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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,

By the end of this issue, you would have gone through the New Testament twice over the last two years. We praise God for your taking this spiritual journey through the Bible with us. David reminds us that the Word of God is “more to be desired...than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:10-11).

We pray that as you make reading the Word of God your daily routine, you will look upon the Scriptures not only as necessary food but also as an essential delight to your soul.

The *Daily Manna* is in its sixth year of publication, and over these few years, we have received much encouragement from you by way of feedback, prayers and financial support. Please do not hesitate 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'll 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 Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the OT 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've 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

Galatians 1

LESSON

The true Gospel of old

VERSE 6

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.

Galatia was a Roman province with several towns. Paul travelled through this region on his first missionary journey [Acts 13–14]. He faced severe persecutions and in one instance was stoned and left to die [Acts 14:19–20]. Nevertheless, Paul went back on his second missionary journey to check on the spiritual growth of the churches he planted [Acts 15:36].

When Paul heard that false teachers had come into the churches, confusing the people by teaching that they had to follow all of the Old Testament laws in order to be saved, Paul responded with this letter to the Galatians. He expressed astonishment that the people would so quickly desert the grace of Christ and the free salvation He offered, believing instead that they had to work for their salvation.

Paul reminded the Christians that it was Christ Who gave Himself for our sins and delivered us from this present evil world [v. 4] through grace. Our atonement for sins and perfect righteousness are not to be sought anywhere but in Christ. Paul warned them that this “gospel” being preached was illegitimate, as it did not come from Christ. Anyone teaching such a gospel should be accursed.

We are too easily impressed with and led astray by men’s ideas that turn the Gospel on its head, and change the grace of Christ into a work of our own doing. Beware of such false gospels that make us better than what God says we are.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 36
GALATIANS 1

THOUGHT

Salvation is by God’s grace alone. It is not by a person’s own work of keeping the Law, or of any other good works that he might do.

BIBLE LESSON

Galatians 2

LESSON

Standing up for the truth

VERSE 16

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

At this time, there was some contention regarding the place of Gentiles in the church. Some Christians from Jewish background had the idea that salvation in Jesus was only for the Jews. Gentiles had to be circumcised before they could become Christians.

Paul realised that if the message of the Gospel became compromised by the need for circumcision, it would be bondage not only for the Gentiles but for everyone who believed in Jesus. He rebuked these false teachers and defended the truth of the Gospel.

Next, we were told that Peter was eating with the Gentiles but withdrew and separated himself when certain influential Jewish men appeared. Under the Mosaic Law, it was considered unclean for Jews to eat with Gentiles. Though Peter knew that God did not require Gentiles to come under the Law of Moses for salvation, he turned his back on all these and treated the uncircumcised Gentiles as if they were not saved at all. Barnabas followed him, as did the rest of the Jews at the church in Antioch.

Paul rebuked Peter publicly and reminded Peter that they were justified before God by the work of Jesus, not by their keeping of the Law. If righteousness had come through the fulfilment of the Law, then Jesus would have died in vain. If you can be righteous before God by just keeping the Law, then you will not need the work of Jesus to make you righteous.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 37
GALATIANS 2

REMINDER

Leaders have heavy responsibilities. When we go astray, others often follow. Satan is always looking to see whom he can devour.

BIBLE LESSON

Galatians 3

LESSON

Faith or law

VERSE 11

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Some teachers, particularly the Judaisers, were teaching that to become a true Christian, one must conform outwardly to the Law of Moses. Paul's response to them was that the Law was not a way to escape from the bondage of sin. The only way to be acceptable to God is to accept His sacrifice—to trust in what Jesus has done for us on the Cross. We are saved by faith alone. We do not earn salvation by following any set of rules. It is the gift of God in response to our trust in Jesus Christ.

Paul rebuked the Galatians because their stubborn dependence on the Mosaic Law had kept them from growing. They had begun in the strength of the Holy Spirit but had regressed to trusting in their own deeds rather than in Christ [v. 3]. Paul reminded them that they received the Holy Spirit when they believed Christ, not when they obeyed the Law [v. 5].

God's law reveals sin but it is powerless to save us from sin. It can show us our weakness but it cannot provide strength. It can condemn but it cannot justify. The law commands but it does not enable. The law kills, but grace gives life.

You cannot overcome sin and obey the Lord unless you have placed your faith in Him and have His Spirit living in you. You need to remain in close fellowship with Christ [John 15:4–5]. Stay connected to the Master. God always enables us to do what is required of us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 38
GALATIANS 3

THOUGHT

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. – Galatians 3:22

BIBLE LESSON

Galatians 4

LESSON

Back into bondage

VERSE 9

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Paul was dismayed that the Galatians, having been set free from the bondage of sin, were heading into the bondage of another sort—the bondage of the Law. He tried to help them understand the difference between the way of the Gospel and the way of the Law.

Paul reminded the Galatians that before their conversion, they were serving pagan gods. But after accepting Christ by faith, they were freed from idolatry. Faith has always been what God really wanted from man. The Mosaic Law was but a device to spare God’s people from the harmful effects of sin. To use it to try to earn God’s favour is a misuse.

The Gospel of salvation is based on humble dependence on God—we cannot save ourselves. The Law teaches that adhering strictly to a set of rules makes you spiritual. Paul reminded the Galatians that once upon a time they had been fervent in their acceptance of the Gospel message, eager to give thanks to God for His goodness. But now that new teachers had come along, they had become wrongly fervent in their pursuit of the Law.

This is a reminder to us, too. Our devotion should be Christ-centred and not based on earthly expectations. Are you measuring your spirituality against others based on performance? Are you fervent to serve God regardless of who is watching? Are you serving out of duty or drawn by the joy of the Lord? People will fail you but Jesus never fails.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 39
GALATIANS 4

THOUGHT

People are saved and sanctified because of their faith in Christ, not because of what they do.

BIBLE LESSON

Galatians 5

LESSON

**Serving one another by
love**

VERSE 13

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

Some leaders were creating deception and confusion in the churches. Paul reminded the Galatians that what really counted was faith expressing itself through love [v. 6]. The pure faith of trusting in the sacrifice Jesus made on the Cross is sufficient in itself to pay for all of our sins. We do not have to add anything to what He has already done.

Jesus says that His sheep know His voice and they follow Him. A very important way to avoid the confusion of this world is to recognise the voice of Jesus so that you can discern truth from fallacy. Paul told the Galatians that they were being confused by wrong teachings, as these did not come from Jesus [v. 8].

Finally, now that we are set free by the love offered through Jesus Christ, we ought to show the love of God to others around us. Biblical love is not licence for self-indulgence. On the contrary, love constrains the believer by not acting in his own self-interests but always for the well being of the other person. God gave the Ten Commandments and our Lord Jesus crystallised them into two. Paul here highlights the second of the two: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" [v. 14].

Just as our Lord Jesus shows us His perfect love by dying on the Cross for our sakes, we should show our love by doing what is in the best interest of others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 40
GALATIANS 5

THOUGHT

Truth must be seen, and it is seen by acts of love.

BIBLE LESSON

Galatians 6

LESSON

**Bearing one another's
burdens**

VERSE 10

*As we have therefore
opportunity, let us do good
unto all men, especially unto
them who are of the household
of faith.*

Paul addresses a tough situation here at the end of Galatians: What about members of the church who profess Jesus as Lord and Saviour but still continue to sin? What are we to do with them?

We are to restore such a one gently. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are all brothers and sisters through faith. Since we are all in Christ, God wants us to help one another—in both good times and bad. Let us cultivate relationships that are close enough that we can share our burdens and understand one another's problems in life. Let us love one another enough to want to help those who are burdened. And let us be humble enough to be willing to receive the loving assistance of others.

Jesus understood God's commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves. Instead of giving in to Satan's temptation, and calling down angels and archangels to defend Him, He went to the Cross for us. He did this not because He had to but because He loved us.

As we wrap up this journey through Paul's letter to the Galatians, remember the theme of the letter: Trust in God's mercy, believe in Jesus' perfect work on the Cross and remember that we are all sinners. By putting your faith in Christ and letting God the Holy Spirit take over the direction of your life, He will lead you in the light of Christ to do His work.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 41
GALATIANS 6

PRAYER

Lord, help me to steer clear of the ways of this world and let me take on the marks of Christ that I may glorify my Father in heaven.

BIBLE LESSON

Ephesians 1

LESSON

Spiritual inheritance

VERSE 5

*Having predestinated us
unto the adoption of children
by Jesus Christ to himself,
according to the good pleasure
of his will,*

God's children are predestined or foreordained to receive the blessing of being born into His family. This is not merely a place of family relationship but a position of son-ship, of dignity and liberty, and of knowing God the Father's will as joint heirs with Christ.

We were brought into this partnership through spiritual rebirth, to be adopted as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus and to enjoy the privileges of this high relationship. He has bestowed upon us the son-ship in Christ. This relationship gives us the right and the title to the Father's riches; the position grants privileges associated with belonging to the Father's family.

Adoption is a family concept. It involves the placing of a person into a family and endowing him with the privileges and blessings of a son. John Calvin aptly puts it thus: the Son of God became the son of man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God. Spiritual and heavenly blessings are the best, as it is for eternity and for the praise of His glory. It is all of grace—God's favour bestowed on people who do not and cannot deserve it.

The new life believers have is none other than the indwelling Son of God. Through Christ, they are made children of God, having both a new relationship and a new position. He has made us dear and precious to Himself out of the good pleasure of His will. In gratitude we are to manifest His love and holiness as His children.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 42
EPHESIANS 1

REMINDER

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. – John 1:12

BIBLE LESSON*Ephesians 2***LESSON****Created for good works****VERSE 10**

*For we are his workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus unto
good works, which God hath
before ordained that we should
walk in them.*

We are saved *for* good works, not *by* good works. God saves us for a purpose: to fashion us as His masterpiece, a newly created work of art. Doing good works is ample evidence of the power of a new life in Christ. This is not an option but is supposed to be the very nature of the believer. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” [James 2:17]. James cited the examples of Abraham [James 2:21] and Rahab [James 2:25] as those who followed up their faith with good works.

God’s transforming grace empowers His children to do good works that are pleasing to Him [Philippians 2:13]. There must be a marked difference in the life of the believer who has been regenerated in Christ. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” [Matthew 5:16].

Before we can do any good work for God, He has to do His good work in us. God has also prepared beforehand that we should practise good works, thus leaving us no room for boasting because all the good that we do have been ordained by God. According to His sovereign plan, God has designed us to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ [Romans 8:29].

Righteous attitudes and righteous acts proceed from the transformed life in the renewed believer. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” [Philippians 1:6].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 43
EPHESIANS 2

PURPOSE

**We’re saved, saved to tell others of the Man of Galilee,
Saved, saved to live daily for the Christ of Calvary.
Saved, saved to invite you to His salvation free,
We’re saved, saved, saved by His blood for all eternity.**

BIBLE LESSON

Ephesians 3

LESSON

Gentiles equal with Jews

VERSE 6

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

Herein is the mystery revealed: Gentiles are on equal footing with Jews. This is a threefold revelation: (a) all true believers (Jews and Gentiles) share the same inheritance from God; (b) they belong to the same body of Christ; and (c) they receive the same promise of Christ.

