued arrogance seen on the part of world leaders, such as Adolf Hitler's cruelty against the Jews. The Bible tells of Haman's attempt to destroy all the Jews [Esther 3:6]. However, God would not allow anyone to oppress His chosen people. For sure, no good end will befall those who do so.

See how gracious God is towards King Jehoiachin of Judah. From prison garb and "jailbird" food to royal diet, what a difference indeed! A sinner in his sinful condition can be transformed into a saint in his saved state by the King of kings and Lord of lords. Then we can have a share in the King's portion.

THANKS I am a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

21 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 30

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Divine affliction

VERSE 3

O LORD, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

David titled this psalm for the occasion of dedicating his house to the Lord. It was highly probable that David's dedication of the place he built on the threshing floor of Araunah was after the grievous plague that had nearly desolated the kingdom [2 Samuel 24:25; 1 Chronicles 21:26].

Sickness is common. No one, regardless of age, is exempted from its ravages. Sooner or later, it comes to all. Though we ought to take care of our bodily health because it is the temple of God, we err if we think it is the result of mere second causes. The psalmist saw in it the hand of God. Twice he says, "Thou hast" [v. 3]. It is in love and for our good that He afflicts, for He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men [Lamentations 3:33].

He intends they should be the seminary of thought, the nursery of virtue, the exercise of wisdom, the trial of patience, the venturing for a crown, and the gate of glory (Jeremy Taylor). Let us take comfort that though He afflicts, He will strengthen us upon the bed of languishing: He wilt make all our bed in our sickness [Psalm 41:3].

THOUGHT Happy sickness that drives the soul to Jesus!

READ

Lamentations 1

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

State of utter ruin

VERSE 11

All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

Jeremiah, aptly known as the Weeping Prophet, describes the deep sorrow felt by God's people over the destruction of Jerusalem. In this opening chapter, the state of this great city is compared to a grieving widow. She is all alone in her sorrow. The heathen nations that Judah had allied with could not help her at all.

What happened to Jerusalem can easily happen to you and me when we grow careless in our Christian walk with the Lord. The Jews had this mistaken belief that the city of Jerusalem was impregnable because the Lord's "house" was there. When we are arrogant, complacent and proud, the Lord will deal with us accordingly.

Is there something that you glory in more than in the Lord? Perhaps you are proud of your academic success as a student or your status in society. Beware of allowing it to come between you and the Lord. Remember that pride goes before a fall [Proverbs 16:18].

When you feel bereft and lost, don't despair. Repent, submit to God's chastening and await His deliverance and loving forgiveness. Thank God that His dealing with us is always out of love.

PRAYER May I not resent Your chastening.

22 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 31

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Forlorn and forgotten

VERSE 12

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

This psalm refers to the time when David fled from Saul into the wilderness of Maon. Driven into exile for no unjust cause and cut off from the companionship of friends and the business of life, he soon came to be as one forgotten.

All of David's youthful prowess was now gone from remembrance. His heroic deeds were forgotten. He whose exploits had but lately been the theme of songs and his name on every lip was now "as a dead man out of mind". He had been the saviour of his country but his services were buried in oblivion. Those who showed him all possible respect when he was in honour at court were strange to him now that he had fallen into disgrace, though unjustly.

There can be times when our good intentions may be evil spoken of, our kind deeds mistaken, our labour of love unappreciated and our humble service goes unnoticed. If we serve God truly, our record is on high. Our Witness is in heaven. It matters not whether we have the praise or approval of men.

THOUGHT Forgotten by men but remembered by God.

READ

Lamentations 2

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God's Word fulfilled

VERSE 17

The LORD hath done that which He had devised; he hath fulfilled His Word that He had commanded in the days of old: He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and He hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, He hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

No wonder Jeremiah lamented the misery of Jerusalem. What a sad state it had fallen into. The Jews chose to listen to false prophets instead of heeding Jeremiah's warning. God had to discipline Judah for rejecting His messengers. The depth of the people's sufferings is described in detail.

What a sorry state to be in, especially for the Jews, who are God's chosen people. God in His permissive will grants us our requests [Psalm 106:15]. Worse still, we read here of God's wrath on His people for their sin of disobedience.

We must not trifle with God's Word and His warning of judgement to come. As believers, let us be serious in our pursuit of holiness. Don't take God's love for granted, thinking that we can live as we please. The Bible is our guide for daily living. Read it diligently, together with the *Daily Manna*.

Privileges always bring responsibilities. As God's children, we must heed His Word and be accountable for our actions. Don't forget that God's Word will come to pass, as prophesied in Scripture. Let us live up to our standing in Christ as His elect ones and not bring shame to His holy name.

PROMISE As predicted, Christ's second coming will be fulfilled.

23 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 32

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The joy of forgiveness

VERSE 1

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

David, who wrote this psalm, tells of the blessing of having one's sin forgiven. David recalls the time when he refused to acknowledge his sin. The resulting guilt became an unbearable burden. Undeclared sins make us sick and cause us to be depressed. Sin robs us of our peace and drains us physically and emotionally. We have to put up a front to show others that all is well but inside us we know that we have done wrong. We suppress our real self and have to think of ways to talk and act so that others will not know our hidden transgressions.

David found joy after he had confessed his sins before God. This is the first step towards forgiveness. Confession means that the person gives up his self-deceit. To David's great relief, God lifts his burden of guilt and gives him back his song. He does not need to playact anymore. However, David would still have to face the consequences caused by his wrongdoings.

With this experience, David encourages us to pray, confess our sins and ask God to forgive, protect and guard us. When that is done, we will rejoice with a new song.

THOUGHT Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. – Psalm 32:11

READ

Lamentations 3

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Mercy triumphs over wrath

VERSE 23

They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.

According to the Hebrew text, Lamentations 3:1, as the central verse of the book, expresses the theme of suffering as a result of God's chastening. Verses 21 to 39 form the "spiritual, theological heart" of this book, detailing one of the greatest testimonies of faith found in Scripture. From distress and despair, Jeremiah found hope in God's mercy, compassion and faithfulness.

The fact that we are alive each day is due to God's mercy. Be thankful for His compassion and faithfulness towards us. Remember that each new, fresh day is an opportunity for us to testify of God's goodness.

How do you react when others ridicule you? Learn from Jeremiah not to fear but to persevere amidst all odds. Be thankful that God chose mercy over wrath in His dealings with His people despite their rejection of Him. We can also react positively to those who mock at our Christian conduct.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God is calling His chosen people to repent. Likewise, through the Word of God and His ministers from the pulpit, God is reaching out to you and me. Are we responding to Him? Where would we be if God had dealt with us in wrath?

PRAYER Help me appreciate Your daily, merciful compassion.

24 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 33

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Rejoice in the Lord

VERSE 1

Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

We should rejoice in the Lord at all times. Is that possible? Yes, as long as we are mindful that the Lord is God. He created everything and, most important of all, He created you and me. As a reminder to us, God is gracious to show us the evidence of His creation all around us. God gives us senses such as sight, hearing, touch, taste and emotion so that we can rejoice as we experience our life on earth.

God created, and He continues to care for His creation. God watches over us. He is attached and interested in our lives. He observes our actions and knows what is in our hearts and our intentions. The destiny of people and nations are in His hands. He takes a special interest in believers [v. 18–20]. He is merciful to deliver us out of hell.

Psalms 33 begins with a joyous praise and ends with a note of joyous trust. Our response should be: wait patiently for the Lord [v. 20]; trust in His holy name [v. 21]; and hope in the Lord because His love is unailing [v. 22].

Let us daily look to our Lord and worship Him at all times.

THOUGHT The LORD looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. – Psalm 33:13

READ

Lamentations 4

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Outpouring of divine anger

VERSE 11

The LORD hath accomplished His fury; He hath poured out His fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

Here, we read of the fallen state of Jerusalem. Indeed, what a contrast is seen from its ancient glory to the depths of despair. Jeremiah uses vivid illustrations to describe the condition of the city. God's wrath has descended fully upon His people.

The truth of Hebrews 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God", can be seen in this chapter. What Israel experienced is recorded in Deuteronomy 28–30, where all these calamities are detailed in the terms of the covenant.

There is always a price to pay when we sin [Romans 6:23]. Our righteous God of truth and justice can never condone sin in any way. Therefore, His Son, Jesus Christ, had to become our punishment for sin. Thank God for His sacrificial love in providing a way of escape for us.

Let us heed the warning in Hebrews 10:31. How is your Christian walk with the Lord? As God's children, we must not live in sin. If something is hindering you from obeying the Lord, ask Him for strength to deal with it. It is so much better to experience the outpouring of God's love than His divine wrath.

PRAYER May I desire to please You more and more each day.

25 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 34

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Praise and trust God

VERSE 8

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

The psalmist praises God and invites readers to worship Him. The Lord extends His glory with us and we are encouraged to exalt His name. The psalmist also invites us to try God for ourselves—to taste and see, that is, to have a first-hand relationship with Him.

The Lord delivers us from fear, trouble and affliction. He "snatches" us from danger at the right moment. We are delivered from defeat to victory. Instead of being ashamed, when we turn to Him, our faces will shine and glow in our fellowship with the Lord.

The "angel of the Lord" protects those who have reverence for God (fear of the Lord). They would seek for things that lead to peace. The psalmist issues a specific challenge to the reader to refrain from speaking deceitfully [v. 13]. The tongue is a small instrument but it can cause great damage and is very difficult to control. It is a fire, a world of iniquity, full of deadly poison [James 3:5–8].

Remember that the Lord sees and hears everything. He delivers the righteous.

THOUGHT For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. – 2 Chronicles 16:9a

READ

Lamentations 5

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The unchanging Christ

VERSE 19

Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; Thy throne from generation to generation.

What an apt ending to the book of Lamentations. Here, the prophet Jeremiah's prayer and plea for the restoration of Israel shows his love for his people. At the same time, he recognises the sin of Israel and the sovereignty of God. We read of the effect of sin on the Jewish nation, which acknowledged their folly before God.

Our covenant-keeping God is always faithful to His Word. Whatever He says will come to pass. The Jews knew of God's law—curses would come from disobedience and blessings would follow obedience [Deuteronomy 27–28].

Thank God that our unchanging Lord is still the same today. As a loving God, He longs to shower His love and blessings upon His children. Do not be guilty of enjoying His gifts and ignoring the Giver. Remember that in keeping with His faithfulness, God will definitely chasten us when we go too far and take His blessings for granted.

