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DAILY *manna*

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GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

We praise God for your perseverance in the reading and study of Holy Scripture. In this quarter, you will cover the history of the first century church (Acts), the grand doctrines of the Christian faith (Romans) and the two longest epistles of Paul (1 and 2 Corinthians). It is certainly our prayer that the daily reading of the Word of God will nourish your soul, encourage your heart, and move you to greater heights of devotion for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me also encourage you to write in with your comments as to how we may improve *Daily Manna* (e-mail: calvary@singnet.com.sg). Parents, we want to remind you that *DM Junior* is also available for your children.

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. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day's Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian's daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the New Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the NT books.

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.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 1

LESSON

Duty to serve

VERSE 8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Forty days after the resurrection of Jesus, He went up to heaven. His Apostles and other followers gathered to listen to Jesus one last time at Mount Olivet. Jesus told them that He would return in the same manner as He had gone up to heaven. The obvious question, if we had been there, would probably be the same as what the disciples asked: “Lord, when will you return?”

Jesus told them that it was not for the people to know the time of His return. It was determined and known only to God the Father. While waiting for His return, He told His followers to witness for Him everywhere. This message is relevant and applicable to us today, too.

Upon their return to Jerusalem (which was a day’s journey on foot), 120 of them, including the Apostles, went to an upper room to pray. It was recorded that they prayed with one accord. Praying is communicating with God.

What do we do after prayer? Jesus instructs us to preach and be witnesses for Him. What do we witness about? Tell others that Jesus came to die for us and that we too would be resurrected, just as He was resurrected. Anyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. We are to look forward to His second coming. He promised that in like manner as He had ascended to heaven, He would surely come again for us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH I
ACTS I

THOUGHT

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season ... – 2 Timothy 4:2

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 2:1–13

LESSON

The privilege to serve

VERSE 4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

How do you preach and witness if there is language barrier? It might be impossible with humans but everything is possible with God. He is our Creator and He can communicate with each of us regardless of the language we speak. God can even understand the dumb and deaf because He looks into our hearts. God, by His grace, sends the Holy Spirit to believers and they all speak in another language (“tongues” were known languages in those days).

Here lies the key difference from other religions. We often hear of people trying to reach their gods. In Christianity, our Almighty God reaches out to us. Jesus [God the Son] came to us and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Which is easier, for man to reach God or for God to reach man?

God does not need our works because He is Almighty. We cannot control the weather, the movement of the earth, calamities, our health and our death. We can do nothing.

By extending to us the privilege to serve, God grants us the means to be obedient to Him. We should count it a joy to have a part to play in the outreach of the Gospel. In order for His disciples to be effective for God, He baptised them with the Holy Spirit. Our baptism may not be dramatic [Acts 2] but the Holy Spirit still dwells in the hearts of those who have accepted Jesus as Saviour.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 2
ACTS 2:1–13

THOUGHT

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. – John 15:5

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 2:14–47***LESSON****United to serve****VERSE 46**

*And they, continuing daily
with one accord in the temple,
and breaking bread from
house to house, did eat their
meat with gladness and
singleness of heart,*

The people who gathered in Jerusalem were all Jews but they had adopted the language and, to some extent, the culture of their host countries. They even had names that were different from those of their ancestors. For this reason, it was not possible to communicate with one another in the gathering. Yet again, whatever is deemed impossible with man is only possible with God.

The most important thing was to preach the Gospel, which Peter did. He spoke in Aramaic, which the people understood. The Holy Spirit came down and enabled them to speak in another language so that they could communicate.

Peter preached that Jesus indeed is the Messiah Who had come to die for us. He was resurrected and ascended to heaven 40 days later. Many had seen these events with their own eyes. Only those who believed in Jesus and repented of their sins would be saved and have the hope of resurrection. They would also ascend to heaven, just as Jesus did. This is the only way to heaven—there is no other way. This was what Peter preached. The message remains the same today, and we are to preach the same message.

The believers then assembled in the temple and their homes to worship God, and to have fellowship with one another. We ought to worship and pray together. Christians ought to love one another and the source of our love is God. When you love God, you will also love whosoever He loves. Do you love your fellow believers?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 3
ACTS 2:14–47

THOUGHT

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. – 1 Peter 3:8

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 3***LESSON****The objective of service****VERSE 6**

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

While Peter and John helped the lame man to walk again, they were quick to let everyone know that the healing came from God and His power. There are two important things to note here.

First, as in those days, there are still many poor, sick and needy people today. Jesus said that there would always be poor people [Matthew 26:11], but we have to get our priorities right. Our main purpose as Christians is to worship God and preach the Gospel. Any other issues or activities are secondary. Heaven is meant for only those who believe and worship Jesus.

We can be fruitless when we over-emphasise our contribution to society, or even to activities of our church, at the expense of the Gospel. All our charitable work comes to nought if those with whom we come into contact do not hear the Gospel. The Great Commission to believers is to preach the Gospel. Jonah did not do anything good for the people of Nineveh except what was in accordance to God's commandment. He preached on repentance. The people of Nineveh, including its king, repented and were saved because of Jonah's proclamation.

Second, take note that both Peter and John did not claim any credit for themselves but gave all glory to God. Why should we feel depressed when nobody appreciates our service or our preaching? We are merely servants. Our reward comes from God. Our objective is to preach the Gospel and magnify His name.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 4
ACTS 3

THOUGHT

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
– 2 Corinthians 4:5

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 4

LESSON

Perseverance in service

VERSE 29

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

Sinful man is naturally self-centred. For this reason, the natural man chooses to do whatever he wants. The Gospel calls for repentance and corrects our focus in life to God. The Gospel runs against our sinful selves. As such, the world will love us if we do not preach the Gospel. Conversely, it does not welcome us if we do.

The Apostles faced obstacles and persecutions. They, together with many others, were thrown into prison, exiled or executed for preaching the Gospel. This is not confined to the apostolic age. Even today, there are certain countries that prohibit the preaching of the Gospel. We are restricted as to whom we can preach. However, God has given us ample opportunities to spread the Good News. We are free to preach to our family members and friends. There are also many people in other lands who are receptive to the Gospel.

When faced with difficulty, the believers in the early church were united, and they prayed together, praying “with one accord”. If we say that we are believers and we all belong to God—that our common destination is heaven—then we should be united too.

We may be discouraged because we want to do things our way and have depended on our own strength. We may not agree with any other approach to matters except that of our own. In situations like these, we will have peace if we can come together and pray, asking God for directions as a church.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 5
ACTS 4

THOUGHT

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. – John 15:19

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 5:1–16***LESSON****Vexed****VERSE 4**

Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Today, we read about the story of Ananias and Sapphira, whom God had struck dead one after another [v. 5, 10], instilling great fear upon the church [v. 11].

What exactly was their sin? It was not because they kept the money that they had earned from selling their land [v. 4]; the discretion was theirs to decide whether to give partially or totally to the church. They were not obliged to sell what they had to give to Peter. Their sin was in giving the church a part of what they had gained yet claiming they had given all. As Peter put across so clearly, they had not lied unto men but unto God by doing so.

The next question is, of course, why should the couple do this? They made two important mistakes. First, they had doubted the power and presence of God. In the words of Peter, they had “agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord”, thinking that God would not know their lies, and even if He did, would not expose and punish the liars. Second, they lied perhaps because they wanted to please men. Wishing to gain the approval of fellow churchgoers yet wanting a part for themselves, they had probably come upon this decision after much struggle.

Unlike Christ’s healing of the multitude that was vexed with unclean spirits [v. 16], Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying to the Holy Spirit.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 6
ACTS 5:1–16

CONSIDERATION**Heed the consequences of vexing the Holy Spirit.**

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 5:17–42***LESSON****Lest haply ye be found
fighting against God****VERSE 39***But if it be of God, ye cannot
overthrow it; lest haply ye be
found even to fight against
God.*

The unbelieving Jews tried to stop the Apostles from teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. They were first thrown into prison but the angel of the Lord came by night to release them [v. 17–24]. They were then interrogated [v. 27–28], to which the Apostles asserted their faith without shame, cutting the hearts of the accusers for their grievous wrongdoing [v. 29–33].

Then came a reputable man called Gamaliel, who asked for their release, quoting incidents of men who propagated their own teachings and eventually came to nought [v. 34–37]. His rationale was simple. If the Apostles' teachings were of men, they would come to nothing as well. But if they were really men of God, then their teachings would stay—and it was not wise to rise against God's messengers [v. 38–39].

The Apostles were eventually released after a beating and a warning. Armed with—and assured by—the truth, the Apostles were glad that they were chosen by God to teach and preach Christ. They were rejoicing when they departed, and continued to share the Gospel thereafter [v. 41–42].

Are you leading a victorious Christian life? Can others see Christ in you? The strength of a Christian lies in his total trust in Christ. When unbelievers look at you, do they want to find out more about Christ? Can seekers see you and marvel, thinking surely God has done great things in you? Can scoffers see you and fear, lest haply they be found fighting against God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 7
ACTS 5:17–42

REMINDER

That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. – 1 Corinthians 1:5–6

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 6***LESSON****By the Spirit****VERSE 10**

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

In Acts 6, we read of the appointment of the first seven deacons in church history [v. 5]. They were chosen to relieve the Apostles of administrative chores so that the latter could focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word [v. 1–4]. With this clear organisation of duties, the church grew both in number and maturity [v. 7].

Among those seven wise men of honest report, we read of Stephen, who was a man full of faith and power, and who did great wonders and miracles among the people [v. 8]. He taught and preached Jesus Christ and was led by the Spirit. No one could resist his wisdom [v. 10]. It was also said that the face of this chosen man of God shone like the face of an angel [v. 15].

It is interesting to note that this same man, who was initially chosen for daily ministration, was actually doing mighty works of the Apostles' capacity. We will read in the next chapter of his sermon and prayers. Man does his part in choosing but God is the One Who uses.

What made Stephen stand out among the chosen seven? He was a man full of faith [v. 5, 8]. By faith, he preached the truth honestly; by faith, he boldly delivered his sermon, and by faith, he obediently endured the stoning by people, even to his death. Because of his faith, this man whose name is found in God's Book of Life is remembered by God and the generations of saints after him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 8
ACTS 6

REMINDER

And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us. – 1 John 3:24

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 7

LESSON

**The same call for
repentance**

VERSE 51

*Ye stiffnecked and
uncircumcised in heart and
ears, ye do always resist the
Holy Ghost: as your fathers
did, so do ye.*

The whole of Acts 7 records the sermon of Stephen. What we read is an account of testimonies from Abraham [v. 1–7] to Joseph [v. 8–17], from Moses [v. 18–43] to David and Solomon [v. 44–47]. What was Stephen trying to tell his people and how are the stories of the Old Testament relevant to us?

Stephen summarised it well in the conclusion of his sermon. God’s children often forget Him—His power and grace. It often slips our minds that God is the Creator of all things, dwells everywhere and thus knows everything [v. 49–50]. Like our fathers, we have often rebelled against Him either in defiance or in ignorance [v. 51–53].

We read that the words of Stephen cut to the hearts of his listeners and they were very angry with him [v. 54]. His claim to have seen Christ made things worse [v. 55–56]. They stoned him to death [v. 57–60]. However, like Christ on the Cross, Stephen submitted obediently to the will of God.

Though he was eventually killed, the words of Stephen resonated in the hearts of the people. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, from John the Baptist to Jesus Christ Himself, from the prophets to the Apostles, the call for repentance is central in God’s doctrines. Because of sin, the whole creation is in pain [Romans 8:22]. Naturally, the duty of Christians is to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins through Christ Jesus [Mark 1:4].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 9
ACTS 7

REMINDER

And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. – Mark 1:15

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 8:1–25***LESSON****From Jerusalem to
Samaria****VERSE 21***Thou hast neither part nor lot
in this matter: for thy heart is
not right in the sight of God.*

One of the most important verses in the Book of Acts is Acts 1:8. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told His disciples that His followers would receive power upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and would become witnesses unto Him both in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and eventually unto the uttermost part of the earth.

However, Jesus did not tell them how this witnessing was going to happen. It is only until Chapter 8 that we see the answer, which is, interestingly, persecution, and in the context, that of Saul.

There are precious lessons for us to learn here. Often, we don't understand the presence of evil in our lives and we always deem 'evil' as destructive and undesirable. Ironically, if we look at church history, Christianity would not have spread as fast if not for persecutions. Some bring the Gospel to other parts of the world when they were forced to leave their comfort zones. Others see an even more urgent need to spread the Good News to the unreached lands in an era of unbelief. But God sees the big picture. He allows evil so that His will can be done.

It is in this manner that God's saving grace reached a sorcerer called Simon [v. 9–24]. What Peter said of Simon is equally applicable to us. God's gift of redemption cannot be purchased with money. Neither is it a privilege by birth. The most important thing is for one's heart to be right in the sight of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 10
ACTS 8:1–25

REMINDER

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. – Romans 1:16

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 8:26–40***LESSON****Just three questions****VERSE 39**

And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

God works in mysterious ways—especially when it comes to salvation. In this passage, we read about the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Holy Spirit prompted Philip to approach the eunuch, who happened to be reading the Book of Isaiah. He was saved after three questions in his heart were answered.

The first question was more of a plea than a question [v. 31]. He wanted to know more but could not, except when someone spiritually mature came to guide him. Upon this request, Philip led him through the book. His second question was about the identity of the prophet preached by Isaiah. He wanted to know who the Saviour was [v. 34]. His third question was how one could be baptised, which Philip answered readily: one just had to believe and confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The eunuch did so and he was saved. It was a happy ending. The most beautiful part of this salvation story is that it was written by God Himself. Philip would not have gone to the desert in Gaza to preach to a single man if not for the prompting of the Holy Spirit [v. 26]. When he had finished the job, he was taken away by the Spirit miraculously [v. 39], as if he did not exist in the first place.

Indeed, salvation is of the LORD. Have you been praying for the salvation of a loved one or a friend? Persevere in your witnessing and leave the rest to God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 11
ACTS 8:26–40

REMINDER

And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. – Matthew 24:31

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 9:1–18***LESSON****Acknowledging Jesus as Lord****VERSE 6**

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

We learn here the miraculous conversion of Saul (later called Paul), from one who persecuted Christians to one who acknowledged Christ as Lord, and zealously serving Him for the rest of his life. If God was able to convert a man who used to be the chief opponent of Christians, to the extent that he wanted all followers of Christ to be killed, we should have the faith and hope in the Lord that He is able to convert any unbeliever today.

“For with God nothing shall be impossible” [Luke 1:37]. Continue to pray for the unsaved souls, pray for God’s mercy and for the Holy Spirit to open up their spiritual eyes so that they may see the truth of the Gospel.

Once Paul personally encountered Christ, his campaign against Jesus was over. He addressed Jesus as his Lord and willingly offered to do whatever his Lord wanted him to do. There was total surrender of his life into the hands of the Lord. He resolved to obey Jesus’ commands.