The Head is Christ and the body (the Church) is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles who are joint-heirs, joint-members and joint-partakers of the same faith. “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” [1 Corinthians 12:13].

Paul maintained that the Gospel had to be preached to the Gentiles, a revelation from the Lord Jesus, and because of this, he was imprisoned [v. 1]. Paul, a Jew, was especially chosen by God to “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” [v. 8b]. The covenantal promise made to Abraham is extended to the Gentiles. “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” [Galatians 3:14].

Paul was specially called to carry the message of salvation to the pagan world. It was a humbling experience for him, who was once a persecutor of the followers of Christ. Now he preached Christ, and nothing but Christ. His ever-recurring theme was “Christ and Him crucified”. He also exhorted Timothy to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season ...” [2 Timothy 4:2].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 44
EPHESIANS 3

MEDITATION

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. – Romans 10:12

BIBLE LESSON

Ephesians 4

LESSON

The Christian walk

VERSE 1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Paul exhorts believers to walk worthy of their calling. This is the heavenly calling that unites the people of God—both Jew and Gentile—in one body, giving them an eternal inheritance in Christ. He compares this walk to the Christian way of life and defines it in terms of attitudes and actions.

Every true child of God ought to practise the virtues of humility, gentleness, patience and love [v. 2]. These same qualities are echoed in Colossians 3:12: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”

Every true believer’s life ought to be characterised by these virtues. He who walks in a manner worthy of his calling is one whose daily living corresponds to his high position as a child of God and fellow-heir with Jesus Christ. His practical living matches his spiritual position. His daily conduct and day-to-day living reflects the love of Christ. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” [Matthew 5:16].

Christians are called to live for Christ [Philippians 1:21], to walk “even as He walked” [1 John 2:6b] and to give diligence to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” [v. 3]. The attributes of a true child of God [v. 2] can only be ours when we yield to the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ, made up of all true believers, should strive to achieve unity with one another and maintain peace with God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 45
EPHESIANS 4

THOUGHT

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? – Micah 6:8.

BIBLE LESSON

Ephesians 5

LESSON

Be good imitators

VERSE 1

*Be ye therefore followers of
God, as dear children;*

This prison epistle was written from Rome. Though a prisoner, the Apostle Paul was able to encourage the Ephesian believers spiritually. In this chapter, they were exhorted to practise brotherly love [v. 1–2]. Furthermore, they were also warned against the sins of the flesh and the mind. Advice on proper Christian behaviour was also given [v. 3–21]. The passage ends with the duty of husbands to love their wives, as illustrated by Christ’s love for the Church [v. 22–33].

Today’s key verse is connected to the previous chapter by the word “therefore”. It is a continuation of Paul’s practical exhortations. All the negative attitudes and actions are to be overcome by love for others. The greatest example of sacrificial love is evidenced in God’s love, as shown on the Cross of Calvary.

The word “followers” [v. 1] can be replaced by the word “imitators”, meaning to “mimic”, a word often used negatively. However, this is the kind of response to be expected from a follower who truly desires to be like his mentor.

Paul emphasised the need for “dear children” to follow and imitate the example of Christ both in word and deed. What is true of the saying “like father, like son” physically must also be true spiritually in every believer. As God’s children, we must reflect this love of God in our lives. Children follow the example of their natural parents. Likewise, as beloved of God, we must emulate His example. Let us be kind, pure, tender-hearted and forgiving to others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 46
EPHESIANS 5

HYMN

**O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed
Redeemer, pure as Thou art!**

BIBLE LESSON*Ephesians 6***LESSON****Requirement for
longevity****VERSE 3**

*That it may be well with thee,
and thou mayest live long on
the earth.*

Longevity is promised to children who obey their parents [v. 1–4]. Fathers are cautioned to be reasonable and nurture their children in the fear of God. Continuing on with human relationship, servants are expected to obey their masters, who ought to treat them with the proper respect [v. 5–9]. Every believer is exhorted to put on the whole armour of God in our spiritual warfare against Satan [v. 10–18]. We can only defeat the enemy of our souls by praying for deliverance from God. Paul ends the chapter with a prayer request through his usual benediction [v. 19–24].

The promise of long life is originally found in the Fifth Commandment [Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16]. Honouring one's parents is the First Commandment with a promise. Children who disobey their parents and persist in a life of vice and crime are guilty of breaking this commandment.

What is the "recipe" for long life then? In our modern society, most of us are obsessed with living well and looking good. We think that a balanced diet plus regular exercise equals longevity. There is nothing wrong with this outlook, provided we remember that our lives are in God's hands. He is the One in control.

The answer to the above question is filial piety [v. 2–3]. Children who are kind, respectful and obedient by honouring their parents will be blessings to them, the Church of God and the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 47
EPHESIANS 6

QUESTION

How do you honour your parents?

BIBLE LESSON

Philippians 1

LESSON

Live in Christ

VERSE 9

*And this I pray, that your love
may abound yet more and
more in knowledge and in all
judgement;*

Paul was in prison when he wrote a letter to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him. It was a letter of joy, with Paul expressing his affection towards the loving brethren at Philippi and showing them that true joy came from Christ alone. He was thankful for the Philippians' commitment and perseverance to spread the Gospel.

Paul addressed the Philippians as saints in Christ Jesus. As Christians, we ought to live in Christ. It is in Christ that we have salvation and eternal joy. It is in Christ that we have the grace and peace of God, and the courage to face the future. It is in Christ that we draw strength to live a holy and righteous life.

As implied in Paul's prayer for them, there is a calling for every believer to multiply his love with knowledge and all discernment, to be filled with the fruits of righteousness and to be more Christ-like [v. 9–11]. As believers, we are assured of true joy. We need to learn to surrender our own will to God and let the Holy Spirit work in us. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and turn away from temptation. Remember that God is at work and only He alone is capable of completing the work in us.

As a citizen in God's kingdom, we need to live a life worthy of the Gospel. Let us strive to be pure and blameless, giving all glory and praise to God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 48
PHILIPPIANS 1

THOUGHT

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.

BIBLE LESSON*Philippians 2***LESSON****The worthy life****VERSE 15**

*That ye may be blameless and
harmless, the sons of God,
without rebuke, in the midst of
a crooked and perverse nation,
among whom ye shine as lights
in the world;*

Paul stressed the importance for every believer to live a worthy life—to be faithful and strong in holding our ground against a hostile world, and to be of the same mind, jointly working for our common faith. We must learn to be like Christ. We should put others above ourselves. We must reach out to love and help one another. We should gently encourage one another to live a life worthy of the Gospel. Pray that we will always be humble, and that we will have a willing heart to serve others with Christ-like compassion.

Our attitude should be the same as that of Christ [v. 5–11]. Jesus was willing to give up His rights in order to obey God. It is His self-denying love that saves sinful men. With the grace of the Lord, we are saved and empowered to serve others with strength and perseverance. Do not be afraid to reach out to the unsaved to preach the good news.

Paul stresses the importance of obedience, responsibility and sensitivity [v. 12]. We must ask the Holy Spirit to guide us. We must be discerning and sensitive to God's guidance. We must ask God to give us the power and wisdom to carry out His will. Do not neglect in studying His Word.

Trust Jesus wholeheartedly. Do not complain, argue or gossip. Be blameless and pure. We should strive to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit. We should have Christian peace and joy. We should shine like stars in this dark world.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL I
PHILIPPIANS 2**

THOUGHT

Be committed to serving the Lord. Be humble to serve one another. Do you have the sacrificial love to build the faith of others and bring yourself joyous rewards?

BIBLE LESSON*Philippians 3***LESSON****Pressing on towards the goal****VERSE 14**

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul warns against those who place great confidence in the flesh [v. 2–4]. He pointed out correctly that the first root of joy is to know the truth and to place confidence in Christ.

Paul uses his own story as a good illustration, that he was wrong in the past to place confidence in fleshly accomplishments [v. 5–6]. He considered such things rubbish after he had encountered Christ, having realised that it was more important to know Christ in person. Paul explains clearly why it is sufficient to be found in Christ [v. 9–12]. We are made righteous by trusting in the Lord. “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” [2 Corinthians 5:21].

We are urged to follow Paul’s example in striving towards perfection, and in his desire to know and serve Christ. We should forget things of the past and fix our eyes firmly on the goal to be perfect like Christ. Reach forward to grow and mature spiritually as you continue to trust in the Lord. Be like an athlete training for the gold medal, not to be distracted by earthly temptations. Press on and let God do the work to discipline and transform you. Ask God to make you a good vessel to labour for Him.

As Christians, we have our citizenship in heaven. Focus on growing in our knowledge of God by working on our relationship with Him. Walk closely with the Lord daily and be a good ambassador for Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 2
PHILIPPIANS 3

THOUGHT

Do stay alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; obey His instruction to correct your thoughts, motives and actions.

BIBLE LESSON*Philippians 4***LESSON****The peace and joy of God****VERSE 6**

*Be careful for nothing; but
in every thing by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made
known unto God.*

Paul stresses the importance of having steadfast faith in the Lord and the necessity of unity among brethren in the local church. He pleaded for Euodias and Syntyche, his two co-labourers, to reconcile with each other and to be of the same mind in the Lord. This is a reminder to mend any broken relationship we have with our brethren so that Christians can live in joy and peace.

Paul also shared the secret of his inner joy despite the fact that he was imprisoned. The key to living joyously and to gaining victories in life is to share our worries and anxieties with the Lord through prayer. Show your gentleness to others and remember to give thanks to the Lord regardless of your circumstances. It is only then that the peace of God can fill us and guard our hearts. Fix your eyes on Christ and trust in the Lord that everything is under His full control.

Paul exhorted us to be disciplined in our thoughts, and meditate on whatever things that are pure, true, honourable, just, lovely, gracious, excellent and praiseworthy. By giving attention to these godly matters, we will do and say things that are pleasing to God.

Let us learn from Paul, always rejoicing and giving thanks to the Lord. Stay positive and not distressed. Do not despair when things do not go smoothly. As believers, we are assured of eternal salvation. In Christ alone, we derive our inner joy and find the peace that transcends all understanding.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 3
PHILIPPIANS 4**

CHALLENGE

Are you able to constantly model yourself to be like Christ, to sanctify your thoughts, train your mind to be godly and subject your life to the Word of God? Keep your heart and mind in Christ and the God of peace will be with you.

BIBLE LESSON

Colossians 1

LESSON

What God has done

VERSE 12

*Giving thanks unto the Father,
which hath made us meet to
be partakers of the inheritance
of the saints in light.*

We often fail to grasp the reality of the finished work of Christ. The event has taken place and by it God has accomplished our salvation. God has qualified us. We are by nature sinful, unworthy and unqualified but He has made us “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”. It is a gift of God to His people, promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Christ, with whom we are going to dwell.

God has delivered us. Our former state was darkness. In the Bible, “darkness” symbolises a terrifying power that holds men in its authority with no escape. Before our deliverance, sin held sway over us. God rescues us with His strong arm. He has thus saved us from every power but His own.