Which earthly father will not forgive his child [Luke 15:20]? Our heavenly Father is always ready to welcome us with open arms when we confess our sins to Him. Let us not just selfishly desire God's blessings without a desire to walk in His will.

PRAYER Help me to obey You faithfully.

26 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 35

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Thank God for deliverance

VERSE 9

And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in His salvation.

The world seems unfair to us—friends whom we have helped now abandon us in our times of trouble. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote that he wore sackcloth and fasted for his friends [v. 13–15]. They say that troubles come in threes. The psalmist cites three laments and he ended up praising God for deliverance.

The first lament is “Contend, O Lord” [v. 1–10]. We face battles in our lives every day. The Lord fights on our behalf. He will deliver us and we will eventually rejoice in the Lord.

The second is “O Lord, how long” [v. 11–18]. We may face attacks on our reputation with lies and accusations. Our kindness has been repaid with ingratitude. The Lord will repay. Be patient. We should help others without expecting to be thanked, but we should always remember to be grateful to all who help us.

The third is “Vindicate me ... O Lord” [v. 19–28]. The psalmist prays for God to come to his aid. People can be vicious and ungrateful. God notices all these and His truth and justice will prevail. Put your faith in God. No matter what, He will deliver.

THOUGHT I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety. – Psalm 4:8

READ

Ezekiel 1

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Glory of the Lord

VERSE 28

As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of One that spake.

Ezekiel had a vision from God when he was 30 years old. This was also the time that Ezekiel was called to be a minister to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

The first revelation was four living creatures and four wheels. Ezekiel identified the living creatures as the cherubim. The brilliant glory of the cherubim was described in terms of light: “burning coals of fire ... the appearance of lamps ... fire was bright ... lightning ... flash of lightning” [v. 13–14] and it represents the judgement upon Jerusalem inflicted by Nebuchadnezzar [2 Kings 25:9].

The four wheels at right angles to each other had the colour of beryl [v. 16]. The constant motion of the wheels is a picture of the continuous providence of God.

However, the greatest wonder of all was the throne of God. Ezekiel’s vision was similar to the one seen by John on Patmos [Revelation 4]. Ezekiel’s vision tells us that heaven is a wonderful place. The most wonderful thing of all is the very glory of God Himself. So holy and glorious is He that He is described in terms of brilliant light. How good it is then that we should be a reflection of that Light.

THOUGHT Read Matthew 5:16.

27 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 36

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The lovingkindness of God

VERSE 5

Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

We are crowded in a world of lies and plots for self-gain. People have taken their blessings for granted, and there is a sense that they are responsible for their own achievements. There is nothing to fear from God. Such is the world. This is human depravity. The world thinks that God would not care or would not find out the misdeeds of man.

The wicked flatter and praise themselves. They hate to admit that they are wrong. They have excuses for not being honest. They walk blindfolded in a world of illusion. This is self-deception.

Against this backdrop of humanity’s evil desires and action, we are reminded of God’s righteousness. God is our source of life and light, and He will always seek us out to protect us. He does not change with time. He had shown mercy in the past and will continue to show mercy in the future.

The psalmist closes with a prayer to ask for God’s continued steadfast love and His salvation from the wickedness of others. The wicked may scheme and plan behind our backs but God knows all their actions and thoughts.

THOUGHT And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. – John 1:16

READ

Ezekiel 2

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Through thick and thin

VERSE 6

*And thou, son of man,
be not afraid of them,
neither be afraid of their
words, though briars
and thorns be with thee,
and thou dost dwell
among scorpions: be not
afraid of their words,
nor be dismayed at their
looks, though they be a
rebellious house.*

God gave Ezekiel his divine commission [v. 3]. God told him to deliver His message to the exiled people of Judah in Babylon. At the same time, God encouraged Ezekiel not to be afraid of their words.

God gave Ezekiel a difficult task. His words would not be welcomed by the people. Ezekiel's ministry would be met with great opposition. God warned him that his audience was a rebellious people [v. 3], impudent and stiff hearted [v. 4]. Ezekiel would be, as it were, sowing among "briars and thorns". God said that Ezekiel's mission would be like dwelling among scorpions.

But God did not set a difficult task without any help. Ezekiel's success would be based upon the Word of God. Ezekiel was told to "open his mouth, and eat" the roll of a book that God had given him.

Job says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" [Job 23:12b]. David says that God's Word is "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" [Psalm 19:10; 119:103]. Blessed is the man who is God's mouthpiece.

PRAYER Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. – Psalm 19:14

28 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 37

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The problem of evil

VERSE 4

*Delight thyself also in the
LORD; and He shall give
thee the desires of thine
heart.*

The wise teacher begins by instructing his students not to be upset by or jealous of the prosperity of the wicked. He insists that the success of the wicked is temporal. We should have an eternal perspective, and that is, the meek shall ultimately inherit the earth [v. 11; Matthew 5:5].

The time of recompense for the wicked is certain [v. 13]. They may plot to destroy the righteous but their weapons will recoil on them [v. 14–15]. The little that the righteous enjoy is better than the plenty of the wicked. High-handed prosperity, quick profit and too-easy credit will have no long-term success. The wicked will eventually be consumed in smoke.

Though we may fall, we will get up again. The Lord will not let us go a-begging. We need to have patience. We are to trust [v. 3], delight [v. 4] and commit our ways to the Lord [v. 5]. Those who trust in the Lord will be delivered [v. 40]. Waiting upon the Lord is not easy but it will be rewarded. Like Job, we need to learn that it is more important to trust God than to have answers to all our questions.

THOUGHT But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. – Psalm 37:39

READ

Ezekiel 3

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Keep watch of your soul

VERSE 27

But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel was sent to his own people—the Jews. God prepared him for the task by feeding him a roll [v. 1] but the Lord also warned Ezekiel of their stubbornness [v. 7]. Ezekiel was to be a spiritual watchman to the people. God presented him with two scenarios: sinners who perished because the watchman had been unfaithful [v. 18, 20] and sinners who refused to heed the warning of the watchman [v. 19, 21]. The watchman is accountable for the deaths of the former but not the latter.

The faithful watchman has two aspects in his job. He is to warn sinners of the consequences of sin and keep believers on the path of righteousness. It is an encouragement to us that we are not accountable for the responses of other people. As God's witnesses and watchmen, our job is to warn and exhort. Personal responsibility is the key for the watchman and those to whom he preaches.

Sow the Word. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" [Psalm 126:6]. Receive the Word also. "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls" [James 1:21b].

PRAYER Oh Lord, watch over me and keep my soul.

29 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 38

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Prayer for mercy and help from God

VERSE 15

For in Thee, O Lord, do I hope: Thou wilt hear, O LORD my God.

The psalmist mentions his physical agony 15 times. He acknowledged his sins and considered his illness as a punishment from God. He called for divine mercy as he repents.

We must answer for the consequences of our sins. The psalmist did not expect to escape the consequences of his sins but he asked for them to be tempered with mercy. He was in agony both bodily and spiritually. His heart throbbed, his strength drained away and his eyes grew dim.

People whom he thought could help were far away. He was ostracised by his dear ones. As if that was not bad enough, his enemies boasted and rejoiced at his misfortune. In such a helpless situation, the psalmist rightly looked to the Lord for help. He cast himself on God's mercy. He appealed to God for help and was sure that He would hear and answer the prayer of a repentant sinner.

We may not all suffer due to our own sins—not all suffering is a result of sin—but we need to heed the example of the psalmist. The best and only way is to look to God alone. He will give strength and bring us out of the suffering a better person.

THOUGHT For in Thee, O LORD, do I hope: Thou wilt hear, O LORD my God. – Psalm 38:15

READ

Ezekiel 4

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Signs and warnings

VERSE 3

Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

In this chapter, Ezekiel was first told to take a brick, draw an image of the city on it, put it in the sand and lay siege over it with soldiers and battering rams. This was to be a sign of Babylon's attack against Jerusalem.

Next, Ezekiel was asked to lie on his left side for 390 days and then on his right for 40 days. During this time, Ezekiel would be tied with ropes and not allowed to turn. One day would represent one year of captivity for the people of God.

Third, Ezekiel was asked to eat bread, meat and grains, and drink water in measures. This intake restriction symbolises the scarcity of food because of the Babylonian invasion.

Although the signs and warnings against Jerusalem were not favourable or positive, the Israelites should have been grateful that God warned them. God also gave us similar warnings through the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God is given "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" [2 Timothy 3:16–17].

THOUGHT How dreadful life would be if God had just left it to us to live life as we desired.

30 AUGUST

READ

Psalm 39

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

A desperate prayer

VERSE 8

Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

The psalmist was caught in a situation where he could not just keep quiet. He held his peace and had been silent in the presence of the wicked. His agony increased and the pain within him reached an unbearable stage. Human effort was futile. He could not cure himself and keep death at bay.

Life is short. Yet, during this brief time of sojourn on earth, our life is filled with trouble and turmoil. Man's life is no more than a fleeting shadow.

All that is left is faith. What happens after death? Man by himself has no answer and search as he may, there is no answer there. The only hope is in God [v. 7]. We are to pray for forgiveness and that we be not consumed. We are part of this decaying world. There is no hope of any reversal in this decay. Man is in desperate need of help from God. He is gracious to stretch out His hand of salvation to us. We should appreciate that there is only one hope through Jesus Christ, the risen Saviour. He died for us so that we need not die. He rose that we, too, may arise.

THOUGHT And now, LORD, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.
– Psalm 39:7

READ

Ezekiel 5

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

**Better to be rebuked
than to be cut off**

VERSE 8

*Therefore thus saith the
Lord GOD; Behold, I, even
I, am against thee, and
will execute judgements
in the midst of thee in the
sight of the nations.*

The only sign here is God asking Ezekiel to shave his head and beard, stand in the middle of the city and separate his cut hair in the following manner: a third to be burnt with fire, a third to be cut with a knife and the last third to be scattered in the wind. God also told him to take a few strands and tie them to his garment.

Verse 12 explains the meaning: a third of the people would die of pestilence, a third would be killed in battle and the final third would be scattered in all directions. The few strands that Ezekiel tied to his garment represented the remnant that God would preserve for Israel.

God would judge His own people in such a severe manner because Jerusalem was to be a testimony for God to the nations. Jerusalem was God's city. The people were privileged but privilege comes with certain expectations. Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles, in the same way that believers are to be a light to the world. To the extent we are not, we are a blight to our Saviour and not a light that shines for Him.