We ought to learn from the Apostle Paul in his absolute obedience to the Lord’s instructions. If we want to be the Lord’s disciples, we must be dead to our old lives. Like Paul, we must be transformed by the Holy Spirit in order to truly follow Christ. For us to lead a life that is pleasing to the Lord, we need to lead a new life in close relationship with Jesus Christ. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” [2 Corinthians 5:17].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 12
ACTS 9:1–18

QUESTION

Are you willing to be submissive to the Lord’s direction?

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 9:19–43***LESSON****Be bold!****VERSE 29**

And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

Once Paul was converted in Damascus and physically recovered, he started to preach boldly in the synagogues, declaring that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. People were astonished that the man who used to persecute Christ's followers had now become a fervent preacher. Being filled with the Spirit, Paul defended his faith, as he "increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews" [v. 22].

The unbelieving Jews, particularly the Pharisees, were upset over Paul's sudden change of position. They conspired to kill him. God was merciful and helped Paul to escape from the city to save his life.

Paul continued to preach fearlessly in the name of Jesus in Jerusalem, declaring that Jesus is the only Source of salvation. As with Stephen, the Grecian Jews plotted to slay Paul [v. 29]. The brethren knew about the plot and helped Paul to escape to Tarsus, where he carried on with his preaching. Paul knew it was purely by the grace of the Lord that he was saved, and it was also God's divine will to preserve him from trials and persecutions, for he knew his greatest commission was to convert more souls. Paul said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" [Acts 20:24].

As Christ's followers, we must be steadfast in our faith in the Lord and not be afraid of persecution from the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 13
ACTS 9:19–43

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I pray that You will continue to keep my faith in You strong. Preserve me through trials and hardship and deliver me from temptations.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 10:1–23***LESSON****Be ready to follow the will
of the Lord****VERSE 15***And the voice spake unto him
again the second time, What
God hath cleansed, that call
not thou common.*

While Peter was praying, God gave him a vision of abundant food and invited him to eat. It included food that the Jewish law forbade Jews to eat [Leviticus 11]. Peter refused but God assured him nothing was impure if God had made them clean. Just as the vision concluded, three Gentiles arrived at the gate and asked for Peter. God wanted to use the vision to reveal to Peter that he should not see the Gentiles as impure and discriminate against them in his outreach, as God's salvation was for all mankind [Luke 3:6].

There was a great barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles during those days, as they had conflict and differences. But Peter obeyed God's instruction, put aside his personal feelings and went ahead to share the Gospel with the Gentiles.

We see the amazing grace of God at work here. He prepared Cornelius to hear Peter's preaching, and he prepared Peter to go and preach to the Gentiles. Similarly, God sent Philip to explain His Word to the Ethiopian eunuch, and led him to believe in Christ and later baptised him. We ought to be sensitive and discerning to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be ready and willing to witness for the Lord and share the Gospel with unsaved souls.

The parable of the good Samaritan [Luke 10:29–37] teaches us to love our neighbours, who include all people of the world, regardless of nation, cultural differences and race. Let us learn to be like Peter, be bold to go and share our testimonies with others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 14
ACTS 10:1–23

CONSIDERATION

Are you ready to be a channel of blessings to others? Are you willing to surrender your time, remove all the obstacles that hinder you from serving the Lord and be bold to witness for the Lord?

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 10:24–48***LESSON****Accept people of every nation****VERSE 34**

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.

God sends a clear message that He does not show favouritism to any nation. We are reminded not to be prejudiced against any race, culture, social status or wealth, as we have been given the Great Commission by Jesus to “go ye therefore, and teach all nations” [Matthew 28:19]. His Good News of peace is to be shared with everyone. Whoever receives Jesus Christ as personal Saviour will receive eternal life. As His disciples, we should worship and fear the only one and true God, serve Him wholeheartedly and meditate on His Word day and night.

Peter then shared God’s divine plan with the Gentiles [v. 36]. Jesus is a powerful and spirit-filled man [v. 38]. More importantly, He is the Messiah. Peter gave his personal testimony to the crowd at Cornelius’ house, as he and the disciples witnessed the things that Jesus did. They knew Jesus well, and did eat and drink with Him after He had risen from the dead.

The Holy Spirit touched the hearts of the Gentiles as soon as Peter told them that “through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” [v. 43]. The crowd believed immediately after they learnt that accepting Christ was the only way to be saved. They praised God, magnified His name and their hearts rejoiced, as they knew that their sins were forgiven and they were saved.

Salvation blessings come to those who hear, receive, believe and hold fast to the Word—the Gospel message.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 15
ACTS 10:24–48

CHALLENGE

Are you willing to share your testimony and tell others the Good News so that more souls will be saved?

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 11:1–18***LESSON****Sharing the good news****VERSE 14**

*Who shall tell thee words,
whereby thou and all thy
house shall be saved.*

When the Jewish believers heard that Peter had visited Cornelius and eaten with the Gentiles, they criticised him. They were upset with Peter for associating himself with people with “lower moral standard”. Peter, however, was not discouraged. He continued to share with excitement the amazing work of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house.

When the circumcised believers heard the testimony, they, too, rejoiced and gave glory to God. It is heart-warming to see Jewish believers accepting Gentiles as their brethren upon hearing that God had extended the same gift to the Gentiles. The gift of eternal life is for all who chose to believe in the Lord.

God’s will is for us to preach His gospel to every corner of the world. We should not discriminate against people of different cultural and social backgrounds. God called Peter to go and preach to the Gentiles. The same commission is also given to us—to share our testimonies with anyone we come across. We must have the burden for our loved ones who have yet to receive salvation.

This event also teaches us that we should not be offended when our brethren question our deeds. Instead, we should explain our kind intentions and be patient with believers of a different maturity level. But we should refrain from forming our own opinions on the actions of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Be humble and always give them an opportunity to explain. Never judge the behaviour of fellow believers. “Judge not, that ye be not judged” [Matthew 7:1].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 16
ACTS 11:1–18

PRAYER

Dear Lord, 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

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 11:19–30***LESSON****Be willing to be used by
the Lord****VERSE 24***For he was a good man, and
full of the Holy Ghost and of
faith: and much people was
added unto the Lord.*

After Stephen was stoned to death in Jerusalem for his boldness in proclaiming the Gospel, there was further persecution in the city. This forced the Christians out of Jerusalem and into Judea, Samaria and throughout the region. Many were scattered and they went everywhere preaching the Gospel [Acts 8:4]. The persecution actually helped spread the Gospel beyond Jerusalem.

The preaching of God's Word, carried by divine power, went as far as to Antioch. The hand of the Lord was with the believers and they preached aggressively. Many heard the Gospel and believed in Jesus.

Barnabas was sent by the Apostles in Jerusalem to Antioch to help the new church in the teaching of God's Word. He saw the good work of grace going on in the hearts of the people—many were truly converted—and he was glad. Barnabas was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. Barnabas [which means “son of consolation or encouragement”] sold the land he owned and gave the proceeds to the Apostles for them to feed the multitude [Acts 4:37]. He enjoyed serving and witnessing for the Lord. With Barnabas' work in Antioch, many more believed in the Lord.

Do you have the faith of Barnabas? Do you serve the Lord wholeheartedly like Barnabas? Do you bear the fruit of the Spirit? Seek to understand and respond to the spiritual and emotional needs of people around you. Pray for others and be good testimonies for the Lord.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 17
ACTS 11:19-30**

QUESTION

Are you willing to be like Barnabas, willing to be used by God, willing to obey and trust the Lord and be a channel of blessings to others?

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 12***LESSON****God resisteth the proud****VERSE 23**

And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

The Bible contains many examples of how God dealt severely with proud and wicked men of power who dared to blaspheme Him and persecute His people. Some, like King Nebuchadnezzar, came to their senses in time and repented and acknowledged Him as the Almighty “King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgement”. But many others, like Pharaoh, Sennacherib [2 Kings 19] and now King Herod, had to learn the hard way that “those that walk in pride He [God] is able to abase” [Daniel 4:37].

Shortly after coming to power, Herod Agrippa I persecuted the church, executed James and imprisoned Peter with the intention of executing him as well. But, in answer to the prayer of the believers, God intervened and sent His angel to deliver Peter supernaturally.

However, Herod refused to believe this miracle and judged instead that some of the keepers of the prison had conspired to release Peter. He commanded them to be put to death. Then he went down to Caesarea. There, he made an oration to a crowd of flatterers who cried out, “It is the voice of a god, and not a man.” Obviously this proud, wicked king believed the people and he was struck dead immediately.

Pride is a terrible sin that has brought about the downfall of many a man, including believers. May God’s Holy Spirit guard our hearts so that we don’t fall prey to this deadly temptation, especially in this age, where pride is often extolled as a positive trait of the successful.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 18
ACTS 12

REMINDER

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. – 1 Samuel 2:3

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 13:1–13***LESSON****Being sent forth****VERSE 3**

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

This chapter records how the world's first missionaries were called and sent forth by God the Holy Spirit to bring the Gospel to the lost. God first selected men who were up and about, serving in the church. These men "ministered to the Lord and fasted" [v. 2], meaning that they were waiting on the Lord in prayer and demonstrated great desire to know the will of God and share His power.

At the same time, God also made known His will to other men. So every missionary who goes out does not represent himself but the church that loves him, prays for him and supports him. These other prophets and preachers "laid their hands on them" (Barnabas and Saul) and "sent them away".

Like the ordination of deacons [Acts 6], this is part of the root of our present-day ordination services. It was obviously intended that, as the brethren pray over one whom God has called, God will give power, spiritual discernment, faith and other gifts such as He would not have given without prayer. Paul was inspired to write to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" [1 Timothy 4:14].

Ordination does not give a man authority to preach; he already has that authority from God. But ordination ought to mean the endorsement of other good Christians and their earnest prayer for God's blessing upon one for whom they pray and upon whom they lay their hands.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 19
ACTS 13:1–13

REMINDER

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest. – Matthew 9:38

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 13:14–52***LESSON****Declaring all the counsel
of God****VERSE 16***Then Paul stood up, and
beckoning with his hand said,
Men of Israel, and ye that fear
God, give audience.*

In his farewell speech to the Christians at Ephesus in Acts 20:26–27, Paul told them: “I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” This had always been Paul’s approach in preaching the Gospel.

In today’s reading, we see that he did exactly that. As soon as he arrived at Antioch, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Like Stephen before him, he recounted God’s past dealings with Israel and their recurrent ingratitude and folly. He explained the Gospel clearly to them and presented Jesus as the promised Saviour through David and his descendants, and heralded by John the Baptist. He then gave them the invitation to come to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin and be justified before God [v. 38–39].

This is the example that we should all follow. We must help our hearers see their sinful condition and how much they need to come to Christ for forgiveness of sin and for salvation. We must preach how Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures [1 Corinthians 15: 3–4].

Note the response to Paul’s message. While some believed, others rejected. Our duty is simply to sow the seed of the Gospel and leave the outcome to God. Pray that some will believe and that we, like the disciples, may be filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit [v. 52].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 20
ACTS 13:14–52

PRAYER

Lord, grant us the burden and the courage to witness to those around us who so desperately need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 14***LESSON****Speaking boldly in the Lord****VERSE 3**

Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

When our Lord sent out His disciples to spread the Gospel to the Jews [Matthew 10], He warned them to expect persecution and hate. Yet repeatedly, He also told them to “fear not”, and move on to another city whenever their lives were threatened [Matthew 10:23]. Here in Chapter 14 and other chapters of the Book of Acts, we see the Apostles complying with Jesus’ instructions.

At Iconium, many came to believe the Gospel message but the unbelieving Jews stirred up trouble. Upon learning of a plot against their lives, Paul and Barnabas left for Lystra. Here, Paul was stoned after he had preached a message and was left for dead by his aggressors. He was miraculously revived and the team proceeded to Derbe. Later, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, re-visiting the new churches, organising and encouraging the leadership.

We can learn much from the examples of these early missionaries. They did not try to do God’s work with their own methods but were totally obedient to their Master’s instructions. Never did they offer physical resistance to persecution. They relied entirely on God for protection and supernatural intervention. Neither did they become discouraged. They pressed on boldly in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Their boldness did not come from themselves but from God through prayer—their own prayers before they began [Acts 4:29] as well as the prayers of their co-labourers back home.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 21
ACTS 14

REMINDER

The world is against Jesus Christ, but He loves sinners still.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 15***LESSON****Culture shock****VERSE 11**

*But we believe that through
the grace of the Lord Jesus
Christ we shall be saved, even
as they.*

We have seen how God worked among the hearts of the Gentiles. We praise God for opening the door of salvation not just to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. There is now no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the eyes of God because they are all equally saved if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, this is not initially apparent from the standpoint of the early believers. After centuries of immersion in the Mosaic Law, the Jewish culture was vastly different from that of the Gentiles. Unlike their heathen fellowmen, the Jews are, for example, free from idolatry and polygamy. How then can a Jew and a Gentile have fellowship with each other? What are considered acceptable Christian practices, and what are not acceptable?

The Apostles in Jerusalem laid down the guidelines. Since salvation is by faith alone, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Gentile believers are not to be burdened with Jewish laws, particularly those involving circumcision. However, Gentiles should also not take their Christian liberty for granted and offend their Jewish brethren with heathen practices, such as eating food offered to idols, practising sexual immorality, or eating things strangled or containing blood. In this way, both groups of believers can have fellowship with one another without hurting the sensitivities of the other party.

We should also be sensitive to the feelings of our brethren who have grown up in other cultures. Let our conversation be edifying to one another, remembering that we are all equally saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ alone.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 22
ACTS 15

THOUGHT

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. – Romans 3:22–23

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 16:1–24***LESSON****Damsel in distress****VERSE 16**

*And it came to pass, as we
went to prayer, a certain
damsel possessed with a spirit
of divination met us, which
brought her masters much
gain by soothsaying.*

In today's reading, we find the Apostle Paul and his group troubled by a demon-possessed damsel. This girl was used by her masters to gain much money through fortune-telling. The Scriptures specifically warns God's people against relying on or consulting such spirits of divination [Deuteronomy 18:10–12].

What especially grieved Paul was the spirit's proclamation that Paul and his followers were the servants of the Most High God and they would show them the way to salvation. Perhaps due to the tone of the proclamation or the constant repetition of the spirit's proclamation for days, Paul found it necessary to stop the spirit by casting it out of the girl. The spirit left the girl in the same hour and she was released from her sufferings.

Even today, the world is continuously looking for different ways of telling the future. God's warning to avoid these still applies to us. Our God is a jealous God, and He does not share His glory with other 'gods,' least of all the devil. Those who seek these other means will not come to any good, of which King Saul is a good example [1 Chronicles 10:13–14].

Put all your trust in the Lord Jesus. Only God knows our future, and He will take care of us if only we trust in Him. All things work together for good to those who love the Lord, and to them who are the called according to His purpose [Romans 8:28].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 23
ACTS 16:1–24**

THOUGHT

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. – Jeremiah 29:11

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 16:25–40***LESSON****Divine deliverances****VERSE 26**

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

After healing the spirit-possessed girl, Paul and Silas were falsely accused, beaten and finally thrown into prison. Here we read of a few miraculous deliverances, the first being the release of the prisoners from their bonds. Why did God intervene and release the bonds of the prisoners, and no one escaped that night?