God has translated us. “Translate” means “to transport, remove from one place to another”. This is the present condition of Christians. We have been removed from a world that is subject to evil forces into one where Christ rules as King, and we submit ourselves to no authority but His.

God has redeemed us. Redemption means “release by the payment of a ransom”. Christ is the ransom [Mark 10:45]. The way of redemption is through His blood. The result of redemption is the forgiveness of sins. Sins are the chains that keep men imprisoned in the power of darkness. Now we are free. The absolute security of every believer is now found in Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 4
COLOSSIANS 1

THOUGHT

Our God acts; He is revealed by His deeds.

BIBLE LESSON*Colossians 2***LESSON****Sins blotted out****VERSE 14**

*Blotting out the handwriting
of ordinances that was against
us, which was contrary to us,
and took it out of the way,
nailing it to his cross;*

We are in debt to God because of our sins. The debt is so huge that it is impossible for us to repay. But our gracious God deals with it. He blots it out by nailing it to the Cross. This is the picture of Jesus' death on the Cross: He paid the price for us so that our debt can be completely written off.

Jesus has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. He has destroyed the demands of the law against believers. Our sin is not merely covered. It is blotted out, completely erased. The handwriting of ordinances is a record of debts we sign with our own handwriting. We owe God our sinlessness. Yet we cannot possibly pay this debt. Therefore, we need Christ.

Because God is perfect, every standard He holds is a testimony against us. He must deal with us, as He cannot compromise on His own high standards. Therefore, the law demands perfection, which men can never achieve. The beauty of Christianity is that Jesus has nailed the old law to the Cross and God has cancelled our list of debts.

Jesus not only takes away the charge against us but He also puts a new heart in us. Grace is effective where the Law has failed. He has completely and eternally settled the issue of the Law through the Cross. He has met the perfect demands of God's holiness.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 5
COLOSSIANS 2**

THOUGHT

We are now free. The only thing we still owe is an eternal debt of gratitude and praise to our Lord.

BIBLE LESSON

Colossians 3

LESSON

Living a new life in Christ

VERSE 1

*If ye then be risen with Christ,
seek those things which are
above, where Christ sitteth on
the right hand of God.*

When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we receive a new life and the power to live this new life. The apostle Paul encourages us to seek “those things which are above”. The word “seek” shows a desire and an ambition to pursue spiritual things.

What are these “things above”? They include the attributes of Christ: love, peace, joy, mercy, compassion and obedience. Paul wants us to demonstrate these qualities in our daily lives. What we believe has a definite link to how we behave. Faith in Christ means following His example.

We often hear of the expression: “Don’t put the cart before the horse.” It tells us to do things in the right order. But many of us put the cart before the horse in our relationship with our Lord. Paul wants us to embrace the truth of our regenerated life in Christ. Hence, he sends us a reminder (“ye then be risen with Christ”), gives us a responsibility (“seek those things which are above”) and shows us who our resource is (“Christ who sits on the right hand of God”).

JR Miller said: “We ought to learn to look up. Many people dwarf their lives and hinder the best possibilities of growth in their souls—by looking downward. They keep their eyes ever entangled in mere earthly sights and scenes, and miss seeing the glory of the hills that pierce the clouds, and of the heavens that bend over them. We grow in the direction in which our eyes habitually turn.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 6
COLOSSIANS 3

THOUGHT

**The Blood deals with what we have done,
whereas the Cross deals with what we are. –
Watchman Nee**

BIBLE LESSON

Colossians 4

LESSON

**Seasoning our speech
with grace**

VERSE 6

*Let your speech be always with
grace, seasoned with salt, that
ye may know how ye ought to
answer every man.*

Our conversations reveal our hearts. What we say shows who we are. Pleasing speech should characterise believers. Paul wants “our speech to be always with grace, seasoned with salt”. Salt gives flavour and retards corruption. Angry, sharp and aggressive words cause barriers and defences to go up. Sarcasm, insults and accusations cause conflicts to escalate. On the other hand, kind, gentle and understanding words can diffuse even the most hostile situation. These words convey peace, concern, love and grace.

To speak with grace means we need grace in our heart. A person who says kind things has a kind heart. A person who says mean things has a mean heart. What is inside us comes out of our mouths. No one who curses, swears, lies or gossips is letting the Word of God dwell richly in his heart.

Stop complaining about your work, bosses or friends. Turn around and try to talk to people around us about the graciousness, love and kindness of Christ. Do people see Christ through your actions and words? If they don't, then you have undermined your effectiveness as a witness for Christ. Making Christ known is not just simply walking up to someone and passing him the Gospel message. We need to talk and walk properly.

Unbelievers around us may not like our identification with Christ but they should not be able to find cause to charge us against our truthfulness and thoughtfulness from the way we conduct our conversations.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 7
COLOSSIANS 4

THOUGHT

How others react towards us depends on our words and actions. What we say and how we say it make a difference. The way we behave tells a lot about ourselves and about our Master.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Thessalonians 1–2

LESSON

Reward of soul winning

I THESSALONIANS 2:19

*For what is our hope, or joy,
or crown of rejoicing? Are
not even ye in the presence of
our Lord Jesus Christ at his
coming?*

This epistle is commonly regarded to be the first of the Pauline letters. It is more practical than the other epistles. Every chapter closes with a reference to the second coming of our Lord Jesus. The power of the Gospel was seen in the response of the believers [1 Thessalonians 1:1–5]. Moreover, its effects were evidenced in their hearts and lives [1 Thessalonians 1:6–10]. Paul reminded them of his preaching and their Christian conduct when he was with them [1 Thessalonians 2:1–12]. Thanking God for their receiving the Gospel as the Word of God, Paul rejoiced on their account [1 Thessalonians 2:13–20].

There are five crowns mentioned in the Bible: the crown of rejoicing [1 Thessalonians 2:19], the crown of life [James 1:12; Revelation 2:10], the crown of glory [1 Peter 5:4], the crown of righteousness [2 Timothy 4:8] and the incorruptible crown [1 Corinthians 9:25]. These crowns are not promised to angels but promised to any believer who overcomes great trials.

All these crowns, not listed in any special order, are rewards for service to our Lord Jesus. In our key verse for today, this crown of rejoicing is given to soul winners. The Thessalonians' presence at Christ's second coming is evidence of their positive response to the Gospel.

How faithful have you been in your evangelistic outreach to the lost? "He that winneth souls is wise" [Proverbs 11:30b]. Whatever crown awaits us will be cast at the feet of Jesus. Let us strive on faithfully in our soul-winning outreach.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 8

I THESSALONIANS 1–2

HYMN

**Standing before Him at last, Trial and trouble all
past,
Crowns at His feet we will cast: Jesus is coming
again!**

BIBLE LESSON**1 Thessalonians 3–4****LESSON****Minding your own
business****I THESSALONIANS 4:11**

*And that ye study to be quiet,
and to do your own business,
and to work with your own
hands, as we commanded you;*

As a spiritual father, Paul was concerned for the Thessalonian Christians [1 Thessalonians 3]. Hence, Timothy was sent to visit them. Paul was very much comforted by Timothy's good report about their faith and love for others. In Chapter 4, we read of Paul exhorting his spiritual children to pure and holy living. Outward manifestation of brotherly love, peaceful living and diligence are encouraged. The Thessalonian believers' sorrow for their departed loved ones was put to rest by Paul's reminder to them of the glorious, bodily resurrection at Christ's second coming.

There was restlessness in Thessalonica because of the misunderstanding of Christ's second coming. The believers there were warned against the sin of laziness. Instead of meddling in other people's affairs, they were urged to live peaceably with all men [Romans 12:18].

Paul cautioned the believers against being busybodies [1 Peter 4:15b]. Some of the Thessalonian brethren thought that work was unnecessary due to the Lord's imminent return. With time on their hands, they made a nuisance of themselves. God's children must "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" [Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:16].

Do not squander your time on frivolities but be a good steward of time. Let us emulate our Lord's example when He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" [Luke 2:49b]? Be busy for the Lord instead of being busybodies minding other people's business.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 9

I THESSALONIANS 3–4**CAUTION**

Idleness is the devil's workshop.

BIBLE LESSON*1 Thessalonians 5***LESSON**

**Hear no evil, see no evil,
do no evil**

VERSE 22

*Abstain from all appearance
of evil.*

Paul continues with his exhortation on believers' readiness for the sudden second coming of Christ [v. 1–11]. At that moment, unlike the righteous, the wicked would surely be destroyed. Paul follows this with exhortations to respect their spiritual leaders and encourage the weak and feeble-minded [v. 12–22]. This chapter closes with Paul's prayer for their sanctification and benediction [v. 23–28].

Paul's command here seems to be a tall order at first reading. Not only did he exhort the Thessalonian believers to avoid evil itself but he also asked them to be wary of what might appear to be wrong. Even so-called white lies do not glorify our Lord. Our positional perfection in Christ must spur us on to sin less and less in our daily conduct.

After proving all things, Paul's advice was to hold fast to the good and avoid evil. Therefore, we must not give anyone cause to find fault with us. Regarding practical matters, all believers must be careful not to court temptation in any way. We must guard both our innermost thoughts and outward actions. Places of entertainment, vices and temptation must be avoided at all costs.

Every believer is called to holiness, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" [1 Peter 1:16]. Since God's children are sanctified and set apart for Him, our lives should be pure and holy. Let us trust in God's power to hear no evil, see no evil and do no evil.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 10
I THESSALONIANS 5

PRAYER**Lord, help me to be sensitive to sin.**

BIBLE LESSON*2 Thessalonians 1***LESSON****Divine retribution****VERSE 8**

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second Thessalonians was written to correct errors and misconceptions of the Lord's second coming and the Day of the Lord. The prophetic spirit of the Apostle Paul was seen in his foretelling of future events. Paul was thankful to God for the Thessalonian believers' increased love and patience [v. 1–4]. Furthermore, he encouraged them to persevere amidst their sufferings [v. 5–12].

The Day of the Lord in this second epistle must not be confused with our Lord's second coming mentioned earlier [1 Thessalonians 4:16–17]. This eschatological teaching of the day of judgement will see Christ's return to earth in power and glory [Revelation 19:11–21]. Accompanied by His mighty angels, He will return in resplendent glory in flaming fire [Exodus 3:2; Acts 7:30].

The word "vengeance" in today's key verse refers to God's divine, complete justice on persecutors of believers. It is not vindictiveness whatsoever on God's part. Furthermore, our Lord's coming will be glorified in His saints [John 17:10]. Scripture teaches that those who reject Christ will face eternal separation from the presence of God.

Sometimes we wonder why the wicked seemingly prosper while the meek are being persecuted. This Day of the Lord is their "payback time" for the unrighteous. Take comfort when the Lord says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" [Romans 12:19b]. God, Who is just and loving, will ensure that retribution is according to divine principles. If you are not saved, heed this severe warning and come to the Lord without any delay.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL II
2 THESSALONIANS I

WARNING**Flee from the wrath to come.**

BIBLE LESSON

2 Thessalonians 2

LESSON

Standing fast in the Lord

VERSE 15

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

There was some misunderstanding concerning the day of judgement. Paul hastened to correct this misconception of the Day of the Lord. Apostasy from the faith would be rampant before the appearance of the son of perdition, the Antichrist [v. 1–4]. At that time, due retribution would be inflicted upon him and his followers. This will be their eternal destruction for choosing to believe a lie [v. 5–12]. The chapter ends with Paul’s thankfulness for the Thessalonian believers’ security from apostasy. They were urged further to be steadfast and to persevere on [v. 13–17].