PRAYER Lord, rebuke me when I sin so that I will not be cut off from You.

31 AUGUST

READ

Psalms 40

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

**An answered prayer and
hope for the future**

VERSE 1

*I waited patiently for the
LORD; and He inclined
unto me, and heard my
cry.*

The psalmist waited patiently for the Lord, not with defeatist resignation but in expectant hope. It appears that there is no immediate answer, but God is always listening and He will answer in due time. The Lord drew the psalmist from the pit. Oftentimes we are sinking down into the miry clay of defeat, but our gracious Lord will lift us up and "set [our] feet upon a rock" [v. 2]. The rock is God Himself.

After that, God will give us a new song of praise, and many who see what God has done for us will put their trust in the Lord [v. 3]. We praise God for His saving grace, faithfulness and steadfast love. Happy is the man who trusts in the Lord. He does not go straying after false gods. Counting one's blessing is always a good spiritual exercise.

Our life is filled with swings. The psalmist encourages us to pray for future deliverance. We can be mocked by others or our weakness can cause us to doubt. Remember to trust only in God. He will take care of you.

THOUGHT Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be Thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.
– Psalm 31:2

READ

Ezekiel 6

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Even God has limits to forgiveness

VERSE 2

Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

In this chapter, God commanded Ezekiel to declare judgement against the Israelites. Ezekiel prophesied that God would bring a sword and destroy the high places, make desolate her altars, slay the men who pray before the altars and leave their corpses unburied, make their houses desolate, break down their idols, and abolish their works.

While God did provide a way of escape for some [v. 8], even they would be taken captive by their enemies. These spared Israelites would then be able to remember God and loathe themselves for the evils that they have committed [v. 9].

While God is compassionate, He will never condone sin. Thus, He rebukes and punishes His people when they sin, and when they refused to repent, He would cut them off. Take heed, God is not mocked. We will reap what we sow.

We must never take God's longsuffering as a licence to sin. Neither should we fall into the trap that we can live like the devil and rest secure in our salvation. The one who sins without compunction is not a child of God. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" [1 John 3:9a].

PRAYER Lord, forgive my repetitious sins and give me strength to overcome them.

1 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 41

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Blessed are the merciful

VERSE 2

The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

The psalmist tells how, when he was sick, his friends came to see him. But what appears to be an act of mercy was actually a visit to see how ill he really was and report it to everyone else. His enemies started a "whisper campaign" and speculated as to what terrible sin he had done to bring about such serious sickness upon himself. They imagined the worst [v. 7]. How true of human nature!

The psalmist asked God to be gracious and heal him in order that he might shut his enemies' mouths. He confessed his sins before the Lord and, in mercy, God forgave and healed him. He was to prove to his enemies that when you approach God with a contrite spirit and ask for forgiveness, your prayer would be answered. Besides, God also gives a bonus of blessings. The psalmist mentions seven of them: God delivers, protects, keeps us alive, sustains us, blesses our land, does not allow our enemy to take advantage of us and restores us from sickness.

The condition that we need fulfil is to come before the all-merciful God Who is there awaiting our call.

THOUGHT Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen. – Psalm 41:13

READ

Ezekiel 7

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The end is near

VERSE 6

An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.

The theme of Ezekiel's sermon was: the end is come upon the land. Ezekiel announced the second judgement to Israel. In this case, he gave details of the impending and inevitable judgement. He also used the word "end" five times. The judgement was assured because the phrase "is come" is used at least seven times. The reason for the judgement was also explained—the people's abominations [v. 3, 4, 8–9].

God has prepared a double judgement for Israel. God would strike Israel with pestilence and plague. He would raise up the Babylonians to strike Israel with the sword. There would be no escape except for a few, who would cry out over their sin like mourning doves [v. 16].

As you read this, you might think that the end applied to the Old Testament only. However, the New Testament tells us of another end—the end of all things [1 Peter 4:7]. And we are to be "sober, and watch unto prayer".

Be sober, watch and pray lest you be caught unawares. Strengthen yourself in the Lord lest you be like the Israelites, who were found wanting at the time of judgement.

PRAYER Lord, watch over me for I know the end is near.

2 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 42–43

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Dealing with spiritual depression

PSALM 42:1

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

Overwhelmed by his depression, the psalmist thirsted for the comfort of God, Who always satisfies. The psalmist longed for the presence and fellowship of God. Tears flowed unceasingly, and they were food for the depressed. Worst of all, scoffers asked, "Where is your God?" Jesus, too, was insulted when He was on the Cross. Remember, God hears all these insults.

In our "dark" days, the nights seem harder to pass. God is gracious and gives us a song in the middle of the night [v. 8]. God is our Rock. He is our Almighty God. He is the source of strength and security. Our enemies may taunt our faith, but they will soon be cut away.

God will defend and deliver us from the ungodly. God may appear to be silent and this silence seems unbearable for us at times. Be assured that God is at work all the time. He will send His light and truth, and we will be brought to the "altar of God" again with great joy. We may only remember God when we go through a patch of tough time but God remembers us at all times.

THOUGHT I praise thee, O God my God. – Psalm 43:4b

READ

Ezekiel 8

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Different degrees of abominations

VERSE 17

Then He said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke Me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

In the sixth year of his ministry, God gave Ezekiel a vision concerning Jerusalem. Ezekiel was shown the abominations committed by the house of Israel, which progressively became worse. The first thing that Ezekiel saw was an idol in the temple. It is called the “image of jealousy” [v. 3] because the idol provoked the Lord to jealousy. Our God is a jealous God [Deuteronomy 32:21]. He would not allow another to rob Him of His glory.

Next, Ezekiel saw 70 elders offering incense to these abominable creatures carved on the temple walls [v. 10–11]. Farther in, Ezekiel saw women participating in a ritual that was dedicated to Tammuz [v. 13–14]. Finally, in the inner court, Ezekiel saw 25 men worshipping the sun.

Bear in mind that what Ezekiel saw was only the tip of what the omniscient God saw. Now we understand why God Himself said that He was provoked to anger, and why He would deal with His chosen people in fury.

Idolatry is a besetting sin. It grows and grips the hearts of man. While we may not bow down to idols of beasts, there are many other idols that can draw us from God [1 John 5:21].

PRAYER Dear Lord, keep me from idols of the heart.

3 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 44

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Be confident in God

VERSE 17

All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten Thee, neither have we dealt falsely in Thy covenant.

This psalm was sung after a humiliating defeat. The Israelites were perplexed. Why did God forsake them and allow the heathen nations to win?

It was a dark day for the people of God to be taunted and ridiculed by their pagan neighbours. Surrounded by enemies, the psalmist remembered what God had done for His people and took heart. When you experience dishonour and disgrace, submit to God and pour out your woes to Him.

Israel had been defeated despite their faith [v. 17] and obedience [v. 18] to God. They did not understand why God allowed it. It did not mean that God loved them less but that He permitted it to happen so that He could carry out His purpose. The psalmist trusted the sovereign Lord to handle the defeats of life and ultimately turn them into victories. Like Job in his undeserved suffering said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” [Job 13:15a].

Those who give their lives for His cause are conquerors, not victims, and God can be glorified in seeming defeat. If you are facing trials, cheer up. God is working out something for your good.

THOUGHT Be confident. In God’s sight, you are a conqueror [Romans 8:37].

READ

Ezekiel 9

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Describing judgement

VERSE 2

And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

We have seen the necessity of judgement. Now the judgement is described. God summoned the executioners—six in all—to judge Israel. Each, with a weapon of destruction in his hand, would go through the city and slay every person.

There are several interesting notes here. First, the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, signifying that He had left the temple [v. 3]. Second, the order in which the judgement would come—first the old, then the young [v. 6]. This was so because the elders were supposed to have led the people to righteousness. Third, together with the six executioners, there was one who was a scribe whose job was to print a mark on the foreheads of some. Those with the mark would be spared.

The glory of the Lord leaving the temple is synonymous to the Holy Spirit leaving a church. That departure of God is also the beginning of judgement, which would “begin at my sanctuary” [v. 6]. Without the presence of God, the sanctuary is not a refuge for sin, but a place of judgement. May the Lord keep us from such a plight.

PRAYER O Lord, keep me close to You always.

4 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 45

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

United with Christ forever

VERSE 17

I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise Thee for ever and ever.

This is a Messianic psalm. It describes the Messiah's future relationship with the Church, the body of believers. In verse 2, God expresses His abundant blessings on the Messiah, followed by the true fulfilment in Christ [v. 6–8].

Christ reigns in heaven now, seated at the right hand of the Father. One day, He will return in glory to defeat His enemies and establish His righteous kingdom on earth. His people will then reign eternally with Him and share His glory.

Christ's death redeems and sanctifies the Church, which is described as the bride of Christ [Revelation 19:7–8]. He cleanses us from the old ways of sin and sets us apart so that when He returns, we will be His glorious bride. Our Lord loves each one of us and He sees beauty in His bride. Let us continue to worship and revere Him for He is the Lord Almighty and the King of glory.

How prepared are you to share His reign and glory? You can do so by acknowledging Jesus as your Saviour today. Love Him, serve Him and be ready for the day when we shall be united with Him forever to share His blessings.

QUESTION Are you eagerly looking forward to be united with Christ?

READ

Ezekiel 10

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The Lord's call for destruction

VERSE 18

Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

Chapter 10 relates to the vision of Chapter 1. It is a reminder that judgement comes from the Holy God of Israel. The man in linen is commanded by God to take coals of fire from the four wheels perpendicular to each other and spread them over the city, meaning that the city would be destroyed by fire. Historically, this judgement was fulfilled in 586 BC, when the Babylonians burnt Jerusalem.

From verse 15, we read about the glory of the Lord preparing to leave Jerusalem. The cherubims and the wheels were lifted up. God was about to withdraw His presence and blessing from Jerusalem [Ezekiel 11:23].

The spiritual and emotional repercussions would be overwhelming. God was going to leave His people. For the Israelites whose lives were spared, not only did they have to contend with the emotional and physical torture of a conquest, they were also in spiritual distress for not having the presence of God.

The lesson is that God had a purpose for Israel. She was to magnify the glory of God. Christians individually and the Church corporately also have the same purpose and privilege. When we fail to do so, the glory of God will depart and judgement will set in.

PRAYER O Lord, may I be reminded of Your grace and protection.