Paul and Silas were such testimonies to the grace of God that apparently all the prisoners were convicted of their sins, and perhaps converted. That was the reason why Paul could shout to the keeper of the prison that they were all there. The conversion of the prisoners was perhaps the second divine deliverance that God performed that night.

Finally, God also delivered the keeper of the prison and his family. The Bible was not specific in the details of the conversion of the keeper, except recording that he asked Paul the simple question, "What must I do to be saved?" One thing we can be sure of is that God works in mysterious ways, from causing an earthquake to the loosening of the bonds of prisoners. Upon witnessing these, the heart of the keeper was moved to believing the Gospel.

God is still at work today in the hearts of men. He is in control of the events that unfold every day in the world. From natural disasters to evil acts of men, God can turn every event to work out His divine deliverances and save His people. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 24
ACTS 16:25–40

THOUGHT

God is still on the throne, and He will remember His own.

Though trials may press us and burdens distress us, He never will leave us alone.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 17:1–15***LESSON****Preaching the Gospel in
the synagogue****VERSE 2**

*And Paul, as his manner was,
went in unto them, and three
sabbath days reasoned with
them out of the scriptures,*

Paul usually visited the synagogue whenever he arrived in a particular city. It had become a custom for him, and it is not difficult to understand why. Paul was a Pharisee—a learned Jew—and had trained under Gamaliel in Jerusalem. As such, he was a leader among the Jews, and was recognised as one.

A synagogue would be the natural place to go for him to preach the Gospel. He would also have access to the Scriptures there and the Jews that he spoke to would have knowledge of the same Scriptures, making it easy for him to use it to preach about Jesus.

For three days, Paul was at the synagogue, teaching from the Scriptures and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He reasoned with the Jews and showed them from the Scriptures how Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah, and how He suffered for the sins of the world and rose from the dead in victory over death. It is therefore not surprising that Paul was able to convert many of the devout Greeks and the chief women there.

Like Paul in a synagogue, each of us has our own circles of influence where we are most able to preach the Gospel. It could be at our workplace, our school or our social group. God has prepared us for it and given us the circumstances to share our faith there. All we need to do is to seize the opportunity and boldly share the Gospel. God will do the rest.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 25
ACTS 17:1–15

PRAYER

Lord, grant me the boldness to share the Gospel wherever you have called me to be. Let me be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks the reason for the hope that is in me, with meekness and fear.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 17:16–34***LESSON****God's truth versus men's philosophies****VERSE 18**

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Paul arrived at Athens, the cultural centre of the world at that time, and where learned men from near and far congregated and spent their time doing nothing else but discussing new ideas or philosophies. What “new things” were discussed among these men? Was there a spiritual world? Did the divine exist? These questions might eventually lead to questions about God.

God created man with intelligence, and therefore, he is able to reason and think about these philosophical questions. But without God's revelation of Himself, it is impossible for fallen, sinful man to know the truth, and to know God Himself.

Seeing Paul, a newcomer, preach about God made the Athenians naturally curious. Paul, therefore, had a ready audience. As Paul preached, some mocked, but we also read that some believed. The world today is very much the same as the situation in Athens then. Men are still seeking after new things, and others are seeking to hear new things. Knowledge is a new commodity, and the rush to find new knowledge and publish research papers is never ending.

Heed the words of Solomon that these things are vanity and vexation of spirit. Furthermore, of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. It is better to fear God and do His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 26
ACTS 17:16-34**

THOUGHT

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. – Ecclesiastes 1:9

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 18:1–17***LESSON****Encouragement to go forward****VERSE 10**

For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth, a centre of commerce, wealth and, sadly, wickedness. In Corinth, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, who had a tent-making business. Paul, also a tentmaker, stayed and worked daily with Aquila and Priscilla to earn his living so that he could preach in the synagogue every Sabbath. What a blessing Aquila and Priscilla were to Paul! They became his best and closest friends.

God not only blessed Paul with two new friends but also sent Silas and Timothy from Macedonia to Corinth to reunite with Paul. And their return greatly encouraged Paul [v. 5] that Paul was pressed in his spirit to testify to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

The greatest encouragement of all is the Lord Himself. The Lord spoke to Paul and told him, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.” The Jews tried to oppose Paul but the matter was dismissed [v. 12–17].

We ought to stand for what is right even if we have to stand alone. But it is a whole lot easier to stand against the pressure of opposition if there are people who support, strengthen and stand with us. Friends are great encouragers, though our assurance comes from God. When God comes to you and promises His presence, protection and power, you have every reason to keep on going forward.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 27
ACTS 18:1–17**

REMINDER

Thank God for friends whom He puts in your path and in your life who will encourage you in the work of the Lord.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 18:18–28***LESSON****The kind of people God uses****VERSE 25**

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Paul left Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila and travelled to Ephesus, where he briefly taught in the synagogue and moved on to Jerusalem, and then to Antioch by himself. After some time in Antioch, he visited the churches that he had planted in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia.

In Ephesus, there was a certain Jew named Apollos. He was an educated and eloquent man, well-versed in the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. Apollos had been instructed in the way of the Lord. Being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. Even though Apollos had limited knowledge of the Lord Jesus, it did not stop him from preaching and reaching out to many people. And God saw it fit to use him.

It was as Apollos was teaching in the synagogue that Aquila and Priscilla had the opportunity to hear him speak. They took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Notice what Aquila and Priscilla did and did not do. They opened their hearts and their home to this young preacher. They did not embarrass him in public but privately, lovingly completing his theological picture.

Who in your life have given you encouragement along the way? Who are those who took you under their wings and mentored, equipped and loved you into the faith? Is there someone in your life in whom you have noticed a gift that needs acknowledging and encouraging?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 28
ACTS 18:18-28

CHALLENGE

Just as Aquila and Priscilla did in the life of Apollos, pray and ask God to lead you to someone you can encourage.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 19***LESSON****God's name prevailed****VERSE 20**

*So mightily grew the word of
God and prevailed.*

When Paul returned to Ephesus, he found out that Apollos' converts were baptised through John's baptism of repentance but did not know the meaning of the Cross, the resurrection or the gift of the Holy Spirit. After Paul's instructions, Paul baptised them in the name of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost came upon them.

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly. When the Jews refused to believe, Paul turned to the Gentiles, many of whom believed in Jesus. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. These miracles that God performed through Paul were a confirmation that God was working through him.

What gift did you receive when you put your faith in the Saviour? What has He enabled you to do to further His work on this earth?

Many of the Jews and Greeks in Ephesus worshipped other gods instead of the Living God in the Bible. They had hoped to profit from using Jesus' name to drive out evil spirits, just as Paul did. But their plans backfired and, in turn, caused many to believe in Jesus. Many silversmiths who made idols and charms had their livelihood affected. In an effort to protect their own selfish gains, they prompted a riot and impromptu trial of Paul and Christianity, only to be quelled by the city clerk. God prevailed!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 29
ACTS 19

PRAISE

The message of our Lord is still as powerful as ever. The name of Jesus brings confession, repentance and a radical change in lifestyle as people put their faith in Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 20:1–16***LESSON****Paul's commitment to
shepherding****VERSE 1**

*And after the uproar was
ceased, Paul called unto him
the disciples, and embraced
them, and departed for to go
into Macedonia.*

Paul lived in an era where there were no airplanes, cars or paved highways. Neither were there telephones, e-mail or other modern tools for communications. To see or speak to someone afar, one had to walk, travel by boat or ride on donkeys, which were slow, tiresome and sometimes even dangerous.

Today's text gives us a glimpse of Paul's travels after the uproar caused by Demetrius had ceased. After touring Macedonia and the regions beyond, Paul proceeded to Greece, where he stayed for three months. Being aware of a plot to kill him, Paul turned inland and headed for Macedonia instead of taking a boat bound for Syria. He then journeyed northwards to Philippi, and then Troas. From Troas, Paul travelled by foot to Assos, sailed down the coast of Asia Minor to Mitylene, Chios, Samos and Trogyllium in succession, coming finally to Miletus, an important city south of Ephesus.

The purpose of Paul's travels was to strengthen and establish the local churches through fellowship, worship and instruction of God's Word. He was committed to train godly leaders for these churches who could, in turn, train others. Paul also collected contributions from the Gentile churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem [1 Corinthians 16:1–8], as a means of unifying Jewish and Gentile believers.

Undeterred by hardship, opposition and threats to his life, Paul was committed to shepherding the local churches for Christ. Do you know how you can have an impact on the world for Christ?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 30
ACTS 20:1–16**

PRAYER

Pray for your pastors and leaders in the mission fields that God will use them to make a difference for Christ in the world.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 20:17–38***LESSON****The responsibilities of
church elders****VERSE 28**

*Take heed therefore unto
yourselves, and to all the flock,
over the which the Holy Ghost
hath made you overseers, to
feed the church of God, which
he hath purchased with his
own blood.*

On his way to Jerusalem, Paul stopped at the port of Miletus, 30 miles from Ephesus. Paul sent for the Ephesian elders so he could speak to them. We will look at Paul's message to the Ephesian elders with regard to their responsibilities.

Paul states the duties of an elder [v. 28–30]. First, an elder has to watch over himself, to take heed to his own spiritual health and fellowship with Christ. Second, the elder is to shepherd the flock. As a shepherd, the elder should value the church because the church is God's flock, and God has entrusted it to his care. The church belongs neither to the congregation nor to the elders. Finally, the elder—also as a shepherd—should provide for the church's spiritual nourishment by teaching them the truth found in God's Word. The elder must warn against error and should protect God's flock from savage wolves that will not spare the flock.

Paul commended the elders to God [v. 32] by saying that the Word of God's grace is able to build them up spiritually and give them a spiritual inheritance. We need to believe that in spite of all our inadequacies, God can use us and bless our efforts if only we centre our ministry upon His Word and look to Him to bless it as a means of grace.

As members of the church, we must uphold our elders and leaders in prayer and support, for the furtherance of God's Kingdom.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 31
ACTS 20:17-38**

THOUGHT

We must not put our trust in ourselves but in God's Word as the instrument of God's grace.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 21:1–26***LESSON****Self-will or God's will?****VERSE 14**

And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

The Apostle Paul ministered to the Gentile nations with great success in his third missionary journey and he gave God all the glory [v. 19]. Led by the Holy Spirit, the Christians in Tyre urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem [v. 4] but he would not be deterred from serving the Lord. Agabus, a prophet from Judaea, used an object lesson of Paul's girdle to warn him about the impending bonds and afflictions awaiting him in Jerusalem [v. 10–11]. He was the prophet who predicted a universal famine in Antioch [Acts 11:27–28].

The Caesarean Christians also tried to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem but he was determined to do so as he was “ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” [v. 13]. He was zealous and ready to devote his entire life to the service of his Lord and Master.

Realising that Paul “would not be persuaded”, the Christian community commended their friend to the protection of God, confident that whatever should occur would be right according to the will of the Lord.

Paul counted it an honour to be permitted to suffer like Christ, which is indeed fellowship with the Lord Himself [Philippians 3:10]. It is true that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” [2 Timothy 3:12]. The Apostle Peter rightly pointed out that Christians are called upon to suffer for the right reason [1 Peter 4:15–16].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 32
ACTS 21:1–26

THOUGHT**Submit to the Lord's will, come what may.**

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 21:27–40***LESSON****The higher hands of God****VERSE 28**

*Crying out, Men of Israel, help:
This is the man, that teacheth
all men every where against
the people, and the law, and
this place: and further brought
Greeks also into the temple,
and hath polluted this holy
place.*

It was customary for the Jews to undergo a purification ritual when they return from Gentile lands. Paul complied with James and the Jerusalem elders to do so with four other men to “fulfil all righteousness” for the sake of peace and harmony. This compromise from the will of the Lord to the earthly wisdom of men did not reconcile the situation. Paul was careful not to cause unrest but his efforts were in vain.

Paul’s missionary success met with hostilities from the Jews of Asia Minor, who falsely accused him of false doctrines and practices contrary to the Mosaic Law. They incited the people to riot, claiming that Paul had brought Greeks to defile the Temple. These troublemakers were outsiders—Asian Jews who were attending the feast of Pentecost, not the Jews of Jerusalem. They twisted the truth of Paul’s teachings to turn the mob against him. They accused him of three charges: turning the world against Jews; claiming that the Mosaic Law was not binding; and polluting the Temple.

The Temple is a place of safety, yet Paul was in danger of losing his life at the hands of the incensed mob. Our sovereign Lord used the Roman soldiers to protect His servant for a higher purpose to reach out to those in royalty. God is in control of the situation to preserve the life of Paul.

Higher hands are leading me,
Higher hands are leading me.
I am not alone I know,
As I walk this world below,
For higher hands are leading me.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 33
ACTS 21:27–40

THOUGHT**Walk by faith, not by sight.**

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 22

LESSON

Pride and prejudice

VERSE 21

*And he said unto me, Depart:
for I will send thee far hence
unto the Gentiles.*

Paul the persecutor of Christians was now persecuted by his fellow men. He started on his self-defence in great respect of his tormentors, addressing them as brothers and fathers. Proud of his Jewish heritage, Paul told them that he was a true Jew from the renowned city of Tarsus, and educated by the revered rabbi, Gamaliel. He was transformed from a zealous Jewish persecutor of Christianity to its most ardent preacher. He stressed his profoundly orthodox position within Judaism, emphasising that he once had acted towards Christians exactly as they were acting towards him now.

The multitude listened intently and patiently to Paul when he spoke in their dialect but they were enraged when he mentioned the Gentiles [v. 21]. It was contrary to their national prejudice that God would favour Gentiles. They would have killed Paul as quickly as they did Stephen [Acts 7:57] but for the presence and protection of the Roman officer.

The crowd could not bear to hear this divine mission, as nothing was more offensive and provoking to them than to hear of the calling of the Gentiles who should be deprived of all blessings. Salvation of the Gentiles at once produced an explosion of frantic rage that was manifested in uncontrolled fury.

The Jews sought to put Jesus to death when He declared the salvation of the Gentiles in His own synagogue at Nazareth. The infant church went through many struggles before it would receive Gentiles without circumcision.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 34

ACTS 22

THANKSGIVING

Salvation is for all, regardless of cultural and social background.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 23:1–22***LESSON****God's comforting
presence****VERSE 11**

*And the night following the
Lord stood by him, and said,
Be of good cheer, Paul: for as
thou hast testified of me in
Jerusalem, so must thou bear
witness also at Rome.*

Paul was now facing trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council that comprises the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Both groups had different political and religious views but were now united against Paul and his doctrine. He started by declaring his clear conscience before God and man [v. 1], which infuriated Ananias the high priest so much that he ordered those nearest to Paul to strike him in the mouth for blasphemy. Though Paul rebuked Ananias for his hypocrisy, he also acknowledged his position and authority.

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels and spirits [v. 8] whereas the Sadducees did not. Paul wisely caused a faction between these two groups of religious leaders when he identified himself as a Pharisee. The dissension was so intense that he was in danger of losing his life. The Roman soldiers once again intervened to protect Paul from the Jews by escorting him away from the incensed mob [v. 10].