Once again we read of Paul’s loving concern for his converts’ spiritual welfare. After grounding them in the faith, he enjoined them to hold on unwaveringly to these teachings. It is also applicable to believers today.

We are forgetful people and do not always remember what we have been taught. Therefore, it is important to be diligent in the study of God’s Word. Every believer must remember this: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” [2 Timothy 2:2].

Thank God for our pastors and church leaders in caring for the flock of God. Let us remember to pray for them as they faithfully guide us in the things of the Lord. It is our responsibility to pass on spiritual truths that we have learnt from them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 12
2 THESSALONIANS 2

PRAYER

Help me to hold fast to You and Your Word.

BIBLE LESSON**2 Thessalonians 3****LESSON****The sin of indolence****VERSE 10**

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

This second epistle ends with many positive exhortations to uplift the believers in Thessalonica, including Paul's confidence in them [v. 1–5], followed by a warning to conduct themselves properly, not to walk disorderly and become busybodies [v. 6–15]. It concludes with prayer and greetings [v. 16–18], as was usual with Paul's style of writing.

This problem of lazy loafing and idling happened even when the Apostle Paul was with them. Some of the converts actually stopped working while waiting for the Rapture [1 Thessalonians 4:11–12]. Paul had to admonish them once again to be wary of the indolent and disorderly in their midst.

From the very beginning of creation, God has sanctioned the need and importance of work [Genesis 3:19]. Honest work is not demeaning at all. Hence Paul's injunction: "if any would not work, neither should he eat." He himself set a good example working as a tentmaker. Paul did not exercise his right to receive support from the church as a servant of God [Deuteronomy 25:4; Matthew 10:10b].

The church of God is expected to help the needy, and rightly so [1 Timothy 5:8; James 1:27]. However, a fit and healthy person must not take advantage of the kindness of others. A lazy person who does not want to earn his own livelihood cannot rely on others to supply his needs. A believer who sponges on others does not glorify God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 1
2 THESSALONIANS 3

CAUTION

Stop fussing, stop idling and stop sponging. – W. Neil

BIBLE LESSON*1 Timothy 1***LESSON****Rebuking false teachers****VERSE 4**

*Neither give heed to fables
and endless genealogies,
which minister questions,
rather than godly edifying
which is in faith: so do.*

Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy, who was pastoring the church at Ephesus. Earlier, Paul had warned this church about the rise of false teachers that would come during his absence [Acts 20:29–31] and now it had happened. This letter to Timothy was a written authorisation to grant him the right to deal with the false teachers.

Timothy was to stop certain men from teaching a doctrine different from that of Paul's, and not to give heed to "fables and endless genealogies". The exact nature of these false teachings was not clear; but their destructive effect was to lead to endless disputes that would not build up the body of Christ in faith. Timothy was to stop this teaching so that love would prevail and the Law should not be misunderstood.

Church leaders today face a similar problem. Satan attempts daily to infiltrate the Church with all sorts of false teachings. As members of the Church, we have to do our part. Pray that God will call faithful men and women into the teaching ministry. Exercise discernment when electing people to serve in positions of leaders, preachers and teachers.

Most importantly, remember them constantly before the Throne of Grace. Pray that God's Holy Spirit will strengthen, lead and direct them. Pray that God will protect them from the temptation of the devil, and may "the grace of our Lord be exceeding abundant" on them [v. 14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 2
I TIMOTHY 1

THOUGHT

**The Church must first talk to God about men,
before they can talk to men about God.**

BIBLE LESSON*1 Timothy 2***LESSON****The priority of prayer****VERSE 1**

*I exhort therefore, that,
first of all, supplications,
prayers, intercessions, and
giving of thanks, be made
for all men;*

In this and the subsequent chapter, Paul instructs Timothy on the conduct of public worship. In worship, prayer must always come first. We are exhorted to pray for all men. There is no one who does not need prayer. Besides our family, friends and loved ones, we should also pray for our enemies and for those with whom we have conflict. We should pray for those who annoy us, and for those who seem to be against us.

We must pray evangelistically for all men. It is God's desire for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" [v. 4]. All men need the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the only Mediator between God and men.

We should also give thanks for those who are in authority, because God has ordained governments in society to keep order. Pray that our political leaders will rule wisely and with integrity so that we can enjoy peace, security and freedom of worship. In public worship, men should lead in public prayer. This restriction in public prayer is a general rule. If women wish to engage in public prayer, they must not aspire for leadership but recognise the headship of men.

The priority of prayer is emphasised throughout the Bible. Sadly, it is a commandment that is widely ignored by Christians. Many of us take prayer seriously only when trouble comes into our lives. May God have mercy on us!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 3
I TIMOTHY 2

PRAYER

Make time for prayer meetings and pray that more members of your church will attend weekly prayer meetings.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Timothy 3

LESSON

Choosing the right church leaders

VERSE 15

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Apostle Paul wanted to impress upon Timothy a deep sense of the importance of correct conduct in church. The church of our Lord Jesus Christ is both the foundation and the pillar that supports the truth on earth. Truth here is the revealed Word that God has given for our salvation.

Hence the leaders of the church have a grave responsibility. As such, much care and caution has to be exercised in the selection of these leaders. Paul provides a detailed list of the qualities that pastors and elders (“bishops”) as well as deacons must have.

It is interesting to note that aside from godly virtues, many of these qualities are also those required of leaders of society at large, such as political leaders and school principals. Sadly, in recent times, there has been a worldwide decline in such qualities in our leaders. For example, there are prominent heads of governments in the developed world who are not even legally married to their “partners” and many political leaders have fallen from grace because of illicit affairs behind their wives’ backs.

To make matters worse, the moral standards of many church leaders, who are supposed to be the “salt of the earth”, are no better. Some churches today have openly gay pastors. Others have leaders who are paedophiles who abuse their positions to molest young members of their flock. In perilous times like these, can judgement from a holy God be far off?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 4
I TIMOTHY 3

THOUGHT

... but if the salt have lost his savour, ... it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. – Matthew 5:13

BIBLE LESSON*1 Timothy 4***LESSON****How to be a good minister****VERSE 6**

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

Paul wanted Timothy to be a good minister. A good minister should protect his flock against false teachers, of whom Paul gave a description, together with their errors [v. 1–5]. Paul further reminded Timothy that he had to keep himself spiritually fit, set a good example for the believers and put his spiritual gifts in good use. In short, he had to also watch his character, doctrine and conduct.

Paul also pointed out that a good pastor (minister) must constantly remind his followers of things that constitute sound doctrine—things contained in the Word of God, which he had mentioned earlier [v. 6]. Such knowledge is life-giving nourishment to our spirit—like food to our bodies.

He should do that even if it made him unpopular. Throughout the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, this had been God’s requirement of His servants—that they knew and obeyed His Word, and taught it to their children.

Paul’s instructions to Timothy applies not only to church leaders but to all Christians as well. After all, did our Master not command us to “minister, and not be ministered unto” and to “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature”? Every one of us, especially mature Christians, ought to be teachers and not be like babies who need others to teach them the “first principles of the oracles of God” [Hebrews 5:12]. We all can be ministers of God’s Word to younger Christians and to our children.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 5
I TIMOTHY 4

THOUGHT

Are you skilled in the use of the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” [Ephesians 6:17]?

BIBLE LESSON

1 Timothy 5

LESSON

Due honour to God's servants

VERSE 17

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

This chapter contains Paul's instructions on how to minister to various groups in church. He starts with the members in general, counselling Timothy to consider them as family, and exhorting them accordingly. A major section is then devoted to the care of widows, who in those days were an especially vulnerable group.

Several remarks are then made regarding elders, not just the older Christians but those serving as overseers. Elders who rule well are to be worthy of "double honour", especially if they are involved in the preaching and teaching ministry. Accusations against an elder must be substantiated by two or three witnesses [v. 19] because of his office. Paul warns against frivolous charges levelled against elders based on hearsay and murmurings through the grapevine [v. 1]. However, in the case where the charges against an elder are found to be true, then the discipline ought to be public so that the congregation may fear [v. 20].

Take note of the emphasis given to the handling of God's Word. Those who "labour in the word and doctrine" today are the pastors, preachers, Bible class teachers and Bible study leaders. They, no doubt, need to spend much time in prayerful and thoughtful meditation in the Scriptures as well as in lesson preparation.

Church members should also accord to such servants of the Lord the relevant respect and appreciation. The highest "honour" you can give them is to avail yourself of the fruits of their labour and to apply the lessons they teach into your life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 6
I TIMOTHY 5

THOUGHT

Have you been supportive and appreciative of the labour of love of those who minister God's Word to you in your church?

BIBLE LESSON

1 Timothy 6

LESSON

The cost of riches

VERSE 17

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

It is remarkable that Paul's epistle written two thousand years ago can be so relevant to us now, especially for those of us living in urban societies. Meritocracy is a highly prized value and we are always exhorted to work hard, climb the ladder of success, excel in our work and business, and keep upgrading our skills. Successful entrepreneurs are held up as role models. The bestselling books in the bookstores are those that give advice on how to make money in the stock market or how to succeed in career and business.

But Paul warns that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" [v. 9] Flip the pages of your newspapers daily and you will see examples of people who "pierced themselves through with many sorrows" as a result of their greed and desire to get rich fast.

The man of God is reminded that the love of money is the root of all evil. He is advised to flee these things and to be contented with what our loving heavenly Father deems fit to bestow us.

However, it is not wrong to be rich. It is important to recognise that material wealth is a gift from God, entrusted to us to manage wisely. Do not be proud if God has granted you material blessings. Share it generously and invest it in God's work. Lay up treasures for yourself in heaven.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 7
I TIMOTHY 6

QUOTE

Riches I heed not nor man's empty praise. – "Be Thou My Vision"

BIBLE LESSON

2 Timothy 1

LESSON

Whence peace comes

VERSE 2

*To Timothy, my dearly
beloved son: Grace, mercy,
and peace, from God the
Father and Christ Jesus our
Lor.d*

One who has been reconciled to God can with full confidence know the assurance of the merciful love of God in Christ: grace to the worthless, mercy to the helpless and peace to the restless.

Grace is a gift that is given to you. You cannot earn it through your own efforts. Neither do you deserve it in the first place. If grace is defined as a gift that you do not deserve, then mercy is defined as not receiving the punishment that you deserve. God has shown to us both His grace and mercy. As a result, we have peace.

The world today sees and understands very little of this wonderful peace. What brings about such unrest? Ultimately, it is because man is at war both with himself and with God. His heart is restless until it finds rest in God, as grace, mercy and peace come only from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. It is the active working of God to reach us at our point of need and supply what we cannot obtain for ourselves. This becomes most evident in our lives when we are humble and contrite, especially when circumstances look hopeless.