5 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 46

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Be unmoveable

VERSE 5

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The emphasis of this psalm is the presence of the Lord with His people [v. 1, 5, 7, 11]. It focuses on the Lord and what He will do for those who put their trust in Him.

When the Assyrian officials threatened Jerusalem, King Hezekiah and his leaders were not afraid because the Lord was their God. God was in control of all their events and crises. The angel of the Lord delivered them by smiting 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. God is our refuge in all uncertainties. He is dependable. God's covenant with His people never changes when you trust Him and bring your woes to Him.

There is a time to obey God and to act. He is always with us for He is Immanuel (God with us). Truly, with God in our midst, we can remain unshakeable in times of trials.

Are you facing any crisis now? You may be experiencing some relationship problems with your spouse, children or colleagues. You can turn to God in confession and faith. God has His time and ways to save you when you commit everything to Him. He will be exalted when your faith grows.

PRAYER Thank You, Lord, for being my eternal refuge in times of storm.

READ

Ezekiel 11

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Reprieve amidst
annihilation

VERSE 13

And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt Thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

God commanded Ezekiel to speak to the 25 chief men of the people who gave wicked counsel to the people that destruction was impending. They were asking people to build houses in Jerusalem at a time when the city was standing at the threshold of God's judgement.

God's wrath was necessary because the people had not walked in His statutes, and to vindicate His holiness, so that the people would know that He is the Lord [v. 12].

In verse 13, Ezekiel interceded for the Israelites. He asked God if He would annihilate Israel completely. Here, we see the intercession of God's servant. Ezekiel, who preached God's wrath, also pleaded for His mercy. In response, God said that although He would scatter the people, He would be to them "as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" [v. 16]. And in His time, God would assemble the people and return them to Israel [v. 17]

How wonderful our God is! Even as we understand that He will judge sin and the sinner, yet He is also merciful. I am so glad to know that I have a God like this. Are you?

PRAYER Thank you, Lord, for Your unceasing mercy.

6 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 47

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Triumph in Christ

VERSE 1

O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

It was a time for the people of Israel to testify to the surrounding Gentile nations the glorious victory of their God—a victory they won without having to fight a battle. The Lord God is awesome beyond words. Nothing can prevent us from talking about Him. Do not let fear stop you from telling others about the indescribable greatness of God.

As the people of Israel praised their God to the Gentiles around them, they made three affirmations about Him: God is awesome, triumphant and He is the King of kings. When the Jewish people clapped their hands and shouted, it was in response to the Lord's marvellous works.

The Christian life should be a victorious celebration, a daily exercise in thanksgiving and praise. God does not intend that you live a mediocre life. He does not want you to hide your light under a bushel. Instead, He wants you to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven". In short, God wants you to live a triumphant life so that others also know what it means to be a believer.

THOUGHT Be conquerors through Him Who loves us.

READ

Ezekiel 12

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The danger of being over-confident

VERSE 23

Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

In this chapter, God instructed Ezekiel to play the role of a man who was running for his life. The point and purpose of this was to draw the people's attention to the impending exile.

Ezekiel was also instructed to eat and drink with fear and trembling, signifying the terror that would accompany the Babylonian invasion. The false prophets had led the people to believe that Israel was safe. They even coined a proverb [v. 22]. God, however, would turn this proverb on its own head [v. 23].

God made it clear that there would be no more delay in His judgement [v. 24–25]. When the judgement came, it would be obvious that it was by the hand of God. The Bible warns, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” [Hebrews 10:31].

We learn that it is foolish to be over-confident. Even though we think we can count on our own wisdom or that of other so-called wise men, we would do well to live our lives according to the Word of God.

THOUGHT The only way to be righteous is to live under the shadow of the Righteous One.

7 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 48

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Seeing is believing

VERSE 8

As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever.

This psalm celebrates Jehovah's victory in delivering Jerusalem from the Assyrians. The emphasis is on the Lord and Mount Zion. Just as the Lord cared for His people, He also cares for us.

When the Ark of the Covenant was brought back to Jerusalem, it became the city of God and the great king [v. 1–2]. They spoke about their city with pride and gratitude for the Lord dwelt there. Spiritually speaking, the city has brought joy to all the earth, for outside the wall, Jesus died for the sins of the world. It was from Jerusalem that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first sounded. One day, God will establish a new Jerusalem where He will judge all nations and live with all believers.

The people could see with their own eyes the great things that the Lord had done for His people. They immediately went back to the Temple to worship the Lord, meditated on His faithfulness and joyfully praised Him.

We pray daily for God's guidance as we struggle with life's decisions. We also experience how His unseen hand unfolds His plans to lead us in our lives. Let us continue to lean upon the Lord as our eternal guide.

THOUGHT Tell others what God has done for you.

READ

Ezekiel 13

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Standing in the gap

VERSE 5

Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

In context, the “gaps” figuratively speak of the weakness in the nation of Israel as a result of the false prophets giving false hopes to the people. These prophets—Israel’s “watchmen”—who were supposed to protect the nation with God’s truth exposed it to danger by their false teachings instead.

What are you doing to stand in the gap for God? Are you interceding with God for others? God’s intervention is often the result of our intercession. Commit to pray and intercede, “and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in” [Isaiah 58:12].

Christians are in a sense “prophets” in that we have God’s Word and must speak it to expose sin. If we see sin in our church and remain silent, not only are we culpable, but the results will also be devastating. We must preach against sin so that sinners may come to repentance.

Bible teachers who discharge their duties honestly and sincerely are like builders, who, upon seeing a gap in a wall, instantly and carefully repair it. They are like gardeners who do not allow either a field or a vineyard to be exposed to wild beasts.

THOUGHT The most powerful position on earth is kneeling before the Lord.

8 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 49

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Don’t trust in riches

VERSE 6

They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

The psalmist has a message for everyone—the noble, the poor and the rich. We are reminded to keep our perspective in a world obsessed with wealth and the power it brings.

Verses 5 to 12 tell us that wealth cannot prevent death. It is not a sin to be rich if we acknowledge God as the Giver and use what He gives us to help others and glorify Him. Death levels the rich and the poor. Queen Elizabeth I said on her death-bed, “Although money can buy medicine and professional help, it cannot buy God off when the death angel comes to claim you.”

Earthly riches are temporary—here today and soon gone forever. Spiritual riches, on the other hand, are permanent—ours today, tomorrow and throughout eternity. We often neglect to accumulate spiritual treasures.

To have treasures in heaven, we must place our faith in God, pledge ourselves to obey Him and utilise our resources for the good of His kingdom. Let us remember that eternal riches in God will not fade or depreciate. The sum of the whole matter is that it profits a man nothing to gain the whole world if he loses his own soul.

THOUGHT Decision for Christ, and not wealth, will determine your destiny.

READ

Ezekiel 14

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Leave the sin that you loved before.

VERSE 3

Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

The elders came to Ezekiel for counsel. But God warned Ezekiel of their religious hypocrisy. These people were guilty of idolatry. Openly, they worshipped God but secretly, they set up “idols in their hearts” [v. 3]. They were influenced by pagan thoughts and practices, and no longer gave primary allegiance to God.

An idol is anything that takes the place of God. The idolatry among the exiles in Babylon was subtle because the “altar” was internal rather than external. Idolatry in any form is still idolatry, whether it involves idols of wood and stone or idols of the heart. The omniscient God sees idols where the eyes of men cannot.

Do you have idols in your heart? If so, the pattern of “repent and return” is your way back to God. Repentance is a change of mind and heart, turning from sin and to God. If you are a sinner, you need to repent and turn to God. If you are a backslider, you need to repent and return to Him. God often has to make us miserable through conviction of sin in order to make us joyful through forgiveness. Repentance is the hurt that leads to healing.

THOUGHT It is never too soon to repent, but one day it will be too late.

9 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 50

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Sincere praise glorifies God

VERSE 23

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

Happy are those who come into the covenant of grace by faith. God’s children are instructed to worship Him in spirit and in truth, bearing fruits of righteousness.

On the other hand, God will be angry with hypocrites who are superficial in their worship and sacrifices. These worshippers profess one thing and practise another [v. 16–22]. They think that God’s silence means escape from punishment, but they are wrong, for judgement will begin with God’s people. They trust in their religious performances and blindly follow what others are doing, but they have forgotten the significance of offering sacrifices.

Today, we often make rituals of going to church, taking the Lord’s Supper and tithing. All these are essential and good, but they must be done out of love and obedience. Our Lord desires righteousness, not rituals.

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Whoever offers praise glorifies God and He will accept spiritual sacrifices. Let us honour the Lord with true praise, thanksgiving and trust. How sincere are you in your praise and worship of God? Get rid of all the obstacles that hinder you from worshipping God.

PRAYER Help me to glorify You in my words, deeds and thoughts.

READ

Ezekiel 15

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Be useful for the Lord

VERSE 6

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In Ezekiel 15, God gives a parable to Ezekiel—a parable of the vine. The vine refers to the nation of Israel, who was ordained to be cast into the fire because of their sins. The vine was supposed to produce fruit, but the vine in Ezekiel 15 was fruitless. Israel had failed to fulfil her purpose to be a light unto the nations in obeying God’s statutes.

A fruitless tree is useless, but its wood can at least be used for making things. But the wood of the vine is useless. It cannot even be used as a pin [v. 3], and it has no value other than to be burnt.

The vine is a picture often used in the Bible. Our Lord Jesus says that He is the vine, and we are the branches. Abide in Him, and we will be fruitful. Without Him, we are worthless and useless. A fruitless Christian is like an unproductive vine. Blind are those who live in the total neglect of God’s truth. Let us beware of an unfruitful profession. Let us come to Christ and seek to abide in Him, and to have His Word abide in us.

THOUGHT God’s people are to influence the culture around them

10 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 51

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The joy-filled Christian

VERSE 12

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.

Do you ever feel stagnant in your faith, as if you are just going through the motions? Has sin driven a wedge between God and you?

David felt this way. He had sinned with Bathsheba and was confronted by Nathan. His whole being was affected by his sin—his eyes [v. 3], mind [v. 6], ears [v. 8], heart [v. 10], spirit [v. 10] and mouth [v. 13–15]. He lost fellowship with God [v. 11]. David cried to God, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.” Sin hurts the sinner. Are the pleasures of sin worth paying this great price?

God wants us to experience His full and complete love. Any sin that remains unconfessed affects your fellowship with God. Today, the Holy Spirit abides in believers but God’s children lose their testimonies by grieving the Holy Spirit through deliberate disobedience. God forgave David but he had to suffer the tragic consequences of his sin. Besides ourselves, we also hurt God’s Name when we sin.