More than 40 Jewish zealots made a solemn vow not to eat or drink until Paul was killed [v. 12–13]. Paul's nephew heard the plot and relayed the message to Paul and the Roman officer. This was indeed God's providential hand at work to protect His faithful servant.

How comforting to hear the words of our Lord to Paul [v. 11] to cheer him up, prepare him for further trials and encourage him. This shows the love and concern of Christ as He assured Paul that he would testify of Him in Rome as well.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 35
ACTS 23:1–22

MEDITATION

**Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for
you. – 1 Peter 5:7**

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 23:23–35

LESSON

God works in mysterious ways

VERSE 27

This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

The fact that Paul was a Roman citizen saved his life more than once. This privilege gave him the right of a proper trial and protection of the Roman army. The chief captain, Claudius Lysias, could not understand the exact nature of the charges against Paul but he knew it had something to do with the Jewish religious law. He was satisfied that Paul did not deserve death or imprisonment, yet did not release him but delivered him into the hands of Felix, the governor of Caesarea.

Lysias wrote a letter of explanation, claiming full credit of having rescued Paul because he was a Roman citizen. He had heard that the Jews were plotting to kill Paul while in custody and therefore was sending him to Felix and told the accusers that they could go there to accuse Paul before Felix.

God set in motion the human events to take Paul to Rome to fulfil His ultimate purpose for His chosen vessel to bear witness to the Gentile rulers and kings [Acts 9:15]. Jesus prepared the disciples likewise: “But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them” [Mark 13:9].

God never moves without purpose or plan
When trying His servant and moulding a man.
Give thanks to the Lord though your testing seems long;
In darkness He giveth a song.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 36
ACTS 23:23–35

THOUGHT

Submit to His perfect will.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 24***LESSON****God for us****VERSE 21**

Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

Ananiah the high priest and a strong deputation of Jews lost no time in going to Caesarea to accuse Paul before the Roman governor, Felix. They brought along an orator, Tertullus, who attempted to ingratiate himself with the governor with words of flattery.

This professional prosecutor falsely accused Paul of three charges: a political charge of sedition or treason (which was a capital offence against the Roman government); a religious charge that Paul was the ringleader of the rebellious Nazarene sect; and a final charge of profanity of the Temple in Jerusalem. All the members of the Sanhedrin concurred with Tertullus.

Paul denied the first and third charges but admitted his involvement in the work of Christ. He declared the actual reason for their hostility was the fact that he worshipped God in a way they called heresy. The Jews were inflamed against him only because of his proclamation of the resurrection. Note that Paul's defence was three-fold: his life, his faith and his service to his nation. Felix perceived that Paul had done nothing wrong to warrant Roman punishment but he kept him under house arrest to please the Jews. Prison was the safest place for Paul, who was guided by the higher hands of God to bear witness for Him in Rome.

In their private conversations, Paul made Felix and his Jewish wife, Drusilla, uncomfortable as he talked about justice, self-control and future judgement. Felix even trembled with fear and guilt though he did not fully believe the message of the Gospel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 37
ACTS 24

MEDITATION

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? – Romans 8:31

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 25:1–12***LESSON****God decides our affairs****VERSE 11**

For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

With the change of governor from Felix to Festus, the Jewish leaders sensed a new opportunity to kill the Apostle Paul. They asked Festus to bring him to Jerusalem to stand trial for his ‘crimes’. In fact, they intended to ambush him en route. Festus refused.

Paul was to defend himself in Caesarea instead. However, favouritism takes the blindfold off justice. Instead of declaring Paul innocent, Festus asked whether he would like to continue the trial in Jerusalem. Paul knew God’s plan for him: “The Lord stood by him, and said, be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” [Acts 23:11]. Paul knew what he must do now—by filing a motion of his own. He asked Festus to transfer his case to the capital of the Roman Empire to be heard by Caesar himself!

Paul held his ground and maintained his innocence throughout his imprisonment and trials because he knew the Lord was directing his path. God was certainly with him when he stood before Governor Festus. God was leading His messenger to Rome, in His own way and in His own time.

It is amazing how often we fret and fume, yearning for an outcome we desire. But long before any external events unfold, our Lord has already determined the outcome. It is God Who makes the decisions—in Paul’s life and in ours. God is providentially directing our affairs.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 38
ACTS 25:1–12

THOUGHT

Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers. – Sidlow Baxter

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 25:13–27***LESSON****Pomp and fanfare are short-lived****VERSE 23**

And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

King Agrippa and Queen Bernice called on the new governor Festus in Caesarea. When Festus told him about the prisoner Paul, Agrippa was eager to hear him, just like King Herod had wanted to hear Jesus—not to believe in him but to be entertained by him. Here came Agrippa who was curious about a man who was so hated by the Jews.

The next day, Agrippa and Bernice entered the auditorium in “great pomp”. They were in fine clothing, and possibly attended by a retinue of servants. What an ostentatious display of power, personal wealth and showmanship. In contrast, there was no glitter associated with Paul. He did not have an impressive outward appearance but he was full of grace. Paul entered the palace in chains. But the Holy Spirit was with him, filling him with wisdom and confidence.

The pomp of Agrippa and Bernice was outshone by the glory of the poor prisoner. What was the honour of their fine appearance compared with that of Paul’s courage and constancy in suffering for Christ? In the midst of all the pomp and pageantry, remember who is on trial here. Festus, Agrippa, Bernice and the Jewish leaders were really the ones on trial before the God whom Paul preached.

The pomp of this world will pass away. Where are the Agrippas, Bernices, Festuses and Caesars of today? Yes, they dressed in purple and lived luxurious lives. But their days of fantasy are long gone, and their day of judgement will soon be coming.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JEREMIAH 39
ACTS 25:13–27

THOUGHT

Unless we rely on God’s power within us, we will yield to the pressures around us.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 26***LESSON****Paul makes an evangelistic appeal to Agrippa****VERSE 27**

King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

When Paul had finished preaching to the regal crowd, he made an evangelistic appeal to King Agrippa. He asked: “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?” Agrippa claimed to be an authority on Jewish affairs. Paul wanted him to answer if he believed in the Scriptures. If he did, he must acknowledge so. “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” [v. 28]. Agrippa’s answer was not a confession that he was nearly convicted by the Gospel but rather an attempt to lessen the effect of the appeal. Do not forget, King Agrippa was a politician. In essence, he was saying, “Paul, do you think in such a short time, after such a brief message, you can persuade me to become a Christian?” Always the politician, he did not commit to anything.

But Paul would not let him off the hook. Paul replied: “I pray that all who listen to me will be like me, a Christian, believing in Jesus.” This is bold, evangelistic preaching by a poor prisoner standing in the midst of great pomp.

But the hearts that beat beneath the royal robes were too involved in worldly pursuits to seriously entertain the Gospel of Jesus. “And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them” [v. 30]. They left the auditorium, thus putting a stop to Paul’s preaching. Tragically, neither Agrippa nor his team ever believed Paul’s message.

“Believest thou?” What is your answer to Paul’s question?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 40
ACTS 26

THOUGHT

A person who has a firm trust in God is powerful in His power, wise by His wisdom, happy by His happiness. – Addison

BIBLE LESSON

Acts 27

LESSON

Julius heard and responded

VERSE 31

Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

The Apostle Paul was aboard a ship heading towards Rome. The ship was tossing in a raging storm, in danger of sinking. The sailors in the doomed vessel planned to sneak away in the lifeboat. They had decided to leave Julius, the Roman soldiers, the prisoners and other passengers to fend for themselves. But God revealed their escape plan to Paul, who then spoke to Julius: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Paul was saying, "If the sailors go, you and your soldiers will surely die!"

Julius listened to Paul and told his soldiers to act immediately. The men cut the ropes and the lifeboat fell into the sea. The centurion had learnt during this rough journey to trust Paul, whose words had the authority of God in them. Just like Julius, when we finally understand that we are hearing the Word of God, we must act in response to His Word.

There are activities in our life that must be cut off, too. The lifeboat looked promising and it might have saved the lives of some. But God, in that circumstance, had the intention that all would be saved. Julius had heard and responded to the will of God, just like we must learn to do so.

God, Who has promised to save our lives, makes His promise on the condition that we make use of every means He has put in our power to help ourselves. While we are using these means, we can expect God's full cooperation.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 41
ACTS 27

THOUGHT

God watches out for His own and He will lead us through life's storms.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 28:1–15***LESSON****A mercy ministry in
Malta****VERSE 8***And it came to pass, that the
father of Publius lay sick of a
fever and of a bloody flux: to
whom Paul entered in, and
prayed, and laid his hands on
him, and healed him.*

Paul and the shipwrecked survivors landed on the island of Malta. The natives kindly took them in. Paul was busy starting a fire when a viper fastened itself to his hand. The islanders witnessed Paul being bitten by the poisonous snake, which they thought would certainly kill him. They waited for him to die. But Paul suffered no harm. So the natives changed their mind about Paul from being a “murderer” to being a “god”.

Paul received an official welcome by Publius, the chief official of the island. Publius’ father was “sick of a fever and of a bloody flux”. Paul went to his bedside. Before laying hands on the sick man, he prayed aloud, thus showing the islanders as explicitly as possible the true source of the healing power. The islanders, finding the power of God in their midst, were not slow in seeking it for their afflicted bodies. People stood in line to receive the power of God. Paul laid hands on them as the Spirit led him, and they were healed.

At that point in time, Malta was brought into unprecedented health. The power of God was authenticated, as was the ministry of Paul. The natives of Malta were grateful for the mercy ministry of Paul. They furnished his party with supplies they needed for the next leg of their journey to Rome.

Likewise, we should not be afraid of “events” that seem to block God’s leading in our lives, for He will always see us through.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 42
ACTS 28:1–15

THOUGHT

From the magnificent palace of Governor Festus to the remotest hamlet of Malta, the name and power of Jesus were fully proclaimed.

BIBLE LESSON*Acts 28:16–31***LESSON****Happiness in chains****VERSE 20**

For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

It is easy to forget that when the Apostle Paul was in Caesarea standing trial, on a doomed ship sailing for Rome, and on Malta healing the islanders for two months, he was in chains. Chains on his ankles restricted his steps when he walked and chains on his wrists restricted the movement of his hands. But he said he wore “this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel”.

Paul could have spent his time in self-pity and complaint—but he did not. Instead, he spent his time encouraging others, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” [Philippians 4:4]. How could the Apostle be happy in his chains? He looked at the past with thanksgiving to God, and he looked at the present and future with confidence in God.

We may not be physically bound but most of us wear “chains” of varying sizes and lengths—our failing health, an unhappy marriage, disobedient children, job pressure and financial struggles. We can look at our past with misgiving or thanksgiving. We can see our present and future with fear or confidence. We can rely on our own strength, or we can rely on the strength of the Lord.

There is no better advice for people who are “in chains” than to take their eyes off themselves and fasten them on the Lord. Whatever our challenges are in life, we do not have to face them alone if we trust God. We just need to get closer to Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 43
ACTS 28:16–31**

THOUGHT

The Apostle Paul was not self-confident as much as he was God-confident; he looked for the good in all things.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 1:1–16***LESSON****Unashamed of Christ****VERSE 16**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Martin Luther, in the preface to his commentary on Romans, wrote, “This Epistle is the chief book of the New Testament, the purest gospel. It deserves not only to be known word for word by every Christian, but to be the subject of his meditation day by day.” Luther also spoke of it as “a light and way into the whole Scriptures”.

Paul is an apostle to the Gentiles. Here he immediately identifies himself as a “servant of the Lord”. He regards himself as the purchased possession of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. He pledges his utmost loyalty to Jesus with great consciousness. To him, it is the greatest privilege and honour to be associated with the One Who had saved him and loved him.

Moreover, he counts it his greatest joy to be called into the service of the Lord. He is indeed Jesus’ specially chosen servant and is given the right and authority to preach the message of the Gospel [Acts 9:15; Galatians 1:12]. This good news centres on the Person of Jesus Christ, Who is both God and Man. It is no wonder that Paul was so keen to present these wonderful truths to the conscience of his readers and hearers.

May you also discover the beauty of the Person of our Saviour so that you may enjoy being called unto Him for a special relationship and fellowship as well. And more than that, you will not be ashamed to share this good news with the people around you.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 44
ROMANS 1:1–16**

PRAYER

Gracious Lord, show me the beauty of Christ so that I may reflect Him in this dark world of sin.

BIBLE LESSON

Romans 1:17–32

LESSON

**Receiving of God's
righteousness in God's
way**

VERSE 17

*For therein is the righteousness
of God revealed from faith to
faith: as it is written, The just
shall live by faith.*

The Gospel that Paul preached was able to bring people into a special relationship with God. Because man has offended God and is thus out of sync with Him, there is therefore a need to mend this rift through what God Himself has provided. The salvation that God offers is in keeping with His own righteous character. And it is by the act of one's faith in Him that he will receive the righteousness of God. As a result, he will have a good standing before the holy God.

Unfortunately, man in his self-conceited heart refuses the free offer of God but instead seek to further provoke God with his wayward behaviour. Although he is aware of the existence of the Creator, he chooses to change the unseen God into an image of a beast. Thus, he perverts the reality and veracity of God into a lie, which further belittles Him Who is the very truth.

Consequently, this act of rebellion by man exposes him to the judgement of God. As he has deliberately shown irreverence and ungratefulness towards God, God will respond with harsh measures to bring him to submission and repentance. If these fail, then man will only have to bear the wrath of God upon his own head.

May the gracious God strike fear into our hearts so that we don't allow such a rebellious attitude to remain in us, lest we provoke Him to anger. But rather, we should learn to submit to Him and acknowledge that He is truly God and therefore deserving of our utmost effort in service.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 45
ROMANS 1:17-32**

PRAYER

O Lord, thank You for saving my soul.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 2:1–16***LESSON****The richness of God's
goodness****VERSE 4***Or despisest thou the riches of
his goodness and forbearance
and longsuffering; not knowing
that the goodness of God
leadeth thee to repentance?*

The Jews had received and enjoyed the benefits of God's special revelation through the Old Testament. This was a very special favour from God to them, which He had not bestowed upon any other nation. But sadly, the Jews remained hardened in their hearts towards God in refusing to obey Him. They had become so judgemental and self-righteous in condemning others when they themselves were just as guilty before the all-knowing God.

We are reminded of the words of Jesus, Who spoke so plainly of those who rejected and despised His ministry, "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgement, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell."

Today, as you are given another day to live, be thankful that it is a bonus from God. It is only because of His abundant grace and mercy that you are able to enjoy another breath of your life. It is never our entitlement or is it our privilege but God's kindness, which He freely bestows on us undeserving sinners.

Remember to give thanks to God and live each day well for His glory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 46
ROMANS 2:1–16

PRAYER

Lord, may I never frustrate Your grace and mercies but respond to You appropriately.