What more could you ask for in life? There can be no greater gifts from God for those who open their hearts and minds to Him. If only you ask to understand God's truth, God will give you that understanding.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 8
2 TIMOTHY 1

THOUGHT

Grace is needed for every service, mercy for every failure and peace for every circumstance.

BIBLE LESSON

2 Timothy 2

LESSON

**Strengthened by His
grace**

VERSE 1

*Thou therefore, my son, be
strong in the grace that is in
Christ Jesus.*

In calling on Timothy to be strong, Paul was not telling Timothy to summon up his strength. He was asking Timothy to be made strong by something outside him: the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This grace is the blessing of strength that can only come about through the understanding of human limitations and weaknesses. To serve the Lord in any capacity, you have to know where your strength comes from.

If you think you can go out and live the Christian life in your own strength, you are in for disappointment. If you expect to be strong by yourself, you are going to fail. Yet if you think God owes you strength because you deserve it, you are also wrong.

Among God's children, the enemy sows confusion by teaching them how to live the Christian life apart from His grace. To be a fruitful Christian, you must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It sustains you as you serve Him. It flows through you to others and draws them to Christ, because His grace is supremely attractive.

The only strength that really matters in life is the strength of heart that comes from feeding on God's grace and trusting in God's grace. All the way through life, it is not health and physical strength that God delights in. The Lord takes pleasure in those who hope in His grace.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 9
2 TIMOTHY 2

THOUGHT

God gives more grace when burdens become greater. God sends more strength when labours increase.

BIBLE LESSON

2 Timothy 3

LESSON

Difficult times

VERSE 1

*This know also, that in the
last days perilous times
shall come.*

As the last days approach, difficult times will come for the righteous. In the last days, mankind is going to become increasingly evil.

As the human race continues to reject God and pursue its own wickedness, life will become more and more perilous for those who desire to live righteously. It will not be enough for the unrighteous to practise their wickedness. They will attempt to force the righteous to accept their practices and embrace their evil-doings. And when the righteous do not comply, they will become violently opposed to them. Ultimately, the righteous will be attacked. And in the last days, good would be deemed evil and evil, good.

False doctrines and ungodly living are twins, they go together and they are the greatest enemies of the Church. The Church will always be and has always been plagued by false teachers, false preachers and false Christians. Those who name the name of Christ say they represent God but they in fact represent Satan. They create confusion and disorder in the Church. And they keep the Church on red alert all the time. Difficult times are coming for the Church.

Walk in a personal reality with Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit, growing in the fruit of the Spirit in your character. Be honest with your thought life before God. Confess your sins and seek forgiveness. Be aware of the ongoing spiritual battle, be doctrinally discerning, be pure, holy and patient. You will win in the end.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 10
2 TIMOTHY 3

THOUGHT

In difficult times, we must persevere with the Bible in our hands and the witness of the Spirit in our hearts.

BIBLE LESSON

2 Timothy 4

LESSON

**Accomplishing your
service for God**

VERSE 5

*But watch thou in all
things, endure afflictions,
do the work of an
evangelist, make full proof
of thy ministry.*

The Church has survived because of God's faithful servants who have consistently supported God's work. These faithful few have stuck to their work when entrusted with tasks by the Lord. They do what needs doing so that God's work can be carried on.

What kind of servant are you? Are you living a life committed to pleasing God or are you living a life characterised by self-interest and preoccupation with the things of the world? Right now, you need to examine your heart carefully to see whether you are working and serving faithfully as God's servant.

If we are living our lives of faith and setting our minds as God's servants, then we are at least doing some of what we are supposed to do. We have nothing to boast about before the Lord. We have nothing to offer but our insufficiencies. Sometimes, pleasing God may mean accepting the fact that some people do not like you, some people criticise your ideas and some people downright despise you. God's servants must have the kind of faith that cherishes what God has entrusted to them, no matter how others might see them.

Because we are fundamentally inadequate by nature, we are incapable of serving the Lord to perfection. And that is why we have so many shortcomings and so many excuses. A servant is someone who seeks his master's interests, not his own. You and I must set our hearts as God's servants and live our lives to seek the Lord's interests.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 11
2 TIMOTHY 4

THOUGHT

All around there are needs to be met: Be God's heart and hands and feet.

BIBLE LESSON

Titus 1–3

LESSON

A gracious reminder

TITUS 1:9

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

If you have experienced God's grace, you are a changed person. There is simply no way you can receive God's gift of eternal life and have your sins forgiven by the blood of Christ, and go on living as you have formerly lived. By His sovereign grace alone, God has raised you from spiritual death and brought you personally to know Him.

However, at the same time, there are also powerful forces at work tempting you to revert to your old ways. The world bombards you daily with its false messages that promise pleasure, enticing you to satisfy your needs in disobedience to God. The flesh tempts you from within, promising you fulfilment if you yield. All of these powerful forces make us tend to forget what God has done in our hearts by His grace. And so we need to be reminded again and again of how God's grace has laid hold of our lives.

We live in a pagan world, a culture that exalts sin and despises God. What our society needs is the Gospel. How do we gain a hearing for the Gospel among people who mock God and His people? We must live godly lives and excel in good works that display God's grace through us.

More importantly, we need to keep being reminded of how God's grace has changed us. If you have received mercy when you deserved judgement, then show God's kindness and love to others. God has shown us great mercy. In light of that, show God's mercy to a rebellious world by your godly behaviour and good deeds.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 12
TITUS 1-3

THOUGHT

Work done well for Christ will receive a "well done" from Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Philemon***LESSON****Change****VERSE 11**

Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.

The Book of Philemon is Paul's personal letter to a fellow believer, Philemon, appealing on behalf of Onesimus, who was Philemon's slave. Onesimus had run away but was converted under the ministry of Paul, and became a changed man.

Likewise, God changes us through the power of the Gospel when we believe. He changes our character, our behaviour towards others and our relationship with Him. However, these changes do not come about automatically. What was Paul like before he met Christ? When the Jews stoned the innocent Stephen, Paul watched the gruesome spectacle in hearty agreement. He threatened and slaughtered disciples of the Lord.

Perhaps before you met Christ, you were an angry person with a reputation for having a short fuse. But as you learn to walk in the Spirit, you see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control replacing outbursts of anger and arguments. You learn to put off the sinful ways of the old man and put on the godly ways of the new man in Christ.

Has He changed your attitude? If you have trusted in Christ, are you allowing His grace to change you? Are you less angry and more patient? Is your attitude towards authority becoming more submissive, even when you are mistreated? Is your life changing from self-centred uselessness to Christ-centred usefulness? What about your relationships? Are you working at being reconciled to those from whom you are alienated, as much as it depends on you? Have you sought forgiveness and made restitution to those you have wronged?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 13
PHILEMON

THOUGHT

Ask yourself: What shortcoming or sin does God most want to change in me?

BIBLE LESSON*Hebrews 1***LESSON****Jesus the Son of God, our Redeemer****VERSE 3**

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

While every book of the Bible is written to strengthen our faith, Hebrews is specially written for Christians to give us further insight and understanding on why Jesus had to come to earth to redeem us.

God in ages past had used both angels and men as messengers to communicate with us. We have seen images of angels drawn from the imagination of man. These representations—whether in drawings or in sculptures—are but works of art. These include illustrations of Jesus that we so often see. Angels are but heavenly messengers following God's specified instructions to be guardians, announcers and executors of His judgements. They perform the passive work of conveying God's message.

However, Jesus is not only sent as a communicator but He is the Son of God. He came to earth to make the way for us to communicate directly with God because Jesus is God Himself. Earthly priests are no longer necessary for communication between God and man. Jesus is the High Priest. Human priests need to cleanse themselves before they can act on behalf of the people. Jesus is already pure. He is the only man who does not sin.

All beings must worship Jesus. We are all subjected to Him and should all worship at His feet. He is the Ruler of all. The reason is simple. As the Son of God, He is given the throne. He sits at the right hand of honour. So bow down and worship our Redeemer.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 14
HEBREWS 1

THOUGHT

And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. – Hebrews 1:6

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 2

LESSON

Jesus, the Anchor of our soul

VERSE 1

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

You would recall that there was a certain indescribable joy that you had when you first received Jesus into your heart as Saviour and Lord. Yet this seems to diminish with time. But God is faithful. He will not cast us off. Some Christians become less fervent over time and their love for the Lord fades. This chapter is a warning to awaken us to the danger that is at hand if it happens to you.

Be watchful of the slow erosion in your commitment to God. Jesus stands ready all the time to receive us back to His fold. Be sure your faith is anchored on the solid rock. Listen to the Word of God and do not sway from your first love.

Jesus is our King, Creator, Provider and Redeemer. He came in the flesh in order to redeem us from our sins. He had to suffer and die in our stead. Angels cannot do this because they are not flesh and blood. Jesus had to be fully man to die for man but He is also fully God and thus sinless to be qualified to do so. Having paid for our sins, He will surely not leave us to fend for ourselves. If He cared enough to die for us, there is nothing that He will not do to keep us in Him.

Jesus is not ashamed to call us joint-heirs of God's heritage. He shares His inheritance with us and has promised us a place in His mansion in heaven. Pray that you will stay close to Jesus at all times.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOEL 1
HEBREWS 2

THOUGHT

But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? – Hebrews 2:6

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 3

LESSON

Jesus, the Builder of all things

VERSE 4

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

The people of old thought Moses was the greatest of all prophets. It is true that Moses was indeed a great man of God but he was not the high priest. It was Aaron. Moses was only a prophet.

Jesus is both Prophet and High Priest. He is the Builder and we should value the Builder more than the building. God is the Builder of all things. Moses was a faithful servant in the house of God. We are part of this house if we hold on with confidence. We rejoice because there is hope in the end. Indeed, there is endless hope in Christ.

Listen to the Word of God today. Do not harden your heart as those who followed Moses did. They grieved God's heart by tempting and provoking Him. For forty years, they wandered around and eventually they perished in the wilderness for their disobedience to God.

Take heed to the Word of God. Do not harbour doubt or unbelief. Stay close to Jesus and pray that you will not stray from the true and living God. Sin can separate us from God. And we have all sinned. No one is better than another in God's eyes. Confess your sins and repent. God has a place for everyone, as He loves each of us. His Son Jesus came to die in order to redeem all, yet only a remnant will be saved. Are you one of them?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOEL 2
HEBREWS 3

THOUGHT

Soften your heart to listen to the voice of God. – Hebrews 3:7–8

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 4

LESSON

Jesus, the Word

VERSE 12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

God has promised that those who accept Jesus as Saviour will have a place in heaven. However, there is an expiry date to this offer. It is applicable only for those who are still alive. There is no second chance for anyone who has died. Grab the opportunity while you can.

We fall into sin because of unbelief. God is just and any soul who sins has to die. We are responsible for our sins because God has given us the instructions and warnings on the consequences of not listening to His Word. Yet all of us have come short of His glory.

In order to save us, Jesus died in our stead. Those who do not believe in the saving power of Jesus will die to pay for their own sins. We should be aware that heaven is for believers while hell is for those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. The Bible instructs us on how to believe but also warns us of the consequences of unbelief. We cannot give any excuse that we are ignorant of God's salvation offer. God's Word is powerful. The whole universe operates according to what is written in the Word of God.