Don’t cover up your secret sins. Confess them to the Lord and seek His forgiveness. God is love, so don’t “break” His heart by sinning. God wants to use you to reach out to others who need this reconciliation.

THOUGHT Joy comes not from what we have but from what we are.
– CH Spurgeon

READ

Ezekiel 16

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Do not fall prey to spiritual harlotry

VERSE 43

Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted Me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Ezekiel 16 is an allegory of Israel's forgetting and forsaking, and it should serve as an example to all of us regarding the importance of remembering God's love and His works of grace and mercy in our lives.

Friendship with the world is hostility towards God, and we jeopardise our testimony for Him when we walk in sync with the world. We need to constantly recall that God provides all we need for life and godliness. We sin against Him when we take His gifts and prostitute them to serve purposes other than His. Our beauty, fame, fortune and skills are all His gracious gifts to us. When we use them selfishly to attract other people whose favours we desire, we sin. When we use them to pay homage to anyone besides God, we sin, just as surely as Israel did in the Old Testament.

What was it like when you first came to Christ and received His gift of salvation? What has happened since then? Have you been growing? Or have you become complacent in your Christianity? Take some time to remember. Do not fall into the trap of forgetfulness, which breeds ingratitude and leads to sin.

THOUGHT Do not pray for success. Ask for faithfulness.

11 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 52–54

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

David's turning point

PSALM 54:4

Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

The Ziphites turned against David to win favour with King Saul. Similarly, when you love and worship God, the world will despise and create problems for you.

David's life was in danger and he called upon God to save him and vindicate his cause. Psalm 54:4 records the turning point in David's experience. Follow David's example. He prayed for God to take charge and protect him against the wiles of the devil. God promises to hear and help David [Psalm 54:2, 4]. David did not forget to praise the Lord [Psalm 54:6]. He was confident that God was his helper and protector.

Most of us want God to help us for self-centred reasons. Some ask God for success in their careers and others ask God for good results in their examinations. David, however, wanted help from God so that justice would prevail in Israel and others could see the power of the living God.

When you call on God for help, consider your motive. Do not feel discouraged if you get no response. God will answer in His own good time. By God's grace, let us patiently bear our problems without repining.

THOUGHT Great things are done one step at a time.

READ

Ezekiel 17

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Fulfil your promise

VERSE 16

*As I live, saith the Lord
GOD, surely in the place
where the king dwelleth
that made him king,
whose oath he despised,
and whose covenant he
broke, even with him in
the midst of Babylon he
shall die.*

Giving your word and then failing to keep your commitment is a sin. King Zedekiah might have thought that he had good reasons for breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. God did not approve of excuses for breaking a commitment.

Zedekiah had taken an oath before God that he would submit to Nebuchadnezzar in exchange for his kingship. When Zedekiah conspired with Pharaoh to overthrow the Babylonians, he not only broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, he also broke his covenant with God. Why? Because he made a promise, and promises must be kept. Breaking a promise is a sin. Don't make promises if you don't intend to keep them.

Have you promised to return something you borrowed? Have you promised to help someone with a project, teach Sunday school, or assist with a youth programme? Have you promised financial support to missions? Have you promised to encourage and pray for a friend who is going through tough times? Have you kept these promises?

It is important for us to faithfully represent our God, Who never lies! Let us be people who honour our commitments. Let us be people whose word can be trusted. Let us keep our promises!

THOUGHT Don't promise what you cannot deliver.

12 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 55

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

**Living above your
circumstances**

VERSE 22

*Cast thy burden upon
the LORD, and He shall
sustain thee: He shall
never suffer the righteous
to be moved.*

David knew that his own negligence as a father had turned Absalom against him, the Lord and his nation. He witnessed violence and strife as people took sides and many followed Absalom. David singled out one person who "broke" his heart—Ahithophel, his counsellor.

Troubles were around him, terrors within him and treachery next to him—how David wished he could get away from them all. What he really needed was an eagle's wings so that he could fly above the storm [Isaiah 40:31].

It is normal for us to hope for a quick way of escape. However, we must learn to acknowledge our feelings and circumstances. It is far more important to look up to God and ask for divine help. David was assured that God would defeat the rebel forces and save him.

When you call upon the Lord and cast your burdens on Him, He enables you to overcome them. God wants to carry your burdens. Trust in Him to sustain you. He will give you new wings to soar like an eagle. With Christ as your Saviour, in His strength you can always live above your circumstances.

THOUGHT Burdens are lifted at Calvary; Jesus is very near.

READ

Ezekiel 18

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

We are responsible for our own actions.

VERSE 2

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

The proverb in verse 2 is used by the Jews to claim that they were punished for their fathers' sins, not their own. The implication was that God was not being just in holding their ancestors' sinful deeds against them.

We cannot blame our parents. We also cannot even say, "The devil made me do it." We are accountable for our own actions, for what we do, not for what our parents have done. We live in a world where the culprit is the victim. Everyone is blamed except the guilty party.

The just man is described as one who practises eight positive virtues and restrains himself from eight vices [v. 6–9]. If a just man has a wicked son, the son cannot live off his father's righteousness. If he persists in sin, he will pay for the consequences of his sins. Conversely, a wicked father can have a just son. That should be a comfort to some whose father is not godly; turn to Christ, you don't have to live in the sins of your father.

However, the best assurance is this, no matter how bad we have been, by faith in Christ, we are imputed with His righteousness.

THOUGHT God is pleading with us to turn to Him so we might live and not die.

13 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 56–57

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

A steadfast heart fixed on God

PSALM 57:7

My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

David fled to the cave of Adullam for protection. This psalm covers one day in David's life as a fugitive. God quieted his heart and gave him the sleep he needed [Psalm 57:4, 8].

Your "enemy" may be an illness, a difficult place of ministry or even a troubled home. God provided David the cave as a sanctuary where he could rest and have respite from his enemies. He had taken refuge in the Lord many times in the past. He knew the Lord was faithful. Despite his troubles: sharp teeth [v. 4], nets and pits [v. 6], David was assured of God's help.

Your "cave" is the throne of God's grace. David has good reasons to sing and praise the Lord. His desire was not just to escape but to exalt the Lord [Psalm 57:6, 11]. In fact, when David awoke the next morning, he picked up his harp and sang praises to God.

Let us be encouraged to keep on trusting God, exalting Him and singing praises to Him. As you face adversities in life, God will provide a "cave" for you. May you transform it into a sanctuary for God's glory.

THOUGHT I want, dear Lord, a faith that looks to Thee.

READ

Ezekiel 19

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Trust God, not man

VERSE 14

And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

In discussing the sins of the leaders, Ezekiel used two images—the lion and the vine. He phrased his message in the form of a funeral hymn lamenting the end of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, and describing the captivity of Judah. All that the nation had placed their hope—its leaders, its wealth—had failed them. They looked to their leaders to direct them, and they were carried away captive.

A commentator writes, “People become like their leaders. The same people who applauded Solomon when he built the temple also applauded Jeroboam when he set up the golden calves.” Human leadership is not absolute. It is important to have godly leaders but if we put trust them blindly, we will be disappointed.

We live in a world of celebrity worship. People look to actors and sports stars to authenticate their own worth. Today, popularity and success seems to be more important than faithfulness. One of the greatest challenges of Christian leaders today is to keep our churches true to the Word of God and not to the so-called Christian celebrities. Who can save us? Not this world, not the philosophies of this world, but only Jesus! To whom are you looking for salvation?

THOUGHT Had Israel obeyed the Lord, it would have become and remained a mighty lion and a fruitful vine.

14 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 58–59

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God knows!

PSALM 59:7

Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?

This psalm reflects David’s difficult times. Saul, who had disobeyed God’s law, was leading the country into moral and political ruin. He also made a direct threat on David’s life. However, David sought God for help and was confident that He could save him.

Like David, we can always depend on God in times of trouble because He is our Deliverer [1 Corinthians 10:13]. He hears our prayers. God has His ways of delivering those who call upon Him. Sometimes, we may become impatient and want quick results but deliverance comes to those who wait on the Lord.

It is also comforting to know that God sees and hears our enemies [2 Chronicles 16:9]. He has power over our greatest threats. He knows what others are saying in secret. Sometimes, believers may find themselves falsely accused, even by other Christians. Sadly, mouths that are used to praise God may foolishly be used also to utter much poison. If you have been faithful to God, you need not fear what others may say about you. God knows the truth.

Beware, take heed and search yourself. God is the silent listener in every conversation.

THOUGHT The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good [Proverbs 15:3].

READ

<i>Ezekiel 20</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Reflect on God's past blessings.

VERSE 19

I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes, and keep My judgements, and do them;

The elders of Israel came to Ezekiel to “inquire of the Lord” [v. 1]. But God turned away from them because of their disobedience. The Lord also rehearsed His grateful dealings with their fathers, and the people’s treacherous dealings with Him. The man who does not want to obey God’s Word does not deserve the knowledge of God’s will.

God recalled the sins of Israel past not to justify His judgement upon Israel present but to demonstrate that the sons committed the very same sins of the fathers. Someone wrote that “the one thing we learn from history is that we don’t learn from history”. Prophets and psalmists declared the sins of the nation and recorded them for future generations so that the same mistakes are not repeated. As God’s people, we need not relive the sins of others. But God’s people have not begun to learn the lessons, let alone obey. Too often people want to know what God says but they don’t regard His Word as absolute but as one of many options that they can choose.

A willingness to submit and obey is the mark of the person who can seek God’s guidance and expect to receive it.

THOUGHT History teaches us the mistakes we are going to make.

15 SEPTEMBER

READ

<i>Psalms 60–61</i>

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Jehovah Nissi – God is our Banner

PSALM 60:4

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.

The historical account in Psalms 60–61 takes us back to the time when David became famous for his victories in battles against the Aramaeans (Syrians). Furthermore, Joab and Abishai were sent to deal with the Edomites in the valley of salt and were victorious [1 Chronicles 18:12]. David had confidence in God for He had preserved him wherever he went.

There are many examples of God giving victory to His people against all odds, such as the parting of the Red Sea. Almost anyone would be terrified at being pursued by Pharaoh. Yet Moses told God’s people not to fear, for God would fight for them [Exodus 14:14].