BIBLE LESSON

Romans 2:17–29

LESSON

We are either stepping stones or stumbling blocks to the world

VERSE 24

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

When an individual is blessed with much truth, he is also responsible to keep and live it. Such was the expectation of God for the Jewish people, who had the privilege of receiving the oracles. Outwardly, they seemed to be fulfilling their duties in their teaching, preaching, guiding and instructing of those who are young and ignorant of the Law. Such were the Pharisees and scribes in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ. While they put the heavy burden of the Law on men’s shoulders, they themselves did not move them with one of their fingers [Matthew 23:3–4].

The example of King David is very evident of this truth [2 Samuel 12], where the prophet Nathan fearlessly rebuked him for his adulterous act and the forthcoming judgement of God. Why these harsh words? He explained: “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” [2 Samuel 12:14a]. There is a great evil in those who profess to know God and yet through their hypocrisy furnish believers with matters of reproach and blasphemy.

The unbelieving world is not interested in who and what we profess to believe but they are watching how we live our lives. Don’t give them any legitimate reason to point an accusing finger at God. When we fail and sin, they blame God for our inconsistencies. Therefore, our actions speak louder than our words.

With God’s help, let us live before this crowd of witnesses like we should live before God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 47
ROMANS 2:17–29

PRAYER

O Lord, help me to live a consistent and a consecrated life before You, as I am the light to the world, to lead them to You.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 3***LESSON**

**Christ is the only solution
to the world's greatest
problem**

VERSE 24

*Being justified freely by his
grace through the redemption
that is in Christ Jesus.*

The greatest problem with the world is the problem of man's sinful nature. Through it, it has resulted in a topsy-turvy world of violence and crime of all types and in all shapes. The problem of sin [v. 23] is not just a crime against man. It is a high crime against the Almighty God.

The influential Christian preacher and author John Piper pointed out, "Sinning is always a valuing of something in the world more than God. It's a belittling of his glory. It's a dishonouring of his name." It is like the fall of Humpty Dumpty from the wall and all the king's men cannot fix it.

As such, there is no one who is capable of salvaging man's lost condition but God Himself, the key question being: "How can a righteous God save an unrighteous man and still remain righteous in doing so?" [v. 26]. God can righteously judge a sinner because this is what His justice demands. But for God to justify and acquit a sinner without compromising His own righteousness requires Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus Christ has to be punished in our place, as our Substitute, so that we can be acquitted.

We should thank God for the way He justifies sinners like us. He pronounces us righteous and treats us as if we have never committed any sin. All our sins are gone and forever wiped out, not merely forgiven. We are righteous in Christ. What a thought!

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 48
ROMANS 3**

PRAYER

**O righteous Father, I thank You for Your
redeeming grace through the death of Your
beloved Son, Jesus Christ.**

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 4***LESSON****Believing faith leads to
God's righteousness****VERSE 3**

*For what saith the scripture?
Abraham believed God, and
it was counted unto him for
righteousness.*

Both Abraham and David are set forth as examples of an important theological truth: justification by faith alone. The Jews regarded Abraham as their greatest patriarch, while David was their greatest king. They set Abraham up as the supreme example of salvation by works. Paul, on the contrary, taught that Abraham was saved by faith alone.

Abraham lived 600 years before the Old Covenant was established through Moses. He therefore lived long before the Law was given and obviously could not have been saved by obeying it. Paul, quoting Genesis 15:6, declared: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Abraham believed God and, on that basis, his belief was counted to him by God as righteousness. He trusted God to give him a land he had never seen. It was in response to Abraham's faith in God that it was credited to him as righteousness.

In David's case, he discovered the only way to true happiness and true holiness was without works. He realised he could do nothing to restore Bathsheba's chastity and Uriah's life. What could he do to restore his own lost innocence? Nothing! His case was hopeless. But then God stepped in and cancelled David's sin through sovereign grace freely given and counted him righteous.

May your eyes be opened to the truth of God's Word that salvation is never by works. It is always and only by faith in Jesus Christ.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 49
ROMANS 4**

PRAYER

O Lord, give me believing faith so that I can embrace Your offer for the forgiveness of all my sins.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 5***LESSON****Holy Spirit and the love
of God****VERSE 5**

*And hope maketh not
ashamed; because the love
of God is shed abroad in our
hearts by the Holy Ghost
which is given unto us.*

Paul, in this chapter, proceeds to observe the blessed effects of justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ: peace with God, joyous hope of eternal glory and salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, known and enjoyed only to believers. The foundation on which it stands is the love of God, appearing in the death of Christ, which is also the source and spring of it. He likewise gives an illustration of this benefit by comparing the two heads, Adam and Christ.

The love of God spoken here is shed abroad in the believer's heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him. Nothing but the Holy Spirit can disclose to us the love of God at the very first. Many read and hear of the love of God and yet do not comprehend it. It is the Holy Spirit coming to the believer who takes the things of Christ and therein shows to a believer the love of the Father. The Holy Spirit shows thus the wonder, extent, height, depth, length and breadth of the love of God in Christ.

The love of God is shed abroad or poured forth in our hearts. Like oil poured into a vessel, the Holy Spirit can penetrate, pervade, fill and possess our whole being with the wonderful, infinite love of God in Christ.

Do you know the love of God? It is poured forth into your heart when you believe. If so, then shouldn't you be lovely or lovable in your nature?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 50
ROMANS 5

THOUGHT

The Holy Spirit brings the love of God to us and brings us to the love of God.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 6***LESSON****Our union with Christ****VERSE 12**

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

Paul, now having asserted and proved the great doctrine of justification by faith, refuted the charge brought against it as a licentious doctrine, and prevented any abuse that might be made of it by men of evil minds. With cogency of argument, he stressed on the absolute necessity of sanctification and a holy life, as the inseparable fruit and companion of justification. Indeed, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

Sin, as a raging and commanding king, has the sinner's heart for its throne; the members of the body for its service; the world, the flesh and the devil for its grand council; the lusts and temptations for its armoury; and ignorance, sensuality and fleshly reasonings for its fortification. Death, the punishment of sin, is the end of the work, though not the end of the worker (Preacher's Homiletic commentary).

Christ once lived under the curse of sin and in a body over which death ruled. However, He died and arose from the dead. By dying once, He has escaped forever from the curse of sin and death, the result of sin. God raised His Son to a deathless life, living a life devoted to God. God gave Christ to us for the purpose of uniting us to Him so that we may share Christ's death and life.

We therefore infer that the purpose of our union with Christ in death is to free us from the service of sin, and our union with Christ in life to set us in active devotion and service to God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 51
ROMANS 6

THOUGHT

Christ's death was a death for sin and to sin.

BIBLE LESSON

Romans 7

LESSON

Two natures in one man

VERSE 23

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Paul discusses the freedom of justified and regenerated persons from the Law, and the use and excellence of nature. He removes several objections to it and gives an account from his own experience of the struggle and conflict between the flesh and the spirit in a regenerate person. He shows that though believers are justified from sin, yet still sin remains in them, and is the complaint of their souls.

Paul finds himself of two natures: one carnal and the other, spiritual. He mourns that the carnal man so often gains mastery over the spiritual. How wondrously strange! Two natures beat within one breast: one is foul and the other blessed.

The spiritual man delights in the law of God but the carnal man desires to be fed with the filth of the world. The saint in us sets out to spend time in holy exercise but no sooner does he start that an inexplicable sluggishness or negative force within him rises to stifle it. It neutralises his desire, paralyses his effort and reduces his willing spirit to inaction. How true this is in the experience of every believer. These unseen conflicts are very real and severe.

But thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, His death redeems us from the guilt of sin. His Spirit rescues us from sin's dominion and we are kept unto the very end.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 52
ROMANS 7

THOUGHT

By the sin of Adam I am what I am; by the grace of God I am what I am.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 8***LESSON****More than conquerors****VERSE 37**

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

This chapter showcases many grand foundational doctrines of the Christian faith, furnishing believers with unspeakable privileges, which they have the utmost reason to rejoice and be glad. Not only are they free from the guilt of sin, believers are also secured from the punishment of eternal condemnation through the grace of God.

Amidst this fallen world of disappointment, misery, sorrow, suffering and especially death, can believers be more than conquerors? Those are more than conquerors who conquer with little loss. Many conquests are dearly bought. But what do the suffering saints lose? They lose that which the gold loses in the furnace—nothing but the dross. The patient and longsuffering Job testified: “But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” [Job 23:10].

It is no great loss to lose those things that are earthly. Those are more than conquerors who conquer with great gain. The spoils are exceedingly rich—glory, honour and peace, a crown of righteousness that fades not away. In this, the suffering saints have triumphed. Not only have we not been separated from the love of Christ but we have also been taken into the most sensible endearments and embraces of it (Matthew Henry).

Many of God’s people have, accordingly, found this chapter a wellspring of comfort to their souls, living or dying. They drank and have been satisfied from these fountains of consolation. Patiently bearing trials, we are not only conquerors but also more than conquerors.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS I
ROMANS 8

THOUGHT

We are conquerors by virtue of our interest in Christ’s victory.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 9***LESSON****Building and resting on
Christ****VERSE 33**

*As it is written, Behold, I lay
in Sion a stumblingstone and
rock of offence: and whosoever
believeth on him shall not be
ashamed.*

Paul now proceeds to discuss predestination, the source and spring of all the blessings of grace. He bids his readers to observe how this distinguishing act of God's sovereign will has taken place, both among Jews and Gentiles. Notwithstanding this, he knows that he would run contrary to the sense of his countrymen, the Jews, who believe that all Israel should have a part in or inherit the world to come—with the Gentiles excluded.

Nothing was more disagreeable to them than talk of their rejection of God and the calling of the Gentiles. In quoting the Prophet's metaphorical language to show why the Jews failed to attain to the principle of justification, Paul brings together parts of two different prophecies, both relating to the same subject, and concurring to make up the view of which he presents. The first part is taken from Isaiah 8:14 and the second from Isaiah 28:16, both alluding to the coming Messiah, Christ Jesus. All who believe in Him shall not be ashamed of their faith or have their hopes disappointed.

A foundation stone must not only rest in its place but should also afford a resting place to the stones it supports. Christ the cornerstone affords a sweet resting place to the lively stones of redeemed humanity. He imparts gracious content. The soul that rests on Christ is full of divine peace and repose.

Discontentment and restlessness pervade the heart as long as Christ is absent. We must build on Christ, and in Christ, and up to Christ until we see Him face to face.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 2
ROMANS 9

HYMN

**On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.**

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 10***LESSON****In our hearts and on our lips****VERSE 8**

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

In this chapter, the Apostle Paul discourses on two kinds of righteousness and the difference between them, namely, that of the Law and of faith, that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. But in the justification and acceptance with God, the Gospel sets them both on the same level. He gives a summary of the Gospel of Christ, a description of the grace of faith, in the nature, use, and means of it, and several testimonies concerning the calling of the Gentiles.

The obvious point of this verse is that the knowledge of the will of God has been made very easily accessible. The Apostle's objective is to make people see that they need not go up to heaven or go down to Sheol to find Christ. No one is required to do what is impossible. It is neither hidden nor afar off but close at hand because He—the Word whom they preach—is very near them, in their hearts and on their lips, if they would but believe and embrace it.

Today, men can explore the marvellous heights and depths, and travel along pathways that the vulture's eye cannot see but have not discovered the treasure of eternal life. The eye of the scientist has not seen it in the depths nor does the philosopher discover it in the heights of life.

You who heard the Gospel and received it ought to show it to those around you who are still searching for it.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 3
ROMANS 10**

THOUGHT

Is not the Word nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of faith?

BIBLE LESSON
Romans 11:1–12

LESSON

**Are you a provoker to
 spiritual jealousy?**

VERSE 11

*I say then, Have they stumbled
 that they should fall? God
 forbid: but rather through
 their fall salvation is come
 unto the Gentiles, for to
 provoke them to jealousy.*

The Jews are God’s chosen people, “an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” [Deuteronomy 7:6]. For this reason, the Jews thought they were specially favoured of God. From the beginning of Romans, Paul had rebuked their arrogance, telling them that without Christ, there was no profit in their religious heritage [Romans 3:1].

However, Paul reminded the Gentiles that it would be equally foolish if they thought that God had disowned the Jews. “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew” [v. 2]. Paul asked rhetorically: “Have [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid” [v. 11]. God will not allow the Jews to be eternally doomed.

It is God’s plan that through the Jews’ rejection of the Messiah, “salvation is come unto the Gentiles” [v. 11], a rejection that brought upon the Jews God’s judgement even as it brought the Gospel into Gentile lands. Now, through the Gentiles, the Jews may come to know of the spiritual blessings that have escaped them because of their unbelief. In that sense, the Gentiles are God’s instruments to provoke and to draw the Jews back to Himself.

Likewise, for Christians, we ought to be alive and full of the virtues of Christ that our love for one another will cause unbelievers to ponder about the Christ that is absent from their lives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 4
ROMANS 11:1–12

QUESTION

If your life a testimony for Christ?

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 11:13–36***LESSON****Israel shall be saved****VERSE 28**

*As concerning the gospel, they
are enemies for your sakes: but
as touching the election, they
are beloved for the fathers'
sakes.*

This second half of the chapter likens the Jews to cut-off branches of the natural olive tree. Because of their unbelief, they were cut off, and God in His kindness and grace offered the gift to the Gentiles to enjoy the spiritual blessings from the natural root. This is proof of the grace of God. Paul had earlier affirmed, “Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also” [Romans 3:29; 9:24].

The future of Israel is mentioned as a warning to Gentile believers not to be “wise in (their) own conceits” [v. 25]. God had made a covenant with Israel and He would never renege on His word [Psalm 89:34–35].

Paul said that Israel’s spiritual blindness would end [v. 25] and “all Israel shall be saved” [v. 26]. Paul did not mean that every Jew who has ever lived would be saved but that the elect Jews would be saved. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” [Zechariah 12:10a].

This is the amazing grace of God for His people, not because of what they have done but in spite of what they have done. God’s grace that prompts Paul to sing out: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God....For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” [Romans 11:33–36].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LAMENTATIONS 5
ROMANS 11:13–36

HYMN

**Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my
God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a
wretch like me!**

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 12***LESSON****The elements of our
commitment****VERSE 2**

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Paul now talks about the elements of commitment and the fruits thereof. He considers the basis of commitment, the character, the demands of this commitment and, finally, its effects. The basis of Christian commitment is the mercies of God. Sinful man was radically lost but likewise radically brought back to the fold. Paul is not asking for our favour but merely stating our obligation [v. 1].

We are to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. That is the total and reasonable characteristics of our commitment. This means that all disciples—laity and leaders—of Christ should not have the mindset that God requires us to be holy some of the time or even most of the time. God wants us to be holy all of the time. There is no shortfall in God's expectations for us.

The demands of commitment are twofold: negative demand ("be not conformed to this world"), and positive demand, ("be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"). There are numerous distractions in today's world to draw our minds and faith away. We have to watch and pray. The demand "be ye transformed", written in the passive imperative, is a command for us to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. The present tense of the verb shows that it is a gradual but continuous process of transformation.

Once we accomplish these, we can then bear the fruits thereof. We will be able to live at peace with the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL I
ROMANS 12

QUESTION

What distractions of the world should I remove from my mind today?