Yet God's Word is also a two-edged sword. The same Word that creates can also destroy. The Word that judges also destroys. Every subject and argument that man can think of and every man-centred thought and deed will be laid bare before the omniscient God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOEL 3
HEBREWS 4

THOUGHT

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. – Hebrews 4:11

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 5

LESSON

Jesus, our High Priest

VERSE 10

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

What is the job of a high priest? It is to approach God on behalf of others by praying, and by offering gifts and sacrifices for their sins against God. He reconciles and appeases God through these acts. The high priest should have compassion for those who are ignorant of their faith and those who have fallen out.

Yet, the high priest also has to wrestle with his own problems, as he too has sinned. The high priest has a place of honour that is not for the person to brag about. He is simply a man called by God, like Aaron.

In the same manner, Jesus has been appointed by God in the sense that He was sent by God. However, He is the Son of God and He is perfect. As a human high priest, Jesus obeyed all the commandments and went through all human sufferings. Yet, He is no ordinary human high priest. He is of the order of Melchisedec. He need not offer any sacrifice for himself because He is perfect. He offered His own body instead and this is the perfect sacrifice.

The Christian walk does not stop in simply knowing that Christ has died for all our sins. We need to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. The author of Hebrews has many things to say but we are always dull of hearing. We cannot behave forever like babies only wanting milk. We need to grow up in the faith and be adults, taking on solid food.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 1
HEBREWS 5

THOUGHT

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. – Hebrews 5:14

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 6

LESSON

Our faithful Lord

VERSE 10

*For God is not unrighteous
to forget your work and
labour of love, which ye
have shewed toward his
name, in that ye have
ministered to the saints,
and do minister.*

Our faith is likened to that of swimming against the current in a flowing river: we either move forward or get pushed back by the water. Jesus wants us to move forward instead of remaining on the same spot, dwelling only and always on the basic teachings. Progress in our faith will propel us to walk closer to God and have a sweeter fellowship with Him and His people. We ought to mature and grow in our faith.

There are those who have already tasted the goodness, shared in the power of the Holy Spirit and enjoyed the multi-fold blessings of God but have now fallen away. Their behaviour would be like having Jesus to sacrifice all over again for them. What a shame! A piece of land that soaks in the rain should produce useful herbs. If it produces nothing other than thorns, it is really useless.

Jesus encourages us to be faithful and diligent. God is fair and is mindful to reward our works and the love that we have shared in His Name. There is endless hope for those who persevere. The Bible records that God promised Abraham blessings and multiplication of his descendants. God need not swear to anyone but for the sake of our faith, God swore upon Himself because there is no one greater than God Himself. He will keep His word.

God has promised that there is hope and eternal life for those who accept Jesus as their Saviour. This is the Gospel truth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 2
HEBREWS 6

THOUGHT

**That ye be not slothful, but followers of them
who through faith and patience inherit the
promises. – Hebrews 6:12**

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 7

LESSON

**Jesus, the Perfect
Sacrifice**

VERSE 28

*For the law maketh men
high priests which have
infirmity; but the word of
the oath, which was since
the law, maketh the Son,
who is consecrated for
evermore.*

Melchisedec was first mentioned in Genesis 14:18 (also spelt as “Melchizedek”) as king of Salem and the priest of the most High God. King of Salem means “King of Peace”. The Bible did not mention Melchizedec’s parents. We could say that He is the Son of God, high priest forever and ever.

Abraham, on his return from victory over King Chedorlaomer and his allies, met Melchisedec. He asked Melchisedec for blessings and even gave him tithes. He is obviously of a higher level than Abraham. David also mentioned Melchisedec [Psalm 110]. David honoured him as the eternal priest whose name was to be celebrated in the coronation of kings.

In Hebrews, Jesus is described as the high priest in the order of Melchisedec, whose name also means “King of Righteousness”. Regardless of whether Melchisedec is Jesus Himself, the important truth we should remember is that Jesus is not appointed by man but by God as our High Priest in the same order as that of Melchisedec.

Only Levites are appointed as priests. Humanly speaking, Jesus was a descendant of the tribe of Judah, who were not appointed as priests. The special High Priest, Jesus, is pure and does not need to make atonement for His sins for He is sinless. He is the perfect sacrifice that was offered once and for all. The Law had once made imperfect men priests but after the Law, God sent us His Son both as the Perfect Priest and the Perfect Sacrifice.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 3
HEBREWS 7

THOUGHT

**Wherefore he is able also to save them to the
utmost that come unto God by him ... –
Hebrews 7:25**

BIBLE LESSON*Hebrews 8***LESSON****A more excellent covenant****VERSE 6**

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

We have, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, a High Priest that is not only different from the old Levitical high priest but also a more excellent office. What is the basis for this claim?

Firstly, Jesus is the minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord Himself established. The Old Testament tabernacle was built by the hands of man and was meant to be a place that is consecrated for the worship of God. Christ has shown us a more excellent way to worship God. True worship is done in spirit and in truth [John 4:23–24].

Secondly, Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises. Jeremiah prophesied of the day when God would make a new covenant with Israel. God had already foreseen Israel's failure to continue in the first covenant. So He promised to give her a new covenant, which is more excellent. In it, He would put His laws directly into their minds and write them in their hearts. Every Israelite would know God intimately because His Spirit would indwell their hearts. And their sins would be forgiven.

This is the same promise that Christ gives to all believers. A sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, becomes a true believer in Christ when he receives the Gospel and puts his trust in Jesus, Who died on the Cross to atone for his sins. To such a believer, God promises to dwell in his heart and guide him through his journey in this life. Are you such a believer?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 4
HEBREWS 8

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for Your promises and tender mercies that You have shown to me. May You continue to guide me as I journey in this life, till I see You face to face.

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 9

LESSON

A more excellent sacrifice

VERSE 12

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were reminded of their sinfulness and their need to be cleansed before approaching the throne of God. God required them to sacrifice an animal and the sacrificial blood of these animals was used in the cleansing rituals. Only God can forgive and cleanse the people of their sins.

In this process, the people were continually reminded that sin had consequences and a life had to be sacrificed to atone for it. However, the blood of sacrificial animals could not truly wash away man's sins. Otherwise, these rituals would not need to be repeated daily.

Although the people sinned continually against Him, God was not willing that any should perish. He would like to see all sinners come to repentance and be reconciled to Him. In His mercy, God sent His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be born as a man, and lived a perfect life on earth. Then He suffered and died on the Cross, as the Perfect Sacrifice for man's sin. Jesus' death was the perfect sacrifice that does away with the Old Testament animal sacrifices. John called Jesus the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world [John 1:29].

The Bible shows us that sin has consequences: eternal damnation in hell. Christ came to this world as the sacrificial Lamb to redeem us and restore us to God. All that is left for you to do is repent and acknowledge Jesus as your Saviour. Have you done so?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 5
HEBREWS 9

THOUGHT

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. – Hebrews 9:27–28

BIBLE LESSON*Hebrews 10***LESSON****A more excellent way****VERSE 20**

*By a new and living way,
which he hath consecrated
for us, through the veil, that
is to say, his flesh;*

In today's reading, Christians are described by a few characteristics. Firstly, we have the boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. In other words, we can boldly come before the holy presence of God through our faith in the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. We no longer need to fear the wrath of God, as non-believers often do. We also have a High Priest who is ever living, and ever interceding for us, even when we do not know what to pray for.

Unlike the Jews who were prevented from entering the holiest by the veil in the tabernacle, we have a new and living way to approach God. The more excellent way is through the Person of our Lord Jesus. He is the Living God Himself, and He is our Mediator. When Jesus died on the Cross, He tore asunder the veil that separated man and God.

Jesus came to this world and established a more excellent way that man can be reconciled with God. What should our response be to this marvellous fact? The heart of the believer is cleansed and indwelt with the Holy Spirit, so we are never far from God, Who speaks to our hearts and comforts us during our trials and tribulations on this earth.

We are exhorted to have fellowship with one another, and to provoke one another to love and good works [v. 24–25]. We are also to come together to worship God and exhort one another from God's Word, the more excellent way revealed by God Himself.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 6
HEBREWS 10

THOUGHT

The way of the Cross leads us home.

BIBLE LESSON*Hebrews 11***LESSON****A more excellent hope****VERSE 1**

*Now faith is the substance
of things hoped for, the
evidence of things not seen.*

In this most popular chapter on the faith of various individuals in Scripture, we learn several facts about the Christian belief.

First, the Scriptures contain many miraculous acts of God that we have to believe by faith. An example is the creation of the universe by God in six literal days. Second, God actively interacts with His creation throughout the ages and personally directs the paths of selected individuals. Third, faithful men respond to God by obeying Him, even though the tasks that God wanted them to do might seem difficult, or even impossible.

We also read that these faithful men often died without seeing God's promises come to fruition. What drove such faithful men to undertake the tasks that God had commanded of them? Although these men did not see the final outcome of God's promises, they were persuaded that God is a faithful God and will bring His promises to fruition one day [v. 13–16]. They confessed that they were pilgrims on this earth, and they sought a better place—a heavenly place the Builder and Maker of which is God. What a marvellous and more excellent hope for all men in this sinful and perverse world that we are living in!

This is also the same hope for every Christian today. All earthly pursuits are eventually vanities and vexations of the spirit. A more excellent hope is in the promises of God through the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died to redeem us from our sins. Do you have such a hope in your heart?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 7
HEBREWS 11

THOUGHT

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness!

BIBLE LESSON*Hebrews 12***LESSON****A more excellent father****VERSE 6**

*For whom the Lord
loveth he chasteneth, and
scourgeth every son whom
he receiveth.*

We are all basically sinful. We are born sinful, inheriting the sinful nature since the fall of Man. Even after we have become new creatures when we have become Christians, the temptation to sin is still in our flesh.

God gives us earthly fathers to discipline us when we do wrong. As Christians, we must also realise that we have a more perfect Father, our Heavenly Father, Who watches over us and disciplines us when we sin.

While our earthly father is not perfect and may at times make mistakes, our Heavenly Father is our perfect Father, and for several reasons. First, He is our Creator, Who made us in His image and Who knows us even better than we know ourselves. Second, God is omniscient and is therefore able to watch over us perfectly in everything that we do. Third, God is just but He is also gracious, merciful and good, and disciplines us for our own good—to bring us back to Him and to be partakers of His holiness.

Take heart in these facts and heed the encouragement in today's reading. Thank God for His chastisement. We are not to take His corrections lightly, yet neither should we be disheartened. Be assured also that God's discipline is always perfectly measured and meted out to bring about His intended purposes for our good, though sometimes it may seem grievous to us. If nothing else, be assured that if you are chastised, God is treating you as His child.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 8
HEBREWS 12

MEDITATION

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. – Proverbs 3:7–8

BIBLE LESSON

Hebrews 13

LESSON

A more excellent set of values

VERSE 18

Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

As Christians, here is a list of values that the author of Hebrew urges us to adopt. First, we are exhorted to be hospitable [v. 2] and compassionate [v. 3] to strangers, not just to fellow Christians [v. 1]. Christians should show the example of good neighbourliness to everyone, regardless of their race, language or religion. We are ambassadors for Christ and our testimonies not only glorify Christ but may also add souls to God's Kingdom.