Likewise, God is our Banner. He protects us. A banner is a standard that bears the colours by which a military unit is identified and behind which troops rally. To proclaim God as our Banner is to say: “I rally behind Jehovah. It is He to Whom I look. It is He Whom I will follow.”

Do you remember the “victories” God has given you over life’s “battles”? So, in future ones, be reminded of His faithfulness to give victory in His way and in His timing.

THOUGHT Take refuge in the strong tower of Christ, our Banner.

READ

Ezekiel 21

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The wrath of God is not to be taken lightly

VERSE 3

And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth My sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.

This chapter introduces the judgement on Judah and Jerusalem. Ezekiel had explained the responsibilities of the people and their leaders. Now he focused on the fact that God must punish His people when they rebelled against Him. God must be true to His character and covenant. Judgement is impending and inevitable and severe; it is described as a sword.

God's judgement would come upon the righteous and the wicked; the former for the purpose of refining and the latter for retribution. Who are the righteous? In the context of the passage, these are carnal Christians. It is using a small bandage to cover a huge tumour. Radical surgery is needed. You do not cure sin by becoming religious. A total change of heart is required, and the judgement from God's sword is needed.

The people had complained that they did not understand Ezekiel's message. It is more like they did not want to understand. They did not like to be told about their sins and God's judgement. This was not a popular message in Ezekiel's time, and not one in our day as well.

THOUGHT Do you tremble when you reflect that God is just?

16 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 62–63

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Desiring God

PSALM 63:1

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

Psalms 62 and 63 were probably written by David when Absalom was planning to usurp his throne. During this time, David gathered his strength from God. He had the faith to know that God would be victorious. Psalm 63 tells us David desired spiritual food.

What do we desire most these days? The world offers us attractions and pleasures that will not satisfy. Day and night, we toil to bring back just a bit more in the hope that these desires may be fulfilled. Luke 12:15 warns us to beware of covetousness for our whole being is not made up of material things. Every Christian must cultivate an appetite for spiritual things. David expressed his desire for God and he made the effort to fulfil this desire [Psalm 63:1].

Do you seek the Lord early in all your endeavours? In making decisions great and small, do you seek Him early for guidance? If we proclaim Christ as Lord, then we must always turn to Him for direction. We live to serve and honour Him.

Nothing about us is unimportant to God. He cares and wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives. Seek Him early and always.

THOUGHT Let your first "Good morning" be to your heavenly Father.

READ

Ezekiel 22

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God calleth – do not refuse

VERSE 30

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

King David took the stronghold of Zion and made Jerusalem his capital. It was in Zion that God placed His sanctuary. The Jews were proud of Mount Zion and claimed that the Lord loved Zion more than any other place. But Zion—the city of God—would be known as the “bloody city” and it would be invaded by the heathen.

Why were God’s people living such wicked lives? They had forgotten the Lord. People who forget God gradually become their own gods and begin to disobey God’s Word, mistreat others, and take God’s blessings for granted. God, in His mercy, holds back His hand of judgement to give sinners the opportunity to repent and be saved.

The Lord promised to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if He could find 10 righteous men in the city. He would have spared Jerusalem for one righteous man. God is still seeking men and women who will take their stand for the moral law of God. The Lord is looking for intercessors who will cry out to God for mercy and plead with the people to return to holiness.

Surely the Lord must be disappointed that His people have little time for intercessory prayer.

THOUGHT Can your heart endure in the days when God shall deal with you?

17 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 64–65

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God hears His children

PSALM 64:1

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

The pursuit of David by Saul is perhaps somewhat similar to what we sometimes encounter. There are troubles, challenges and temptations that we need to battle each day. In the face of adversity, ask God for protection, wisdom and victory, knowing that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the snares of Satan [Ephesians 6:11–12].

David faced such a situation in Saul’s court, where many of his officers conspired against him. He compared his enemies’ tongues to swords and their bitter words were like arrows. Worse, they set traps, confident that nobody would see them.

Like it or not, there are unkind people in this world. It may be in the home, at school or at your workplace where cunning people lie in wait to trap and harm you. Pray and ask God for wisdom on how to handle such situations [James 1:5]. He hears us when we cry to Him [Psalm 34:15]. He hears our petitions and understands our needs even before we ask.

There is always a way out when God directs the play. Nothing is impossible with Him. No situation is ever too hard for Him to solve.

THOUGHT Prayer changes everything, including us!

READ

Ezekiel 23

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Learning from mistakes

VERSE 13

Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way,

In Ezekiel 23, the prophet condemned the immorality of Samaria and Jerusalem. God compared them to two sisters who have become harlots at a young age and continued their practice to old age. God sent the Assyrians to destroy Samaria in 721 BC and sent the Babylonians to level Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Ezekiel 23 teaches us that we must learn from the mistakes of others. The people of Judah should have learnt from the errors of their brethren in Samaria and Israel. Sin and idolatry brought the wrath of God upon Samaria. The people of Judah knew about God's judgement upon their kinfolk in the north, and yet they followed in their footsteps of wickedness.

Did they not know that if they did the same things they would receive the same punishment? Their sins had cost them their city, their temple, their lives and their souls.

The Bible is replete with many examples of the terrible end of ungodly people. Let us take warning from these passages and not become infatuated with the sin of this world. Instead, let us serve God with diligence.

THOUGHT When I have listened to my mistakes, I have grown.

18 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 66–67

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Real hope

PSALM 67:6

Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.

This is a joyous psalm as it speaks of God's goodness and blessings to all who are His. The promises of God are sure and He never fails His people. Gentiles are also included in God's blessings and that gives this psalm a gospel leaning. We can reap God's harvest of blessings when we obey and put our trust in Him.

How often do we acknowledge the magnificent grandeur of God? There is so much we can draw from the One Who gives us endless joys and real peace. Yet, believers often go about their own way without giving God due respect in their lives. God must be included in our daily plans. He has promised never to leave or forsake us [Hebrews 13:5].

God is our Friend in times of trouble. The Bible tells us that when the ship was sinking, the disciples were afraid and cried to our Lord for help. He rebuked the winds and the sea, and all became calm.

We are so privileged to have Christ on our side. He is our Light when we are in the dark, our Shield when we are surrounded by enemies. He is our Guide when we are lost.

THOUGHT There is more safety with Christ in the tempest than without Christ in the calm waters.

READ

Ezekiel 24

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

**Those who cannot
remember the past are
condemned to repeat it.**

VERSE 15

*Also the Word of the
LORD came unto me,
saying,*

In this chapter, Ezekiel was given another parable—Jerusalem was pictured as a pot with the best choice of meats. The meat would be burnt, and the pot with its residue of scum would be destroyed. The only way to purge the city was to raze it to the ground. “Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great” [v. 9].

The second illustration of God’s judgement hit Ezekiel personally. His wife died and he was told not to mourn for her passing. Ezekiel’s wife was the joy of his life, just as the Temple was the joy of the people. Ezekiel’s wife did not die because of sin, but Jerusalem was surely guilty of wickedness. The death of Ezekiel’s wife and the destruction of the Temple were acts of God. But in the latter, judgement came because of sin.

Ezekiel was given a day’s notice that his wife would die. Judah was given years of warning through God’s prophets, and they did not listen. Sinners today are given ample warning through the preaching of the Gospel. “The Word of the Lord came unto me ...” God has a strong warning for us. Will you listen?

THOUGHT ... Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts ... – Hebrew 3:15

19 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 68

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The Lord is on our side

VERSE 1

*Let God arise, let His
enemies be scattered: let
them also that hate Him
flee before Him.*

The mighty presence of God is depicted in Psalm 68. Its overwhelming description of God coming to Israel’s aid and then residing in Mount Zion has some parallels with the song of Deborah in Judges 5. Several names are used to describe God: Elohim (23 times), Jehovah, Jah (short for Jehovah), Adonai (six times) and Shaddai.

It is heartening to know that God fights our battles. In Psalm 68, He is seen as marching on behalf of His people. Israel’s enemies were blown away like smoke. Who can stand up to such a mighty God? All His enemies who stand in His way will be crushed.

Sometimes, we may encounter obstacles that seem very big and we think that God cannot overcome them. Our enemies may be difficult and never seem to let us rest. Elijah had a terrifying encounter with Jezebel and the false prophets. Daniel had to contend with court officials who were intent on destroying him. Yet in all of these, God showed Himself strong.

Perhaps you may be facing some personal problems today. Victory is sure when we persevere in our obedience to God and find comfort in Him.

THOUGHT It is good to be on the Lord’s side.

READ

Ezekiel 25

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

God cares for His people

VERSE 7

Behold, therefore I will stretch out Mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

In Chapters 1 to 24, we have Ezekiel warning the Jews of the dangers facing Judah and Jerusalem. In particular, it contains the denunciations of the wickedness during the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. In Chapters 25 to 32, Ezekiel turned his attention to the foreign nations and Chapters 33 to 48 offer words of hope.

Chapter 25 contains pronouncements of heavy judgements of God against the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and Philistines, on account of their hatred to His people, and their insulting them during their distress. These Syro-Palestinian states form a geographical arc around Judah. These prophecies were fulfilled by the instrumentality of Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Who are God's people? Jesus said, "For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." God's people belong to one family; our relationship with the Lord is a spiritual one, born of God and sanctified by the truth of the Gospel. Sometimes we may slip or backslide because of our weaknesses, or due to our enemies. But God has assured us that He will take us back if we repent.

THOUGHT Those who profess to know Christ but set up idols in their hearts will surely be cut off [Ezekiel 14:7–8].

20 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 69

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Zeal in the right balance

VERSE 9

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten Me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon Me.

These words by David are also mentioned in John 2:17, when Jesus was angry that God's house had been desecrated by wicked people selling merchandise. The priests were rebuked for allowing the holy place of worship to be adulterated with sordid dealings by those who had no respect for the sanctity of God's house.

Zeal describes a conviction so strong that the person puts his whole self into carrying out a specific purpose. While fanatic zeal is a negative aspect and results in destruction, righteous zeal pleases God and edifies believers. For example, the Apostle Paul went through all manner of hardship to spread the Gospel, enduring persecutions for his faith in Christ.

Praise God for those who serve Him zealously and labour tirelessly in various church ministries. Likewise, we should participate in God's work as best as we can. It is often the case of a faithful few who bear the heavy burden of doing most of the work while the rest sit back and watch, sometimes making discouraging comments.

As God's children, let us be found serving Christ faithfully—not half-heartedly or sloppily, but zealously. Our Master deserves no less than our best.