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 13***LESSON****Paying tribute to God****VERSE 14**

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

The first part of this chapter calls on Christians to fulfil their obligations as citizens of the land: to pay taxes, obey the laws and honour the civic leaders. Paul made no distinction between good and bad governments. He was living under the Roman government, which was well-known for its severe justice. Yet never once did Paul call for the overthrow of the Romans. Paul lived and ministered within the constraints of Roman law.

Paul calls on Christians to obey secular governments. The person who rebels against the government is rebelling against that which God has instituted. Paul said that the government is “the minister of God to thee for good...Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake” [v. 4–5].

The primary responsibility of the government is to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. If we abide by its laws, there is no need for us to fear the government. Of course, it is implied that if the government fails in this task, then the government is to be rejected.

In the second half of this chapter, Paul applies this to our relationship with the community at large. “Owe no man any thing...love one another...love thy neighbour as thyself” [v. 8–10]. Paul’s list is not exhaustive. However, the underlying principle is: “The day is at hand” [v. 12]. Therefore, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” [v. 14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 2
ROMANS 13

THOUGHT

Live each day in the light of what we shall be in eternity.

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 14***LESSON****Receiving one another****VERSE 15**

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

The Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians have different cultural norms. For example, Jews would not eat meat prepared by Gentiles for fear that the meat was not clean. Jews favour observing special holy days. Gentiles, on the other hand, have no such reservations. The issue here is one's liberty. How far can one go to exercise the liberty that we have in Christ? Are Christians free to do anything? Or are there limits? If there are, where are the lines drawn?

Paul is not saying that Christians are free to do anything, including committing sin. He was speaking of the exercise of our liberty in matters that are morally neutral. In those areas, we are free to exercise our liberty. However, we must consider believers who may not share our convictions.

So Paul prescribes the following. Receive one another [v. 1]; despise not [v. 3]; do not be overly judgemental [v. 4]; be persuaded of your own convictions [v. 5]; live not for man's approval but for God's glory [v. 8]; do not let the exercise of our liberty stumble another person [v. 13]; pursue peace and edify one another [v. 19].

A spiritually mature Christian always considers how his actions and attitudes will affect another person. There may be activities that are perfectly legitimate but in exercising our liberty to engage in them, we must also consider that in some situations, it is better for the conscience of another, for the peace between God's people and for the glory of God not to exercise that liberty.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 3
ROMANS 14

THOUGHT

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. – Galatians 5:13

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 15***LESSON****Striving to preach the Gospel****VERSE 20**

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

Stronger Christians are called—and expected—to—support weaker Christians. Just as Christ has accepted us, we too must accept our weaker brethren. We should not judge one another but be humble, accepting and forgiving. Only then can we glorify God with one heart. This is especially relevant in a community where different races and cultures live. Paul exhorts, “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” [v. 7].

Paul, in a sense, was a citizen of the world for the Gospel’s sake. He was a Jew but he was first a “minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles” [v. 16a] according to the will of God [Acts 13:47]. Paul would stop at nothing to preach the Gospel [Acts 20:24]. He testified to the Galatians that he bore in his body “the marks of the Lord Jesus” [Galatians 6:17].

Paul “strived to preach the gospel” [v. 20], not in the sense that he had to overcome obstacles or to work against his own inclinations so as to preach the Gospel but in his earnest desire and spiritual ambition. To preach the Gospel was his life. He had told the Corinthians, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” [1 Corinthians 9:16b].

Paul’s ambition is seen in his willingness to pioneer into regions that had never heard the Gospel. Such is the heart of a true missionary. It should also be the heart of every Christian.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 4
ROMANS 15

QUESTION

What is your spiritual ambition?

BIBLE LESSON*Romans 16***LESSON****Laying down our necks
for Christ****VERSE 4**

*Who have for my life laid
down their own necks: unto
whom not only I give thanks,
but also all the churches of the
Gentiles.*

As usual, Paul ends his epistle with salutations. He acknowledged those who had laboured with him, among whom was a husband-and-wife team, Priscilla and Aquila [v. 3]. They were Jews living in Rome before they were expelled by a decree from Claudius [Acts 18:2]. Paul and this godly couple met in Corinth, and they struck up an unbreakable bond of love.

They were bound by their love for Christ and the Gospel, a love that was expressed in the willingness of Priscilla and Aquila to lay down their necks for Paul. To lay down one's neck is to lay the head on a block waiting for the executioner's sword to fall. This does not mean that Priscilla and Aquila really lost their heads but that they were not afraid to put their lives in harm's way for the sake of the Gospel.

What a blessing this must be for Paul! This is an encouraging conclusion to a book that begins with the grand doctrines of the Christian faith. The work of the Gospel is larger than any one person. Paul was surrounded by a host of willing Christians.

As long as our Lord Jesus tarries in His return, the work of the Gospel must also extend beyond the present generation to the next. In this last chapter of Romans, we have a list of names that we have never seen before. The cause of Christ will continue as long as there are future generations of leaders like Priscilla and Aquila.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 5
ROMANS 16

QUESTION

Are you willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of the Gospel?

BIBLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 1

LESSON

Called to be saints

VERSE 2

*Unto the church of God
which is at Corinth, to them
that are sanctified in Christ
Jesus, called to be saints,
with all that in every place
call upon the name of Jesus
Christ our Lord, both theirs
and ours.*

The situation in the church at Corinth was serious. The Apostle Paul had to deal with the situation in a Christ-like manner and, as a result, the name of Jesus Christ occurs at least 10 times in the first 10 verses. Too often, churches have to deal with difficult situations by means of a rulebook and in the spirit of human justice, relying on their own wisdom and power. However, Paul teaches us something important here. He sought to deal with the difficult situation in the light of the Cross of Christ and His love.

Although many vices and corruptions—both of doctrine and of manners—had crept into this church, there were certain marks still remaining that presented the church at Corinth as a true church of Christ. It is a dangerous temptation to think that a church without perfect purity is not considered one. Any person with such a view must necessarily in the end withdraw from all others and look upon himself as the only saint in the world.

Being a saint, a person is set apart for God. The Christian has been consecrated to God by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to be one for whom Christ died, to know it, and to realise that this perfect sacrifice has made one right with God.

If a person has been marked out as specially belonging to God, he must show himself to be fit in life and in character for this privilege.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 6
I CORINTHIANS I

THOUGHT

The Christian is called into a community whose boundaries include all earth and all heaven. It is beyond our own little circle and is part of the Church of God, which is as wide as the world.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 2

LESSON

True wisdom

VERSE 6

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought.

So far, Paul has been talking about Christ and Him crucified, yet he goes on to teach not only the facts but also the significance of the truths. Paul said that this was done among those who are mature [perfect].

There are, as it were, two stages. To those who have just become Christians, we talk about the basic elements of Christianity. When they are a little more mature, we give them deeper teaching about what these basic facts mean. The tragedy that so often happens is for a Christian to be contented with remaining at the elementary stage when they should be going on diligently to discover what the Bible teaches and to think things out for themselves.

This special teaching is not the product of the intellectual activity of men but the gift of God, and it came into the world with Jesus Christ. All our discoveries are not what our minds have found out as much as what God has deemed fit to tell us. A mystery in the Bible is something whose meaning is hidden until God decides to reveal its truth to us.

This by no means frees us from the responsibility of human effort. Only the student who works can prove himself fit to receive the real riches of the mind of the Great Teacher. This is true with God and with us. The more we strive to understand, the more God tells us. And there is no limit to this process because the riches of God are unsearchable.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 7
I CORINTHIANS 2

THOUGHT

When the kingdom of God is revealed, let the wisdom of this world retire, and what is transient give place to what is eternal.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 3

LESSON

Becoming fools to be wise

VERSE 18

Let no man deceive himself.

If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

The Church, comprising saints from the past and the present, can be viewed as the temple of God because the Holy Spirit dwells in them. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” [v. 16] Hence, we are most of all God’s temple when we prepare ourselves to receive the Holy Spirit. But if we introduce dissension and division into the fellowship of the Church, we destroy the temple of God.

The root cause of dissension and the breakdown of the Church is the worship of worldly wisdom, the intellect and self. It is by these that many of us, like the Corinthians, judge the worth of our brethren.

An intellectually proud person is one who is always in dispute. He cannot keep silent and admire; he must talk and criticise. He cannot bear to have his opinions challenged; he must prove that he is right. He is never humble enough to learn; he must always have the last word. This is a path that leads to destruction.

The way to true wisdom is for a person to sink his opinion of himself to a low level and be willing to be taught of God. He must become a fool who would be truly and thoroughly wise. The person who resigns his own understanding that he may follow the instruction of God is on the way to true and everlasting wisdom. “The meek will He guide in judgement; and the meek will He teach His way” [Psalm 25:9].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 8
I CORINTHIANS 3

THOUGHT

He who knows not and doesn’t know that he knows not is a fool; avoid him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not is a wise man; teach him.

BIBLE LESSON*1 Corinthians 4***LESSON****Let God be the Judge****VERSE 5**

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Paul cautions us against prejudging others—the froward and severe judging of others. Paul did not mean to reprove every kind of judgement without exception but only what was hasty and rash, without examination of the facts. The Corinthians did not examine fairly the character of each individual but were instead blinded by ambition, groundlessly praising one person and criticising another. They took upon themselves to mark out the dignity of each individual beyond what was fair and reasonable.

The Word of God offers the best set of rules by which we can judge people. Judging rightly, and not judging more highly of them than is fit, is one way to prevent quarrel and contention in the Church, as well as society at large. Pride commonly lies at the bottom of these quarrels. Self-conceit contributes very much to the way we look down on others.

To think modestly of ourselves and to not exaggerate the qualities of those we admire is the most effective way to settle disputes. After all, we are all instruments employed by God in His husbandry and building, and endowed by Him with our various talents and qualifications.

We need to realise that this world is sinful. Yet, in this age of ours, matters are never so well-regulated. Many things are involved in darkness, yet there is never so much light. Things that remain in obscurity result in confusion. We need to see that God is the One Who illumines. Until the thoughts of the hearts are brought to light, there will always be darkness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 9
I CORINTHIANS 4

THOUGHT

We should be very careful how we censure others. Others may not lie open to our notice but we lie open to God, and when He comes to judge, every man shall have praise of God.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 5

LESSON

**In the world but not of
the world**

VERSE 10

*Yet not altogether with the
fornicators of this world,
or with the covetous,
or extortioners, or with
idolaters; for then must ye
needs go out of the world.*

It would appear that Paul was referring to a letter that was lost. Indeed, it is possible that there were other letters of the Apostles that had gone missing. Yet, we have lost nothing by it, the Christian revelation being entire in these books of Scripture that have come down to us, which are all that were intended by God for the general use of Christians. Being sovereign, God has preserved those books only for us.

In the earlier letter, Paul had urged the Corinthians to avoid the society of all evil people. He had meant for it to apply only to members of the Church. The wicked must be disciplined by being excommunicated from the fellowship of the Church until they mend their ways.

But some of the Corinthians had taken this to be an absolute prohibition of liaison with the secular world, and this could only take place if they withdrew themselves from the world altogether. In this world, it would have been impossible to carry on a normal life at all without associating in the ordinary everyday affairs with those whose lives the Church would utterly condemn.

Christianity is not designed to drive us out of the world. We are to live among people righteously. Our Lord and Master mixed freely among men. By doing so, we have many opportunities of witnessing for Christ when we come in contact with the world. However, we must recognise the peril of such association with ungodly and unregenerate people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 10
I CORINTHIANS 5

THOUGHT

**Let God, Who alone knows the hearts of men,
be the Judge of those outside the kingdom of
God. The man within God's kingdom has special
privileges and therefore special responsibilities;
as a man who has taken an oath to Christ.**

BIBLE LESSON*1 Corinthians 6***LESSON****Our bodies belong to God****VERSE 13**

Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

The Apostle Paul mentioned a long list of the types of sinful conduct of the unrighteous [v. 9–11] that some Corinthian Christians had indulged in before their conversion. He followed up with five powerful statements about the body before concluding, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” [v. 20]. He warned against using the body for fornication.

Paul’s second point has to do with the destiny of the body [v. 14]. God, Who raised up Jesus, shall in due time also quicken our mortal bodies for eternal glory. Christ is the Head of the body—the Church [Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:18] and church unity is summarised by reference to “one body, and one Spirit” [Ephesians 4:4]. All believers are baptised into this spiritual body.

Since the Christian’s body belongs to God, he must not unite his body sexually to that of a prostitute [v. 16]. Paul insisted that the believer “joined unto the Lord is one spirit” [v. 17]. The believer has entered into an intimate relationship with the Lord and the Spirit of Christ dwells in him. Therefore Paul commands, “Flee fornication” [v. 18a].

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you” [v. 19a]. The Corinthian Christians knew this truth [Acts 2:38]. The Holy Spirit given by God indwells the Christian. Thus the only thing required of a Christian is glorifying and serving God with his body.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 11
1 CORINTHIANS 6

THOUGHT

Read Titus 2:11–12.

BIBLE LESSON*1 Corinthians 7***LESSON****Marriage and prayer****VERSE 5**

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Marriage was divinely instituted by God. The perfect marriage is a uniting of three parties: a man, a woman and God. During the wedding ceremony, the pastor would solemnly and reverently declare after the vows are said, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” [Matthew 19:6b]. The secret of marital bliss is to let God take His rightful place in the home. A home that puts Christ first and is bathed in prayer never falls apart.

Some believers in Corinth thought that spiritual Christians should abstain from sexual relations in marriage. Paul corrected them and instructed married couples not to “defraud one another”. Abstinence should be mutual and temporary. Both husband and wife are to agree to give themselves to a special time of fasting and intensive prayer. After such urgent spiritual needs have been met, both husband and wife are to “come together again”.

Paul also stressed on monogamy. “... let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” [v. 2]. Both husband and wife are to meet each other’s sexual needs.

Paul makes it clear that physical relations within marriage is not simply a privilege and a pleasure but a responsibility as well. To “defraud one another” too long will “tempt” the couple to expose themselves to Satan’s temptations. In Christian homes today, worship and prayer is woven into the fabric of our lives with time given to studies, work, marriage, family, church and even recreation.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 12
I CORINTHIANS 7**

THOUGHT

A family that prays together stays together.

BIBLE LESSON*1 Corinthians 8***LESSON****Only one God****VERSE 6**

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Christians trust, worship and serve the only living true God Who is the sovereign creator, ruler of the world and all-governing God the Father [Genesis 2:4, 7]. The Bible teaches us that there is one true God and one true Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. The living and true God has revealed Himself to His covenant people as Jehovah, the self-existent, Almighty, immutable, eternal, faithful and supreme God.

The words “Our Father which art in heaven” [Matthew 6:9] reveals God as Father in two ways—as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [John 1:14; 5:17] and as the Father of all who believe in Jesus [John 1:12]. In teaching us to start our prayer with “Our Father”, Jesus has given us a new revelation of God, One Who is loving, friendly, companionable and approachable.

“Jesus is the Son of God” implies a belief in God. God the Father created all of us. God the Son has redeemed us. He is anointed with the Spirit of God to the end that He may bestow that Spirit upon men. In his sermon at the first Pentecost, Peter said, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this Jesus, whom ye crucified, Lord as well as Christ.”