Next, we are not to be greedy for money because, firstly, God is always providing for our needs and, secondly, the love of money is the root of all evil. Also, we should not forget those who have ministered God's Word to us, and have directed our paths with godly love. First and foremost in this list would be our parents and elders.

Besides the values stated above, we are also exhorted to make firm our faith, and do this with a measure of grace. If we stand firm in our faith, we will not be swayed whenever a new or strange doctrine comes our way. Having established our hearts in this manner, we should continue in our growth by serving God in whatever capacity He has called us to be in. Finally, we should remember to do good and have fellowship with one another so that our Father in Heaven will be glorified and well pleased.

Let us not forget that we are not of this world, even though we are in this world. Let our conversations be such that the world may see Christ in us; perchance some may be saved.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 9
HEBREWS 13

THOUGHT

Let the lower lights be burning! Send a gleam across the wave! Some poor fainting struggling seamen, you may rescue, you may save.

BIBLE LESSON*James 1***LESSON****A brother, a servant****VERSE I**

*James, a servant of God
and of the Lord Jesus
Christ, to the twelve tribes
which are scattered abroad,
greeting.*

James was the Lord's brother [1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19]. His epistle seems strange to some readers because of what it does not contain. There is no doctrine of redemption in it or any other formulated doctrine. It deals with life, conduct, relations, temptations as well as trials. His emphasis is on practical Christianity. He wrote to the scattered Jewish Christians who were persecuted for their faith in Christ.

His use of parables and proverbs suggests he had a fine poetical vein in his nature. His imagination lends liveliness to his maxims. Coincidentally, his language is strikingly similar to our Lord's, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. On the human side, the poetical trait in the Lord Jesus and in James (regarded as the Lord's natural brother) may go back to the mother whose hymn of praise Luke has preserved for us.

James calls himself a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word means a "bond-servant". It is not one who is bound by force against his own will, but one who has bound himself and made a loving surrender of his will, and finds service to be the truest liberty. Bond-service is always to be considered in view of him to whom we are bound. If it is a bond-service to Christ, that service is perfect freedom.

The Lord calls those who do the will of His Father in heaven, His brother, sister, mother [Matthew 12:50] and friends [John 15:14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

OBADIAH
JAMES I

THOUGHT

My ear hast Thou opened (bored); I will not go out free. – Exodus 21:5–6

BIBLE LESSON*James 2***LESSON****Justified by works or by faith?****VERSE 24**

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

In this chapter, James condemns the sinful preference of the rich over the poor. This he imputes to partiality and injustice, an act contrary to God's directive, Who has chosen the poor and Whose interest is often persecuted, and Whose name blasphemed by the rich. He shows that the whole law is to be fulfilled, and that mercy should be followed, as well as justice. He exposes the error of those who boast of faith without works, which is dead faith.

James maintained that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" [v. 17], whereas Paul declared firmly that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" [Galatians 2:16a]. How do we reconcile these two statements of faith? Do they contradict each other? God forbid.

The justification of which Paul speaks is different from that spoken of by James; Paul speaks of our being justified before God, James speaks of our faith being justified before men. Thus we see that we are justified before God by faith, but our faith is justified before men by works.

So good works is not a condition for justification (make right with God), but evidence of it. Do not confound the two. You must lay Christ as your foundation first, and afterwards build on Him the superstructure of good works. Faith will honour Him as the only Saviour of mankind, and works will honour Him as Lord and Master.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JONAH I
JAMES 2

THOUGHT

Works are nothing without faith [St. Paul]; faith is nothing without works [St. James].

BIBLE LESSON*James 3***LESSON****The evils of the tongue****VERSE 6**

*And the tongue is a fire,
a world of iniquity: so is
the tongue among our
members, that it defileth
the whole body, and setteth
on fire the course of nature;
and it is set on fire of hell.*

James reproves ambition and an arrogant magisterial tongue in this chapter. He shows the duty and advantage of bridling it because of its power to do mischief. Those who profess religion ought especially to govern their tongues. True wisdom makes men meek avoiders of strife and envy. It may easily be distinguished from a wisdom that is earthly and hypocritical.

Fire, in its original formation, was intended for man's good. It is a good servant in the grate but a bad master when raging in a burning house. Its tendency is to consume and destroy. So it is with the tongue. Even the smallest spark is capable of producing incalculable mischief, beyond the power of man to repair. A single motion of the tongue can irritate and inflame a man, change him instantly into a savage beast and an incarnate devil. It has kindled flames of war and spread desolation.

Search the long catalogue of sins against God, against your neighbour, against yourself, and there will be found one that has the tongue as its principal ally, employed in its service. The slanderer, flatterer, swearer and talebearer are monstrous men.

Let our tongue be as choice silver, or tree of life, to enrich or feed the Lord's people. Let our speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, for God's honour and for man's good. Let us move our tongue to entreat for our tongue, for He that made the tongue can tame the tongue. He that gave man a tongue to speak can give him a tongue to speak well.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JONAH 2
JAMES 3

THOUGHT

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. – Solomon

BIBLE LESSON*James 4***LESSON****Our failures in prayer****VERSE 3**

*Ye ask, and receive not,
because ye ask amiss, that
ye may consume it upon
your lusts.*

James now turns from things that should be in the previous chapter (pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated) to things as they were in the Hebrew Christian communities: contentions, heart-burnings, enmities and sectarian rivalries.

Disputes among God's people had made James distressed and anxious. He had taught God's people to abandon the friendship of this world, and to submit themselves entirely to God. All detraction and rash judgement of others should be carefully avoided, and must preserve a constant regard, and pay the utmost deference to the disposals of divine Providence.

James also suggested sharply why the Hebrew Christians failed to receive divine benedictions. He was evidently thinking of cases in which men prayed for what was very necessary in the endeavour to live the Christian life, to meet the Christian obligations, and to render the Christian service, but had not intended to use what they might gain in answer to these spheres. They purposed to spend it on their own selfish pleasures.

The omniscient God to Whom we addressed our prayers is in no way deceived, and He makes no mistakes. We cannot have from Him what we intend to use for other things. Do we ask God to bless our health, family, studies, career and protection, so that we may serve Him better? Even when we do not err in praying, we may err by praying amiss. Our daily prayer is at its best when we make use of what might be bestowed for the honour of God and the interest of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JONAH 3
JAMES 4

THOUGHT

To pray for that which is to satisfy our lower, baser nature can never be a Christian prayer.

BIBLE LESSON*James 5***LESSON****Prayer and praise****VERSE 13**

*Is any among you afflicted?
let him pray. Is any merry?
let him sing psalms.*

In this chapter, James reproves the vices of rich men who oppress the poor. He shows them how great their sin and folly are in the sight of God, and how grievous the punishments that should fall upon them. He exhorts the saints to patience under sufferings, warns them from vain and profane swearing, and presses to various duties and branches of religious worship, private and public, and to the performance of several good offices of love to one another. He concludes by recommending them to bring back those that have strayed from the ways of truth.

By affliction, we understand the distresses that come from trying and perplexing circumstances. The idea is that if the sufferer broods over his woes, he is sure to get more and more depressed. The Christian way of relief is to carry the burden to God in prayer. All we can do, and the thing we should do, is to take such afflictions freely to God in private prayer.

There should be a song of praise in times of rejoicing and success. At such times, we want to sing, and we should sing unto God. Let it have a ring of a psalm. Let it be such a thanksgiving that turns our heart to God and fills our thoughts with God. Bring God near, and keep God near in these joyful times.

Take care in all various circumstances and moods of the Christian life, and do not lose your self-restraint and dishonour your Christian profession.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JONAH 4
JAMES 5

THOUGHT

Let prayer and praise, the twin messengers of God, hold your hands, one on the right and the other on the left, to guide you heavenward.

BIBLE LESSON

1 Peter 1

LESSON

Transformed

VERSE 2

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

If you read the first 10 verses of this encouraging letter, you will probably be surprised that Peter was able to pen these words. Peter was the fisherman who cut off the right ear of a priest's servant and later denied our Lord thrice in public. How could he have written such elegant words that are full of wise counsel and manifestation of great faith?

The truth is Peter would not have been able to do it without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Comforter sent by God the Father, through the Son, had inspired him in writing these words of wisdom. Another noteworthy point is that through these passages, we can see how the Holy Spirit transformed Peter into a strong and joyful witness for God.

God would sanctify His elect for the good of the believer and also as a testimony to the world [v. 2]. People should be able to see a lively hope, a longsuffering patience and an unspeakable joy in us. Our faith is built on the salvation of our souls. As God's salt and light in this world, we should strive to be holy even as God is holy. Be sober and obedient to His will, casting off your former lusts. Fear God and love one another without pretence, abiding by His Word.

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you walking daily by the Saviour's side?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH I
I PETER I

REMINDER

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. – 1 Peter 1:7

BIBLE LESSON*1 Peter 2***LESSON****Being a Christian****VERSE 12**

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

To be a Christian, one just has to believe in Christ and confess Him as Lord and Saviour. However, the Christian walk does not end here. Being a Christian, one is a living stone and an integral part of the spiritual house of God.

As God's chosen elect, we are both part of a royal priesthood and peculiar people. In Old Testament times, priests acted as mediators for man. But through the blood of Christ, we no longer need these priests. We are royal priests ourselves. As children of God, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices with our hearts and minds.

We are also a peculiar people, literally meaning "purchased". We are "peculiar" in that we are special because we are called out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Perhaps it is also right to read an element of "strangeness" in this peculiarity—at least in the eyes of worldly people. The Apostle Peter exhorted Christians to separate themselves from carnal desires and fleshly lusts. He then advised God's people to submit themselves to authorities, and be especially patient, emulating the example of the suffering Christ, if they find themselves under the jurisdiction of unrighteous rulers. These attitudes may appear "strange" in the eyes of the world.

This teaching goes beyond the call to live peacefully with all men. It comes after a reminder for Christians to bear a good testimony [v. 12], "having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 2
1 PETER 2**

CONSIDERATION

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. – 1 Peter 2:15–16

BIBLE LESSON*1 Peter 3***LESSON****Meek and quiet****VERSE 4**

*But let it be the hidden
man of the heart, in that
which is not corruptible,
even the ornament of a
meek and quiet spirit,
which is in the sight of God
of great price.*

Chapter 3 covers many aspects of the Christian life. We read of how wives and husbands should behave towards each other, how man should treat one another and even how we should contend for the Christian faith.

One word stands out in this chapter: meekness. A wife should not be too obsessed with gossip and outer appearance but should instead focus on her inner self, submitting to her husband. A husband should honour his wife in sacrificial love, remembering what Christ has done for him and the human race. Christians should all be of one mind instead of disputing one against another in vengeful retaliation.

Similarly while defending the faith, one should be ready to give an answer to every man who asks one for a reason of the hope that is in one in meekness and fear, having a good conscience. Many apologetics, in their zeal to speak up for Christ, always cite verse 15 as the source of their motivation. Yet many also miss out God's reminder for us to be meek and fearful when doing so. In their bid to win an argument for the theist camp, they often lose souls for the kingdom of God.