THOUGHT Now is the time to start serving the Lord with zeal.

READ

Ezekiel 26

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Destruction of Tyre

VERSE 21

*I will make thee a terror,
and thou shalt be no
more: though thou be
sought for, yet shalt thou
never be found again,
saith the Lord GOD.*

Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia. It was distributed over two parts: one situated on the coastline and the other on an island. It rejoiced when Jerusalem fell, because Tyre and Judah competed for the profitable trade that came from Egypt in the south and Mesopotamia in the north. Tyre dominated the sea trading routes while Judah, the land routes. When Judah was defeated, Tyre rejoiced thinking that she was going to benefit from the destruction of her competitor.

Ezekiel foretold the destruction of Tyre. The first stage of the fulfilment began with the siege of Tyre which lasted 13 years, beginning from 585 BC, about three years after the capture of Jerusalem. Without a fleet, the island part of Tyre was spared the Babylonian onslaught. However, Tyre's greatest days were gone. Her commerce was ruined by the siege as well as competition from Greek merchants.

The prophecy was completely fulfilled when, in 332 BC, Alexander the Great besieged the city for seven months. He built a causeway leading to the island city from the rubble of the former city along the coastline and, in the process, scrapped the area "as bare as the top of the rock".

THOUGHT The words of our God are always true and trustworthy.

21 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 70–71

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Praise God continually

PSALM 71:6

*By thee have I been holden
up from the womb: Thou
art He that took me out of
my mother's bowels: my
praise shall be continually
of Thee.*

Probably fast-approaching old age, the anonymous writer of Psalm 71 sought God's help and protection from his enemies. Perhaps he was a temple musician, whose duty was to praise God in the sanctuary day and night [v. 22–24]. He acknowledged God as his present help [v. 1–4], his help in the past [v. 5–13], his help in the future [v. 14–21] and praised God for His help [v. 22–24].

In verse 6, we see the imagery of an unborn child in the mother's womb. The protection and care of the unborn speaks of God's amazing biological design. God has planned everything precisely. Yet so-called evolutionists deny the Creator. Regardless of the proof presented to them, they harden their hearts and reject God.

However, we have a different outlook. We praise our Creator-God, Who directs every detail in our lives. He knows everything that happens to us, and even numbers the hairs on our head [Luke 12:7]. It is comforting to know that God rules over all and nothing escapes Him.

Like the psalmist, let us continually praise our mighty God for He alone is worthy of our adoration. We are precious in His sight [Matthew 10.31].

THOUGHT Our God is an awesome God. Give Him all praise.

READ

Ezekiel 27

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Don't trust in the riches of this world

VERSE 33

When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.

Ezekiel continues with the second part of his prophecy concerning Tyre. The prophet pursues his subject in the manner of ancient funeral songs, in which the mourning women first recounted whatever was great or praiseworthy in the deceased, and then mourned his fall.

Here the riches, glory, and extensive commerce of Tyre are enlarged upon [v. 1–25]. Her downfall is then described in a beautiful allegory of a shipwreck [v. 26]. Tyre's main source of wealth—maritime trade—was crushed by the east wind. Her “riches ... mariners ... men of war ... shall fall into the midst of the seas” [v. 27].

This chapter is similar to Revelation 18, where Babylon, symbolic of a corrupt world system, is destroyed by God. There are big corporations that are oiled by power, money and greed. They grow rich by exploiting the sinful pleasures of society. Many bright people are tempted to take advantage of the evil system. As Christians, we should stay away from being enticed by money, positions of power, status and the good life.

We are to follow the example of Christ: to love, to serve others with our resources and time, and obey God's Word.

THOUGHT It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

22 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 72

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

King of kings and Lord of lords

VERSE 11

Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.

Messianic in nature, Psalm 72 can be divided as follows: God is righteous [v. 1–7]; God is omnipresent [v. 8–11]; God is compassionate and kind [v. 12–14]; and God is everlasting [v. 15–17].

For the longest time, many great kingdoms and rulers have come and gone. Great names like Alexander, Napoleon, Genghis Khan and Julius Caesar conjure up the image of magnificent conquests. However, none of them has lasted. All have since vanished and exist only as records in history books.

The kingdom of God is quite the opposite. All earthly rulers and their kingdoms are appointed by God, Who dictates the history of civilisation, and the rise and fall of leaders. There may be empires that seem poised to rule forever, only to be trampled upon and removed the next moment.

God's kingdom, on the other hand, will last forever. It is foolish of anyone to even think that he can go up against God. No one can defeat the mighty God we serve. One day soon, every knee shall bow at the feet of Christ. And as His redeemed, we will reign with Christ in His kingdom. Have you asked Jesus to be your Saviour?

THOUGHT The Creator of the universe calls me His child. What a blessing! What a privilege! What a responsibility!

READ

Ezekiel 28

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Be humble

VERSE 7

Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.

The first part of this chapter relates to a prince of Tyre. The Jewish historian Josephus identified him as Ithobalus, a vain man. But whoever he was, this prince was proud of his wisdom and wealth and exalted himself as god [v. 2]. The prophet treats his foolish pretensions with severe irony, and predicts his doom [v. 1–10]. He then takes up a funeral song and lamentation over him, in which his former pomp and splendour are finely contrasted with his fall, in terms that seem frequently to allude to the fall of Lucifer from heaven [Isaiah 14; v. 11–19].

Throughout the ancient East, the majesty and glory of a people were represented by their monarch, who was worshipped as a god in some nations. The king was the embodiment of the community. Their glory is his glory, their pride, his pride. The doom of Tyre could not be complete without denunciation of the king of Tyre. Idolatrous nations and idolatrous kings oppose the true God.

The king of Tyre thought that he was a god. But a wise Christian in a position of authority would acknowledge his status is from God.

THOUGHT Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

23 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 73

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The ultimate end for the wicked

VERSE 17

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

During David's reign, some Levites served as musicians and worship leaders. Among them were Asaph, Heman and Ethan (Jeduthun) [2 Chronicles 5:12–14]. Twelve psalms are attributed to Asaph and Psalm 73 deals with the problem of why the ungodly prosper while the righteous suffer.

Throughout history, there have been wicked people who seem to profit without end. We ask God why He does not do anything to them. While prosperity and power may look attractive to the world, they are, unfortunately, a fleeting fantasy.

God is not mocked because we will reap what we sow [Galatians 6:7]. The truth is that everyone will have to face the final judgement and stand before God. Asaph was initially a doubter and came to the conclusion that he had wasted his time being righteous [v. 13]. Regardless of what happens in our lives, we must remain faithful to God.

Let us consider the big picture when the situations around seem discouraging. While the ungodly may gain huge wealth and power on earth, this is temporal. Someday, they would have to stand before God's judgement throne. Let us be found faithful in Christ.

THOUGHT The real measure of a person's wealth is what he has invested for eternity.

READ

Ezekiel 29

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Providence of God

VERSE 20

I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for Me, saith the Lord God.

This and the three following chapters foretell the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, which he accomplished in the twenty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity. The same event is foretold in Jeremiah 46:13. The prophecy opened with God's charging the king of Egypt with the same extravagant pride, the same charges against the prince of Tyre. Pharaoh also claimed to be a god and boasted so much of the strength of his kingdom.

God pronounced grave judgements against Pharaoh and Egypt, and declared that the Egyptians would be subjected to the Babylonians until the fall of the Chaldean empire [v. 8–12]. Ezekiel then foretold that Egypt would be devastated by the Babylonians and many of the people carried into captivity. Egypt would rise again as a kingdom but she would never regain her former political importance.

God gave Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. God gave him that land so that the Babylonians might take the spoil. This was God's wages for the Babylonians. God is sovereign. He accomplishes His will even through unbelievers for even "the wrath of man shall praise Thee" [Psalm 76:10].

THOUGHT Although Nebuchadnezzar was not a believer, God used him for His ends and also rewarded him for the effort.

24 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 74

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Do not take God's name in vain

VERSE 18

Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed Thy name.

The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians took place around 587 BC and Psalm 74 focuses its attention on this. Its author is not the Asaph of David's day but of another from the same family. The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple were prophesied by the prophets [2 Chronicles 36:15–21]. In this psalm, Asaph's account moved from one of despair to one of confidence.

Quite often, we may hear people blaspheming God's name. Sadly, this is not limited to Hollywood movies. There are some who ignorantly use such expressions, thinking that it is "cool" to do so. To blaspheme is to swear, curse or use foul language. We have to be very careful when using words that are associated with God.

In Exodus 20:7, the Third Commandment warns us against pronouncing the holy Name of God without reverence and forbids any trivial mention of God in superficial conversation. God's name must not be used disrespectfully or carelessly.

It is important that we give God the glory due unto His name [Psalm 29:2]. He is holy. As Christians, we have the responsibility to correct and warn those who take His name in vain.

THOUGHT Be careful not to use words that are offensive to God.

READ

Ezekiel 30

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Have no part with questionable characters and organisations

VERSE 6

Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God.

Continuing the prophecy against Egypt, it is introduced with expressions of lamentation because of the coming destruction of Egypt and all her connections—the ancient Ethiopians, Lydians, Lybians and others. Nebuchadnezzar and his army were to be the instruments of their ruin and desolation. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was threatened with broken arms, and his people scattered.

Judah rebelled against Babylon and made a pact with the Egyptians in spite of God's warning [Jeremiah 2:36–37]. When Babylon attacked Jerusalem, Egypt made a feeble attempt to help Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar turned on Egypt, whose power was as strong as broken arms [v. 22].

God often allows worldly powers to arise and perform acts that we don't quite understand how they could serve the cause of Christianity. However, we know that our God is in control and He sees the big picture and is in charge. Whatever powerful organisations and countries may plot and scheme, they ultimately fall within God's purpose. For a season the ungodly may rejoice, but soon they shall be cut off.

THOUGHT The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will.

25 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 75–76

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The righteous Judge

PSALM 75:2

When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.

Psalms 75 and 76 call for the judgement of God against the wicked. However, there are questions on why God has not wrought out His vengeance.

Besides remembering the good deeds of the Lord from the past, Asaph also gave thanks to God for His works and nearness. We praise God for Who He is, His glorious attributes and His wonderful works.

We hear the two-fold message of the Lord: a word of encouragement for believers [Psalm 75:2–3] and a word of warning to the godless [Psalm 75:4–5]. As we see the wicked prosper in their evil deeds, we often ask God, "How long?" God says that He will judge, but only in His time. The upright judgement of God pertains to both aspects of His righteous rule: vengeance on His enemies and vindication of the godly.