If Jesus is Lord, we must call upon Him for what we need. Paul makes it clear that there is only one true God. He also shows that the only way to know and worship Him is through our Lord Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 13
I CORINTHIANS 8

PRAYER

Lord, with Paul we rejoice that there is one true God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Source of life and all good things.

BIBLE LESSON**1 Corinthians 9****LESSON****Inner necessity****VERSE 16**

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

A part from Jesus Christ, Paul is the greatest missionary sent by God to the world. The impact his life and ministry has on the entire world is simply incalculable and beyond any words to express. Paul tells us the imperious necessity that was laid upon him [v. 16]. After Jesus had converted Paul on the Damascus road, it became his supreme passion to preach the Gospel. He was aware of the call of God.

Paul gloried in the Gospel and did not boast of his commitment to or ability in preaching it. For him, Jesus stood at the centre of things. The love of Christ controlled every activity and constrained him to live no longer for himself but only for Christ [2 Corinthians 5:14–15].

Paul was a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name before the Jews and, more particularly, the Gentiles. He who was willing to die for his own people had to live for the Gentiles. He gave himself at once entirely to his holy work [Acts 9:6]. He regarded it as woeful if he did not do it. He did not receive any payment for his preaching but a stewardship. He argued that the privilege of preaching was his primary reward [v. 18].

Are you prepared to follow the example of Paul? Although we shall never reach his missionary accomplishments, we can go by God's grace and serve Him as faithfully as Paul did. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel."

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 14
1 CORINTHIANS 9

THOUGHT

Witnessing for Christ is bringing hope to hopeless people.

BIBLE LESSON
1 Corinthians 10

LESSON

Temptation and escape

VERSE 13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Paul gives a strong word of encouragement about God's help when we are tempted [v. 13], the first portion of which reads: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Every Christian will face temptation. Being tempted is not a sin in itself. It is something we will face simply by virtue of being human. If we resist it in God's power, it is a test that eventually proves our faithfulness. If we do not resist it, it becomes a solicitation to sin. Temptation is common to all of us.

"But God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" [1 Corinthians 10:13]. God promises every Christian that He never allows us to go through temptations more than what we can bear. We can rely on the faithfulness of God [1 Corinthians 1:9]. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" [Revelation 3:10b].

When our faithfulness is tested, we have God's own faithfulness as our resource. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" [1 Thessalonians 5:24]. He will do what He has promised.

The closing portion of today's verse says, "But will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" [2 Peter 2:9a]. Along with temptation will come the way of escape. Paul says that when we are beset by temptation, we are to flee to the Deliverer. Be active in the Lord's work.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 15
1 CORINTHIANS 10

PRAYER

Lord, help us to resist temptation and stay away from the path of sin.

BIBLE LESSON
1 Corinthians 11

LESSON
**Followers and imitators
of Christ**

VERSE I
*Be ye followers of me, even
as I also am of Christ.*

Paul is a faithful servant of Christ. To all of us who have any desire to serve our Saviour, Paul points to his undying passion for souls and says, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” [v. 1]. Paul was so confident and successful in his Christian living in general and in the responsible use of his Christian liberties in particular because he was an imitator of Christ.

If we are to be worthy followers of Christ, we should emulate His love, His humility and His sufferings. That “God is love” [1 John 4:8] makes all the difference in our lives. It causes us to love others [1 John 4:11]. We are told to “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” [Ephesians 5:2].

Jesus is the perfect example of obedience and humility. “Learn of Me,” says Jesus, “for I am meek and lowly in heart” [Matthew 11:29]. The greatest act of humility in the history of the universe is when Jesus died on the Cross at Calvary. To have humility, we must follow the example of Christ.

We are to follow Christ in His sufferings, too. The Bible is full of instances that exhort us to do this [1 Peter 2:21]. We are told that if we experience sufferings, we should rejoice, “inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings” [1 Peter 4:13a]. Suffering for the sake of Christ is part of a Christian’s calling [Philippians 1:29].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 16
I CORINTHIANS 11

THOUGHT

If our Christianity is to be more than a name, we must be, like the Apostle Paul, imitators of Christ.

BIBLE LESSON
1 Corinthians 12

LESSON
Unity and diversity

VERSE 14
For the body is not one member, but many.

David wrote, “I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” [Psalm 139:14a]. Do you ever consider the human body and how it works? God has established the human body in many parts and in a manner so that all its parts need one another. Paul wants us to think of the Church as a human body, each of us an indispensable member of the body. Even if we were to lose a seemingly insignificant part, the effect it has on the whole body can be traumatic.

God has fashioned us to carry on Jesus’ ministry with Him present in us by the Holy Spirit. It is this same Spirit that enables us with gifts for our ministry. The Holy Spirit gives witness to the fact that God is alive and is establishing His kingdom.

Are you sitting in the pew and avoiding fellowship? Individualism is when we look at our brothers and sisters in Christ and say, “I do not need you for my Christian walk. It is only Jesus and me, thank you.” We should not isolate ourselves in our imagined superiority, nor should we draw ourselves away in our supposed inadequacy. We are all in this together. If one suffers, all will suffer. If one rejoices, all will rejoice.

Each one of us is a member of the living body of Christ. This is by God’s doing and design and not our own. Each of us has been gifted to be a particular part in the body of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 17
I CORINTHIANS 12

THOUGHT

None of us can do everything, but all of us can do something!

BIBLE LESSON
1 Corinthians 13

LESSON
Learn to love

VERSE 4

*Charity suffereth long, and
is kind; charity envieth not;
charity vaunteth not itself,
is not puffed up.*

Our home is the perfect place to practise patience and kindness. We are given opportunities every day to practise true and biblical love. Be more understanding and tolerant of the flaws in your family members. Look for ways to be kind. Show consideration for their needs. Think deliberately about the impact that your actions can have on them. Make it a point to say kind things. Express love and appreciation for one another.

Practise love in the church, where we so often have unrealistic expectations and frequently take one another for granted. We are in the process of growth. We must be patient with others just as we would want others to be patient with us. We have to consider the needs of others above our own. We must continually encourage and build one another up.

We must also take this love into the world. As we love others, people find themselves attracted to our Lord Jesus, Who loves through us. Kind words, a wave, a kind hello, a sincere hug, a sincere thank you to someone who is often taken for granted are simple acts of kindness that can lighten a load, enrich a life and open the door to the grace of God.

Learn to love and this door of grace will not only be opened to others but also be opened more fully to you. It is not enough to learn about love; we must also put it into practice. And today is as good a day as any to begin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 18
I CORINTHIANS 13

THOUGHT

Love enriches the giver as much as it does the recipient.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 14:1–25

LESSON

Ministering to people

VERSE 3

*But he that prophesieth
speaketh unto men
to edification, and
exhortation, and comfort.*

The gift of prophesying is not merely for the prediction of the future. It is used to explain and expound on God’s Word as well as applied to the daily struggles of life, so that men can see what is happening in their lives as what God wills them to be.

It teaches us to be who we are in Christ. We learn to empathise, put ourselves in the place of others and understand the pressures they face so we can encourage them, knowing how they feel. You have once been there, and God is now working it out with them as He has previously worked it out with you.

Let Scripture become second nature to you. Be humble, teachable and accountable, and stay away from the fruits of the wrong tree—envy, jealousy, criticism, pride and negativity. Real prophecy brings life, encouragement, hope, love and joy, and draws us closer to the Father. Therefore, you must choose to eat from the tree of life, which will cause life to flow out of you and many will eat from the fruit of it.

Prophecy is a tool of service to bless others. God is interested in healing and touching the heart of the person who stands in front of you. Because of that person, He will anoint you and channel His grace through you. Never take for granted the undeserved privilege of touching someone’s heart. Let love be the foundation of your ministry.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 19

I CORINTHIANS 14:1–25

THOUGHT

Prophesying is not merely about “giving words” to people but is about sharing the Father’s heart with them and introducing His Kingdom into their lives.

BIBLE LESSON

I Corinthians 14:26–40

LESSON

True worshippers

VERSE 40

*Let all things be done
decently and in order.*

The fact that the Bible speaks of “true worshippers” naturally implies that there are “false worshippers”. What then is the difference between true worshippers and false worshippers? Can we apply this to our corporate worship?

Our worship of God is part of our walk with Him. We must set our worship in order, just as God commands us to set our lives in order. We must be willing to look diligently at God’s Word and answer the question, “What is acceptable worship in God’s eyes?”

We should be reverent in our worship. We should treat Bible study with a sense of responsibility to encourage and teach others. We should treat prayer with an attitude of love for others and thankfulness towards God. We should treat hymn singing with a desire to teach and encourage one another, rather than to simply go through the words. We should be present every time the church meets. We should be early and be ready to worship on time.

Any worship designed without the benefit of authority and restraint of God’s specific Word is patently false. Will you be among the true worshippers? If so, then take charge of the worship you bring to God when you meet in solemn assembly. Bring an offering according to his Word alone. Then you will be named among those whom God desires—the true worshippers.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 20

I CORINTHIANS 14:26–40

THOUGHT

God is not to be dishonoured, nor His worship disgraced, by our unbecoming and disorderly performance of it and attendance at it.

BIBLE LESSON
1 Corinthians 15

LESSON
**Working faithfully
 regardless**

VERSE 58

*Therefore, my beloved
 brethren, be ye stedfast,
 unmoveable, always
 abounding in the work of the
 Lord, forasmuch as ye know
 that your labour is not in vain
 in the Lord.*

Have you ever felt that you are ineffective in what you are doing for the Lord? Or that your church is at a standstill? Many Christians do feel weary after sharing the Good News for years. They go through spiritual highs and lows.

Sometimes we get excited and want to consume every ounce of information that we can about God. Other times we get discouraged and don't feel like we can accomplish anything. Sometimes we look around the church and it seems like there is little being done. Instead of being productive, we just get tired of caring; we fold our arms and just comment on how bad things have become.

A Christian who is ineffective in God's service is Satan's 'favourite' kind of Christian. But discouragement does come in our service for the Lord. It is a common human failing. But don't give up or let it be an excuse for complacency. Don't let Satan get the best of you. God is the One Who causes things to grow. We are God's servants and we have been called to work diligently and strive to serve God to the best of our ability.

Paul, too, had many frustrations—over the immorality of the Corinthians, the ignorance of the Galatians and the abuse of the grace of God by the Romans. Yet he continued to serve ungrudgingly. We are called to be faithful until the end, regardless of what difficulties we are facing. Let us do our part!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 21
1 CORINTHIANS 15

THOUGHT

We are called to be faithful, in season and out of season.

BIBLE LESSON
1 Corinthians 16

LESSON
Opportunities

VERSE 9

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

When we speak of a door, what comes to our mind is an entrance to somewhere. In life, we come across many doors but we only need a particular kind of door: the one that Paul calls a “great and effectual door”. Such is an entrance to a great opportunity. We are actually looking for a door of opportunity.

God uses doors to guide us in the course of our life and service for Him. Many come in the form of opportunities that He puts before us. New homes being built in our neighbourhoods is an opportunity for us to reach out to more people—a type of door. However, not every opportunity is an open door. God still wants us to use our discernment and wisdom in the choices we make. Sometimes an open door is really a temptation. Sometimes the right thing to do involves walking through a narrower door.

We have to exercise our God-given discretion to choose correctly. Don’t choose foolishly. “Answer not a fool according to his folly” [Proverbs 26:4a] is followed by “Answer a fool according to his folly” [Proverbs 26:5a]. What is a person supposed to do when questioned by a fool then? Practise discernment!

We need to grow in our Christian walk knowing which of the many and different counsels of God are applicable in any given moment. We need to discern the source of the doors that are opened up and courageously accept the direction of God into new pastures so that we can do God’s will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 22
1 CORINTHIANS 16

THOUGHT

I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. – John 10:9

BIBLE LESSON
2 Corinthians 1

LESSON
Prayer helpers

VERSE 11

*Ye also helping together by
 prayer for us, that for the
 gift bestowed upon us by the
 means of many persons thanks
 may be given by many on our
 behalf.*

In his second missionary journey to Corinth, Paul stayed for 18 months [Acts 18:11]. After his departure, there was an exchange of letters between Paul and the Corinthians, of which we have two. In the first letter, Paul dealt with the practical issues of the Church. The tone and content of his second epistle is theological.

On a more personal side, Paul, working under the threat of imprisonment and even death, began by listing his sufferings for Christ. He said that the sufferings of Christ abounded in him and his companions [v. 5]. They were afflicted [v. 6], pressed beyond measure and despaired even of life [v. 8], and had the sentence of death [v. 9].

But Paul also said that even “as the sufferings of Christ abound in (them), so their consolation also aboundeth by Christ” [v. 5]. How did he do it? Paul knew God to be the Father of mercies and comfort. He wrote with confidence that God “will yet deliver us” [v. 10]. The other consolation that Paul experienced is the prayer of believers [v. 11].

Paul had a team of prayer warriors in his ministry. The Bible records the frontline soldiers who travelled with Paul—Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and Luke, among others. But supporting from the home front are those who continually prayed for and with Paul and his team. Paul said that their prayer was the reason that the gift was bestowed upon them. This was what sustained Paul in his ministry.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 23
2 CORINTHIANS 1

THOUGHT

Pray with and for your pastor. Communion with God and the continuous prayer of His people are the most powerful tools for those who are engaged in the front-line ministry.

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 2***LESSON****Denying Satan his victory****VERSE 11**

*Lest Satan should get an
advantage of us: for we are not
ignorant of his devices.*

This chapter is the follow-up of an event that Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 5. A member of the Corinthian church had committed fornication with his stepmother [1 Corinthians 5:1]. At first, the church did nothing until Paul commanded that the man be delivered “unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh” [1 Corinthians 5:5a].

Following Paul’s rebuke, the Corinthians overreacted. Even after the man had repented and made the appropriate restitutions for his sin, he stayed excommunicated. Paul advised them that such an unforgiving attitude was just as harmful to the church as its earlier attitude of indifference.

Paul warns us of the devil and his wiles [Ephesians 6:11]. He is the one with the fiery darts [Ephesians 6:16], “(our) adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” [1 Peter 5:8]. Satan does not rest from his attempts to destroy the church. A church’s indifference, lack of discipline [1 Corinthians 5] or unreasonable severity [2 Corinthians 2] can plunge a believer into despair because he cannot find acceptance in the church even after he has truly repented.

To the crafty devil, a crisis in the church is a great opportunity to wreak havoc. Under the pretence of showing righteous anger against sin, he can exploit such a crisis and destroy souls, divide God’s people and bring reproach against Christ. Don’t be “ignorant of (the devil’s) devices” [v. 11].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 24
2 CORINTHIANS 2

THOUGHT

Exercise discipline with mercy and “let not then your good be evil spoken of” [Romans 14:16].