The psalmist likens God's judgement to a cup of wine. Bitter indeed will be the cup of wrath when the wicked are forced to drink it [v. 8]. That God will one day judge the wicked should motivate us to share the Gospel with them. That the righteous shall be exalted ought to humble us and give us courage in the difficult hours of life.

PRAYER Judge of all the earth, spare us yet, lest we forget.

READ

Ezekiel 31

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Falling from God's favour

VERSE 18

To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? Yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel described to Pharaoh the fall of the king of Assyria using the picture of a fair cedar of Lebanon, once exceedingly tall, flourishing and majestic, but it was cut down and withered, and its broken branches strewn around [v. 1–17]. The prophet then applied the same message to the king of Egypt, by telling him that it was a picture of his approaching end [v. 18].

The cedar of Lebanon was known for its height, beauty, strength and hardiness, so much so that Ezekiel said that even “all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God envied him” [v. 9]. Such was the glory of Assyria but she forgot that she was what she was because God made it so [v. 9].

The destruction of Assyria is a lesson that all who exalted themselves would be brought down, whether it is an entire empire or a single person. When God strips men of their honour, riches, power and dominion, it is because they have abused God's gifts to them.

The fall of Assyria, Egypt and all empires that followed, and people who lifted their hands against God, admonishes us not to exalt ourselves before and apart from God.

THOUGHT We have to give God the glory of what we have and are.

26 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 77

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Confidence in crisis

VERSE 9

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?

Asaph was resolved to pray without intermission. He prayed in anguish to God for his soul was comfortless and sorely tempted by the vast distance between the former days and the present time. He remembered the former days when he had pleasure in the night (songs) but now he only had tears and distress.

Asaph wondered if God had withdrawn His favour from him forever. He refocused his meditation on the works and wonders God had done in the past. He recalled His miracles and mighty deeds. He recorded the feeling of every person in the middle of a difficult trial.

Asaph's feelings are recorded as six rhetorical questions to which he sought answers [v. 7–9]. Therein lies hope! He believed that the Lord would remain faithful to His promise. God has promised that we will not be tested beyond what we are capable of enduring [1 Corinthians 10:13].

He concluded his psalm by hearkening to the past when God led His people into the Promised Land. God does not leave us to cope with our sufferings alone; He will lead us to the light at the end of the tunnel.

THOUGHT We are strong in seeking the world but weak in seeking God.

READ

Ezekiel 32

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Our fullness consists of knowing God through Jesus

VERSE 15

When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the LORD.

This chapter contains two more prophecies concerning the destruction of Egypt. The king of Egypt is compared to a crocodile taken in a net, and brought to land, and left to be the prey of the fowls of the air and beasts of the field.

The ruin of Egypt is further amplified by the casting of it on the mountains and valleys; by the land flowing with its blood; by the darkness of the heavens; by the vexation in the hearts of many people; and by the amazement of kings and nations. God used the king of Babylon to destroy Egypt so that the surrounding nations would lament the fate of Egypt.

The Egyptians were filled with pride because she was rich. Everyone who talked with them would know how much it filled them. But God would soon make their country destitute of that whereof it was full.

Those who set their hearts on this world's goods will ultimately be disappointed because death is a great equaliser. Materially speaking, a pauper and a millionaire are of equal status in death. The only difference that matters in eternity is whether or not we die in Christ.

THOUGHT A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.

27 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 78

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Learning from our past

VERSE 4

We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done.

In this psalm, Asaph reminds us that God's people are to share the mighty works of God and His people with future generations. We are to transmit to our children the praises of the Lord and His strength as seen in the wonderful works that He has done. Children are to be taught constantly and diligently not to be stubborn like their forefathers.

As Asaph reviewed the history of his people, he saw a sad record of forgetfulness, faithlessness, foolishness and failure. Therefore, he sought to understand what it all meant. These things are written for the profit of believers today.

On the positive side, Asaph wanted the future generations to trust God, learn from the past and obey God's Word [v. 8]. Only then could they be sure of the blessing of the Lord. This principle still applies today.

Today, we have a message of salvation through Jesus and the opportunity to demonstrate a life of devotion to God. If you have preached the Gospel to others, your impact lingers. Your message keeps going and your influence will never die. As God's children, let us be good missionaries for our Lord and lead souls to Him.

REMINDER Read Deuteronomy 6:7–9.

READ

Ezekiel 33

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

How do you treat the Sunday sermon?

VERSE 32

And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

Ezekiel addressed the remnant that still remained in their ancient home and warned them against presumptuous hopes that were founded upon false grounds. [v. 23–29]. Then he turned his eyes to those near him, and pointed out their lack of sincerity in hearing the Word of God [v. 31].

They made some show of religion and piety but their hearts were not right with God. First, they were proud of their diligent and constant attendance at church services. They worshipped God with their mouths and lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

Second, they had little reverence and respect for him. They were coming to Ezekiel to be entertained. They were careless and indifferent about hearing him. They treated his message as a song to be enjoyed rather than as an admonishment to be heeded.

Like them, many people go to church for the music, the people and the activities. Just as an entertainer needs only applause and no heart response from his audience, so they give none. Christians must be concerned about God's truth, and their own personal responsibility when they hear the preaching of it.

THOUGHT What is on your mind when you hear the preaching of God's Word?

28 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 79

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Lord, remember the sheep of Your pasture

VERSE 9

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake.

Asaph complained about the destruction of Jerusalem and its carnage perpetrated upon the inhabitants by God's enemies. The complaint graphically describes the suffering that God's people had experienced [v. 1–4].

Asaph acknowledged that Israel's former iniquities might have merited divine punishment but he appealed to the "God of our salvation" [v. 9a] to provide atonement for their sins. God's name is blasphemed by the pagan nations [v. 10].

Asaph asked how long the judgement would continue. He wanted to know if God would be angry with His people forever. He prayed in faith that God would render a sevenfold judgement upon His enemies. The psalmist ends on a note of expectation. God would answer his prayer. In return, God's people would thank Him and praise Him for His deliverance from their oppressors.

When we face trouble or ruin, God is still our refuge and prayer remains our true resource. Sometimes the Lord has to bring His people very low before He can lift them up. We should trust God and look high. He will not only keep us from sinning but also from sinking. With this assurance of our Shepherd's help, let us press on.

THOUGHT Sometimes God may "break" us so that He can "remake" us.

READ

Ezekiel 34

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Are your church leaders dependable?

VERSE 6

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Our God is righteous and cares for His people. He appoints leaders to take charge of them, feed them spiritually and guide them according to God's commandments as revealed in His Word.

However, there are many examples in church history when leaders fail to perform. As our Lord said, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" [Jeremiah 23:1], and again, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" [v. 2]. The religious leaders were negligent and unfaithful to their calling by their sloth and self-centredness. The congregation were led astray. Instead of feeding and taking care of the flock, unfaithful ministers milked and fleeced, bullied and killed the people whom God had put under their care.

God shall surely judge false shepherds. "Behold, I am against the shepherds" [v. 10]. God also promises that He would deliver His elect from these unfaithful ministers. Is there hope then for God's flock? The hope is this: God will be our shepherd. He will seek, deliver and gather His flock and bring them back to His fold.

THOUGHT Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

29 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalm 80

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Make Your face to shine on us

VERSE 3

Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Crushed and desperate, God's people begged the Lord to restore them. Asaph knew that if God's face shone on them in grace, they would be blessed with His presence and favour, and be restored and saved [v. 3, 7, 19].

The psalmist presents three calls for restoration. The first one is in verses 1–3, calling for the Shepherd not to abandon His flock but to revive His people, to forgive them and lead them. The second movement is in verses 4–7, where he asked how long the Lord's anger would linger as they yearned for divine salvation. The third movement is found in verses 8–18, where the psalmist recalled the greatness of Israel as a flourishing vineyard, but now its glory was being stripped away because of their sin. The psalmist called for the Messiah to raise the vineyard back to its former greatness.

This prayer crafted for a national disaster reminds us that God is in charge, no matter what happens. Our Lord is in control of the events of our lives. We are never helpless victims of circumstances. All that happens to us is filtered through God's love. We can always appeal to God in prayer that the good times be restored.

WARNING Do not reject the commandments of God.

READ

Ezekiel 35

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

The vengeance of God

VERSE 6

Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.

In Chapter 34 God spoke about the time when He would send One Shepherd (Jesus) to gather His people and deliver them from their enemies [Ezekiel 34:23–31]. God would cause the enemies of His church to cease and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. It enlarges on the former promise concerning the destruction of His enemies.

Specifically, the enemy of Israel is Mount Seir or Edom. Edom was hostile towards Israel throughout its history [Ezekiel 25:12]. Edom, together with other nations, had delivered Israel over to its enemies. In Obadiah 1:10–14, Edom was denounced for its betrayal of Israel in time of need. God would punish Edom severely because she did not resist from bloodshed in her hatred of Israel. For that, the Lord would bring unrestrained bloodshed on Edom.

Edom represents the world and mankind in its hostility to the people and kingdom of God. They would persecute, revile, torment and kill God's covenant people. However, God protects His own. The worldly methods, philosophies and powers would become a complete and perpetual devastation before Jesus and His church.

THOUGHT God espouses His people's cause, taking what is done against them as done against Himself.

30 SEPTEMBER

READ

Psalms 81–82

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

LESSON

Open wide

PSALM 81:10

I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

One day, I was thrilled to discover a newly-constructed sparrow's nest in my garden. Four eggs were laid and I waited patiently for the featherless young sparrows with gaping mouths to break out of their shells. I could see their heads bobbing unsteadily with their mouths wide open, expecting the mother sparrow to fill them with food.

The scene reminds me of God's promise to His people in Psalm 81:10. However, the rebellious Israelites ignored God. So He gave them over to their proud and stubborn hearts to follow their own counsel [Psalm 81:12]. If they had trusted and accepted God's offer, He would have fed them with the finest wheat and honey [Psalm 81:16].

Our God bids us to open our mouths wide and He promises to fill them with spiritual food. He will satisfy our spiritual hunger as we study His Word, worship and listen to Sunday sermons, read biblical literature, listen to faithful Bible teachers and depend on Him daily.

If we disobey God's provision, we will suffer spiritual malnutrition and not grow. Therefore, let us open our mouths wide for the Lord to "fill" our needs.

THOUGHT But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:19