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 3***LESSON****The plainness of speech****VERSE 12**

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

The Corinthians knew that Paul was not a member of the original Twelve who followed our Lord Jesus. Some opposed Paul's apostleship on this count. Paul believed that his best defence for his apostleship was the Corinthians themselves. They knew Paul from the very beginning and they were the best testimony of his ministry [v. 2–3]. Using his personal situation as a springboard, Paul contrasted between the letter that killed and the Spirit that gave life. This is the essential difference between the old and the new covenants.

The old covenant was written on tablets of stone; the new, on hearts of flesh. The old covenant came under Moses; the new under the Apostles. The old covenant was transient; the new is eternal. The old covenant was veiled; the new revealed. The old covenant was without the Spirit; the new is the work of the Spirit. The old covenant kills; the new gives life. The old covenant brings condemnation; the new imputes righteousness. The old covenant passes away; the new is glorious and permanent. The new covenant offers such a hope that motivates Paul to speak plainly and boldly [v. 12].

As God's redeemed people, we share in the same hope and responsibility of the new covenant. The Gospel is as simple as it is straightforward. Its truth needs neither embellishment nor clever arguments. Don't be so concerned with the techniques of presenting the truth as its content.

Preach the Gospel, as Paul says, not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God [1 Corinthians 2:5].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 25
2 CORINTHIANS 3

THOUGHT

For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. – 1 Corinthians 1:17

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 4***LESSON****The eternal weight of
glory****VERSE 17**

*For our light affliction, which
is but for a moment, worketh
for us a far more exceeding
and eternal weight of glory;*

Any person serving God can testify to the many reasons for discouragement. The weakness of the body, coupled with the wickedness of opposition, often gets us down. Paul has seen more discouragement and opposition than anyone else. He had many trials but always proclaimed that “we have this ministry ... we faint not” [v. 1].

What was Paul’s secret? First, he was keenly aware that the Gospel is centred on our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not preach ourselves, but “Christ Jesus the Lord” [v. 5]. Second, by the grace of God, Paul never lost heart; nothing could stop him. He was “troubled ... yet not distressed ... perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” [v. 8–9]. There was in Paul a God-endowed tenacity. Life might knock him down but it never knocked him out. Despite all that he had gone through, he always kept going.

Third, while Paul was aware of the weakening of his body, he was also assured of the renewing of his spirit [v. 16]. His arduous ministry had taken a toll on Paul’s body but Paul daily experienced renewal through the Holy Spirit. This renewal of the inward man gave Paul strength to face the present and hope for the future.

Finally, Paul had the right perspective. He put the “moment” in the context of “eternity” and the “visible” in the context of the “invisible” [v. 17]. We tend to be spiritually near-sighted but we should reveal the true value of what we do.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 26
2 CORINTHIANS 4

THOUGHT

The strength of our faith and our commitment to Christ is measured by what it takes to stop us.

BIBLE LESSON
2 Corinthians 5

LESSON

A conversation on death

VERSE 1

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Many people, including some Christians, try to avoid talking about death. The Bible, which teaches that there is no hope beyond the grave, deals with death openly and with a certain degree of urgency. To have a meaningful conversation on death at the eleventh hour is a little too late. Paul was different. He wrote with the expectation that he and those with him might face death before the return of his Lord Jesus.

Paul spoke about the certainty of his own death. “We know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved” [v. 1a]. However, Paul also spoke of the confidence that he had in Christ: “Absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” [v. 8b].

Paul uses two pictures to describe the difference between life here and life hereafter. Life here is like living in a tent, which is temporal. Life after death is like living in a house, which is eternal. Tents are never meant to be permanent abodes. When someone leaves his tent, he goes back to a house, which is home.

Death is not final but a transition into the presence of the Almighty God. It also represents a change, as seen in Paul’s second analogy. Death is not only a change of place of abode but also a change of the person. To unbelievers, the dead is an empty shell. The Bible teaches us that believers put on “immortality” [1 Corinthians 15:53] and will “not be found naked” [v. 3].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 27
2 CORINTHIANS 5

THOUGHT

Death is certain. The issue that a person—especially an unbeliever—should be concerned with is whether or not the life beyond the grave is going to be better.

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 6***LESSON****Not unequally yoked
together****VERSE 14**

*Be ye not unequally yoked
together with unbelievers:
for what fellowship
hath righteousness with
unrighteousness? and what
communion hath light with
darkness?*

The principle of biblical separation teaches us that Christians, by virtue of who they are, ought to be different from unbelievers. There is a distinction between believers and unbelievers. As a good tree that produces good fruit, Christians need to show the presence of God in their lives by the kinds of lives they live [Matthew 7:15–20]. This principle is based on the fact that the church is a community of people separated by God for a special purpose [v. 17].

Biblical separation is not isolation. Paul is not instructing Christians to totally withdraw from the world. He is not advocating monasticism or asceticism but calling on Christians to be very careful of relationships that can undermine their faith and relationship with God. He highlights the incompatibility of Christian and pagan values with five rhetorical questions [v. 14–16].

Today's verse is often quoted to young people as a warning when they begin looking for a life partner and prepare for marriage, and rightly so. We live in a world that seeks to blur the distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, that as long as the heart feels right, everything else will fall into place. Believers tend to disregard God's Word when it comes to matters of the heart.

Every Christian ought to take the summons of God seriously: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate" [v. 17a]. This principle should be applied in every aspect of your life, and certainly in one of the most important decisions about relationship that a person has to make.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 28
2 CORINTHIANS 6**

THOUGHT

The only way for Christians to make a difference in the world is to be different.

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 7***LESSON****You are in our hearts****VERSE 3**

I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

Several Corinthian believers questioned the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship. Despite their opposition, Paul remained steadfast, having said earlier that he would not despair and distress even in the face of trouble and persecution [2 Corinthians 4:8–10].

Paul had earlier spoken of the anguish that he was going through and the reason for his holding on. "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears ... that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" [2 Corinthians 2:4]

Now Paul writes again to reaffirm his love and commitment to the believers. "Ye are in our hearts to die and live with you" [v. 3b]. There is no stronger expression of love than to say to someone that he or she is in our hearts. It means that as long as Paul was living, the Corinthians would be in his heart. The Corinthian Christians were so attached to Paul and had such a place of affection in his heart that nothing could separate them. If it were the will of God, Paul would gladly spend his life with them. Paul's commitment to them was all the more amazing in light of the fact that they had not shown themselves worthy of Paul's affections.

These words of Paul reveal the heart of a missionary who is passionate about souls, or a pastor who loves his flock. There was no burden too heavy, no opposition too strong and no challenge too daunting that would stop Paul. He was prepared to go through what his flock was going through, even to death.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 29
2 CORINTHIANS 7

THOUGHT

Pray for your pastor. Pray that his heart will not weary but that he will persevere in his labour of love.

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 8***LESSON****Openness in money matters****VERSE 21**

*Providing for honest things,
not only in the sight of the
Lord, but also in the sight
of men.*

The lengthiest teaching on stewardship in the New Testament is found in this and the next chapter. In this chapter, the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian believers to help the needy who were affected by the famine in Jerusalem. Their willingness in giving showed their love for the Lord [v. 1–9]. This abundant giving by the Corinthians had resulted in supplying the needs of the poor. Paul also commended Titus and two other workers for their help with the collection for the poor [v. 10–24].

Paul handled the work of fundraising very honourably. He exercised cautious prudence in handling money issues by mentioning two other helpers accompanying Titus to Corinth in their collection for the poor saints. Such openness showed his honesty in the sight of God and others.

Acknowledging Titus and the other two brethren in charge of the collection for the poor was also necessary to ensure that they could be trusted. A pure conscience and honest character brings glory to God. All believers must act prudently, especially in money issues, to allay any suspicion. We must remember not to be stumbling blocks to others.

It is important to abstain from all appearance of evil [1 Thessalonians 5:22]. All believers must walk uprightly before God and men. There must not be any cause for doubts. Beware of the temptation of the pride of life that the love of money can do to us [1 John 2:15–17; 1 Timothy 6:10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 30
2 CORINTHIANS 8

REMINDER

There must be accountability in stewardship.

BIBLE LESSON*2 Corinthians 9***LESSON****The spiritual harvest of generous giving****VERSE 6**

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Concerning alms giving for the poor saints in Jerusalem, Paul now gave the reason for sending Titus and the other two brethren to Corinth. The apostle was thankful for their generosity [v. 1–5]. This farming imagery of reaping according to what has been sowed is a natural outcome of the law of harvest. The Corinthian believers were encouraged to give liberally and cheerfully. God’s sacrificial gift of His Son is the greatest example of giving [v. 15].

Paul used the agricultural language of sowing and reaping to encourage the Corinthian saints to continue in their abundant giving. We, too, should emulate and put into practice Paul’s theology of giving [v. 6–7]. Giving should be done willingly and cheerfully, not grudgingly or out of necessity.

In giving, never let your left hand know what your right hand is doing [Matthew 6:3]. In other words, the purpose in helping is done for God’s sake only. There should be no selfish motive or outward ostentation in alms giving. Sharing what you have with the needy should be motivated only by your love for Christ.

Christian giving is related to our biblical understanding of God. What you give to Him will be given back to you in full measure. The more you give, the more you will be blessed [Acts 20:35]. Pray for a right attitude to help the needy out of a pure heart of love. This brings glory and honour to our Lord Jesus.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 31
2 CORINTHIANS 9

THOUGHT**No one can out-give God.**

BIBLE LESSON
2 Corinthians 10

LESSON
Seeking God's approval

VERSE 18

*For not he that
 commendeth himself is
 approved, but whom the
 Lord commendet.h*

There is a difference from this chapter to the end of the epistle. From confidence in God and the Corinthian believers, Paul now engages in the personal defence of his apostleship. To refute the allegations of those false teachers, Paul was both meek and humble in asserting his apostolic authority [v. 1–6]. He exhorted the Corinthian believers to make sound judgement based on clear evidence concerning his relationship with them. As a true apostle, Paul only sought God's glory in order to be commended by Him [v. 7–18].

We see two types of preachers of the Gospel in this chapter: men pleasers who appraised themselves and Paul, who desired to please God only. The false apostles instigated the brethren in Corinth to doubt Paul's apostleship. Hence, Paul had to speak up in his own defence to dispel further confusion among his Corinthian converts.

It was not in Paul's nature to be boastful. Exercising Christ-like meekness and gentleness, he emphasised the importance of seeking God's approval only. True servants of Christ don't have to seek worldly self-commendation. A life lived only for God's glory is enough to win God's approval.

How do you react to criticism? Are you a man-pleaser or do you live for self-glory? Beware of self-flattery, which dishonours God. Let us heed Paul's advice and seek to honour God so as to be commended by His words of approval: "Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant." Are you willing to seek God's commendation by the way you conduct yourself?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 32
2 CORINTHIANS 10

PRAYER

Lord, help me live to please only You.

BIBLE LESSON
2 Corinthians 11

LESSON
Being pure for Christ

VERSE 2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Continuing his apostolic self-defence, Paul gave the reason for this personal commendation of his ministry. He had never been a financial burden to his Corinthian converts [v. 1–15]. Unlike the wrong motives in the ministry that the false teachers had, Paul mentioned the trials and tribulations he had experienced for the sake of the Gospel [v. 16–33].

The fact that Paul first brought the Gospel to Corinth had endeared him to the people there. As their spiritual father, Paul felt responsible for their spiritual condition. His love for his spiritual children moved him to godly jealousy at the thought of them being swayed from the truth by those false teachers.

Paul was concerned for their spiritual relationship with God. His analogy of “a chaste virgin” [v. 2] was a reference to betrothal and marriage in the Jewish culture. It was the responsibility of a Jewish father to present his betrothed daughter as a pure and chaste virgin to her groom on their wedding day. Likewise, Paul zealously and jealously guarded his converts from the corrupting influence of false prophets.

How do you detect false prophets? The way to differentiate counterfeit money from genuine notes is to be familiar with the real thing by handling it often enough. By staying close to God and His Word, believers can be alert to tell truth from error. God’s Holy Spirit in His children helps protect us from the influence of false teachers. Let us desire to be pure for Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 33
2 CORINTHIANS 11

PRAYER

Lord, keep me faithful to You always.

BIBLE LESSON
2 Corinthians 12

LESSON

**Divine strength in human
 weakness**

VERSE 10

*Therefore I take pleasure in
 infirmities, in reproaches, in
 necessities, in persecutions,
 in distresses for Christ's
 sake: for when I am weak,
 then am I strong.*

Paul describes his vision when he was caught up to the third heaven. This was more evidence for his apostleship. However, God sent him a thorn in the flesh in order to keep him humble [v. 1–10]. Furthermore, signs, wonders and miracles were part of Paul's divinely powered ministry to them. He had planned to visit the church in Corinth soon, though he might have to be severe with some of the impenitent believers there [v. 11–21].

The false apostles were no match for Paul in his service for our Lord Jesus. He had experienced many different types of trials for the sake of the Gospel. Yet he endured all those physical sufferings gladly for the manifestation of God's power. Paul acknowledged his weakness, which was turned to strength in God's enabling power at work in his ministry.

How did Paul react to his prayer for deliverance from this thorn in his flesh? This was Satan's intention to buffet him but God meant it for good [Genesis 50:20]. Though he prayed thrice, God did not remove his affliction. And Paul accepted this willingly. Every child of God must trust in God's sovereignty in dealing with us.

What is your response when God answers your petition with a "No"? We must remember that God answers in His own good time and according to His perfect will. Whatever your thorn in the flesh is, trust in God to see you through your trials. Every trial is meant as a lesson of faith in our Christian walk.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 34
2 CORINTHIANS 12

PRAYER

**May I continue to trust You for strength even in
 my weakest moment.**

BIBLE LESSON
2 Corinthians 13

LESSON
Spiritual check-up

VERSE 5

*Examine yourselves,
 whether ye be in the faith;
 prove your own selves.*

*Know ye not your own
 selves, how that Jesus Christ
 is in you, except ye be
 reprobates?*

Paul warned some of the Corinthian believers against persistently sinning against God. He had the apostolic authority from God's Word to discipline them for the edification of erring believers [v. 1–10]. This epistle ends with an exhortation for holy living, together with a salutation and blessing from Paul [v. 11–14].

Verse 5 is a good reminder for all who claim to be God's children. Just as we see the need for regular medical check-ups, Paul's exhortation to his converts for spiritual self-examination is necessary for believers today. Hence, the call for self-examination before every Lord's Supper must be heeded.

Anyone who does not have Christ in his heart is a reprobate. Our faith in God must be evidenced in good works [James 2:20]. Though these don't save us, salvation in Christ must result in good deeds. True, genuine faith is marked by godly sorrow, desire for righteousness, submission to divine authority, a life of obedience and love for God and people. A change of heart brings about a change in behaviour, as seen from our daily activities, evident to everyone—believers and non-believers alike.

When was the last time you went for a physical? If you see the importance of a medical check-up, what about your spiritual welfare? Ephesians 2:8–9 is the answer to knowing how to have faith in Christ. Proving one's faith thereon is seen in our lifestyle. A saved person desires to be Christ-like in his words and deeds. Can others tell whether you are a believer?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 35
2 CORINTHIANS 13

MEDITATION

Read Psalm 139:23–24.