With regard to meekness, Peter's rhetoric answer is: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" [v. 13]. Did someone offend you recently? Do not take revenge but leave everything to God, "for it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" [v. 17].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 3
1 PETER 3

REMINDER

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. – Matthew 5:5, 9

BIBLE LESSON*1 Peter 4***LESSON****A living testimony****VERSE 19**

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

We started our study of 1 Peter by looking at how God has transformed the Apostle Peter to someone fit for His use. Here is another reason why Peter had changed so much since Christ first called him. Not only had he followed Christ in His public ministry on this earth, he must have also personally seen the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

This is apparent from his frequent call for Christians to follow the example of Christ. The chapter starts with, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath”, followed by, “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings” [v. 13], and ending with: “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator”, which reminds us of one of the seven of Christ’s sayings on the Cross [Luke 23:46].

We cannot underestimate the impact of Christ’s sayings and deeds on the life of Peter; they must have imprinted in his mind what it meant to be a Christian. It means: following the will of God regardless of the views of men; the call to be praying and watchful; the great love which covers the multitude of sins; ministering to others what have been ministered unto you [v. 10]; giving all glory to God; suffering for righteousness’ sake, and warning everyone against the coming judgement.

Inasmuch as Christ had impacted the life of Peter, how have you influenced the lives of others around you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 4
1 PETER 4

CONSIDERATION

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. – 1 Peter 4:10

BIBLE LESSON*1 Peter 5***LESSON****Power or pride****VERSE 6**

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

Peter ends the chapter by addressing two groups of people: the old and the young. And there is only one message for both: humility. The elder ones are often regarded with high esteem. With age comes experience, with experience comes wisdom, and with wisdom, respect. Yet seniority often comes with temptations related to power. Here Peter exhorts the elders among his audience to serve with a willing and ready mind instead of doing it out of self-interest and personal ambitions.

The younger ones, on the other hand, are often valued for their energy. With youth comes vitality, with vitality comes ideas, and with ideas, great passions. Yet youth also comes with snares, especially those related to pride. Here Peter advises the younger ones to be “clothed with humility”, for God resists the proud and graces the lowly.

Some read verse 6 as a continuing reminder for the young ones as an exhortation for both groups of people. Humility is the key against both power and pride. The young ones need to humble themselves and the elders also need to remember the mighty hand of God.

Young or old, the devil is real and he walks around seeking to devour anyone who succumbs to temptation [v. 8]. So be sober and vigilant. Resist the snares of Satan [v. 9] and keep your eyes on the eternal glory of God through Christ Jesus, towards that day when, after we have suffered a while, will be made perfect in His grace [v. 10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 5
1 PETER 5

REMINDER

And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. – 1 Peter 5:4

BIBLE LESSON

2 Peter 1

LESSON

The channels of prophecy

VERSE 21

*For the prophecy came not
in old time by the will of
man: but holy men of God
spake as they were moved
by the Holy Ghost.*

The central phenomenon of the Old Testament is prophecy. Prophecy is the result of God speaking through men moved by the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament prophets were men of the highest moral character and obedient to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical prophecies never had their origins in the will or mind of man. It is of God. They were written by men who were chosen to be the channels of prophetic teaching spoken from God. The Holy Spirit powerfully inspired them to write what God wanted to communicate to man. "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" [2 Samuel 23:2]. "The LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand ..." [Isaiah 8:11]. "Then the LORD put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth" [Jeremiah 1:9].

The one outstanding characteristic of the prophet is that he speaks with the authority of Jehovah Himself. Hundreds of Old Testament prophecies have been literally fulfilled in the New Testament. And more will certainly follow.

Although we are not prophets in the sense that Isaiah and Jeremiah were, we can speak as from God and for God, as they did. As they were sent into the world with a divine message, so Christ sends us out to proclaim His message, the Gospel. With power from God, let us all be God's messengers and witness for Him until we are called home to glory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 6
2 PETER 1

PRAYER

Lord, inspire me as I read the Bible so that I may be able to understand Your divine teachings clearly.

BIBLE LESSON

2 Peter 2

LESSON

False teachers

VERSE 9

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished.

Peter's first chapter in his second letter deals with God's prophets who spoke God's Word. Their purpose was to bring glory to the Lord. Their desire was to benefit God's people both spiritually and materially. The second epistle of Peter deals mainly with false prophets who teach false doctrines and destructive heresies, threatening the purity and sanctity of the Church. Having no sense of holiness, they deny the Lord Who has redeemed them. These false teachers are wolves in sheep's clothing [Matthew 7:15]. More dangerously, they are not out in the world but are within the Church. These false teachers shall be judged and destroyed.

False teachers encourage people to live immoral and licentious lives. Through covetous exploitations, they mislead their followers to meet their own ends. By using feigned words, they deceive the hearts of their flock.

God knows how to deliver the godly and reserve the unjust until the day of judgement to be punished. A description of false teachers follows. They walk after the flesh and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed, greedy, covetous and their vileness lure unstable souls astray. They follow the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. They speak great and pompous words of emptiness. They promise liberty but only enslave people.

Let us heed Peter's warning. We should continually be on guard, lest we are led astray by false teachers. We should be like the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" [Acts 17:11b].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 7
2 PETER 2

PRAYER

Dear Lord, grant me discernment to identify false teachers.

BIBLE LESSON*2 Peter 3***LESSON****Scoffers and the day of the Lord****VERSE 13**

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Peter's intention in writing the final section of this epistle was to stir up believers' pure minds by way of reminders. His hope was for believers to recall the words of the holy prophets and apostles, and to be active and lively in their work of holiness. He cautioned them against scoffers and proclaimed the certainty of their punishment.

The Apostle described ungodly scoffers who in the last days would say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The sceptics argued that it had not happened since the days of our fathers, therefore it would never happen. They scoffed and ridiculed the Christian belief of Christ's return.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise. However, His longsuffering causes Him to delay His judgement in order to extend His day of grace so that more may repent and return to Him. He wants none to perish. Peter admonished believers not to forget "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" [v. 8b]. The Lord does not measure time the same way man does. Eventually the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly for the unprepared as a thief in the night, bringing a judgement of consuming fire.

As we anticipate that glorious day, we must repent, turn to God and live consistent, holy lives. We must make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him. We are to live with an attitude of expectancy. If Jesus were to return today, will you be ready? Take time now to prepare yourself for Christ's coming!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NAHUM 1
2 PETER 3

PRAYER

Lord, I long to see Your face. I rejoice in the anticipation of Your coming again.

BIBLE LESSON*1 John 1***LESSON****True joy****VERSE 4**

*And these things write we
unto you, that your joy may
be full.*

Every person who sits down to write a letter has an objective. He wishes to communicate a certain message to the hearts, minds and lives of those to whom his message is addressed. And here at the very beginning of his letter, John sets down his objectives in writing to his people.

It was his wish to foster fellowship with men and fellowship with God [v. 3]. The preacher's aim must always be to bring men closer to one another and to God. Messages that cause divisions among believers are usually false messages. The Christian message can be summed up as having two great aims: love for men and love for God.

It was the wish of the Apostle John to bring his people joy [v. 4]. Joy is the essence of Christianity. A good message is one aimed at awakening godly sorrow, which leads to true repentance. But after the conviction of sin is produced, people are led to the Saviour in whom their sins are all forgiven. The ultimate note of the Christian message is joy. A message that depresses and discourages the recipient is not the Gospel.

To this end, John's aim was to set Jesus Christ before his readers. John said that he had seen Christ. We cannot see Christ in the flesh as John did, but we can still see him with the eye of faith.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NAHUM 2
1 JOHN 1

THOUGHT

If people are ever to find fellowship with one another and fellowship with God, and if they are ever to find true joy, they must find them in Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*1 John 2–3***LESSON****Forgiven through Christ****1 JOHN 2:2**

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

In this chapter, John writes against sins. There is a two-fold connection of thought here: with what has gone before and with what comes afterwards. And with it, there is also a two-fold danger that may cause one to think lightly of sin.

John says two things about sin. First, sin is universal. Anyone who says that he has not sinned is a liar. Second, there is forgiveness of sins through what Jesus Christ has done for man. Now it is possible to use both of these statements as an excuse to think lightly of sin. For example, if all have sinned, why make a fuss about it and why struggle against something that, in any event, is an inevitable part of the human situation? Also, if there is forgiveness of sins, why worry about it?

The answer to the first question: The Christian is one who has come to know God and the inevitable accompaniment of knowledge must be obedience. To know God and to obey God must, as John sees it, be two essential parts of the same experience. The answer to the second: The man who claims that he abides in God [1 John 2:6] and in Jesus Christ must live the same kind of life as Jesus had lived. Union with Christ necessarily involves imitation of Christ.

So John lays down his two great ethical principles: knowledge involves obedience, and union involves imitation. Therefore, in the Christian life, there can never be any inducement for us to think lightly of sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NAHUM 3
1 JOHN 2-3

THOUGHT

Confronted with the demands of God, man falls short of His glory. How can sinful man ever enter into the presence of the holy God? That problem is solved in Jesus Christ, the propitiation for the sins of this world.

BIBLE LESSON*1 John 4–5***LESSON****Truth versus error****I JOHN 4:6**

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Our Lord spoke regarding Satan on two occasions, “Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” [John 12:31] and “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” [Luke 10:18]. Christ saw that the preaching of the Gospel would fly like lightning throughout the world. It will pull down Satan’s kingdom wherever it goes. Now is the prince of this world cast out.

The Apostle John proclaims boldly that “we are of God”, and rightly so, because he can lay claim to the victory of Christ against Satan. The victory belongs to Christians as Paul puts it ever so succinctly: God is come in the flesh. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” [Romans 8:3–4].

It therefore remains our duty to discern truth from error, righteousness from evil. In Christ the victory over all the powers of evil has been won. The powers of evil did their worst to Him, even crucifying Him on the Cross. In the end, He emerged victorious. This victory belongs to the Christian.

The person whose source and origin is God hears the truth. The person whose source and origin is the world is not capable of hearing the truth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK I
I JOHN 4-5

THOUGHT

The difference between truth and error lies in the opposition between God and the world.

BIBLE LESSON*2 John***LESSON****Jesus, our anchor point****VERSE 9**

*Whosoever transgresseth, and
abideth not in the doctrine
of Christ, hath not God. He
that abideth in the doctrine of
Christ, he hath both the Father
and the Son.*

John is saying that the person who continues to transgress does not follow the doctrine of Christ. John had in mind the Gnostic heresies that denied the humanity of Jesus—that He had come in the flesh.

These false teachers had gone beyond revealed truth and professed to teach something more profound. They professed to have advanced beyond the simple facts and simple moral teaching of the Gospel. They had gone beyond the teachings of the Christian Bible, which was written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These heretics claimed to know “deeper than the thoughts of God”. In truth, their false teachings were not only incompatible with Scripture but also a complete reversal of it.

False teachers and heresies are very much alive today as in John’s days. The most dangerous ones are found within the Christian churches and endorsed by Christian leaders. Some examples of heresies then are (a) soul-sleep; (b) annihilation of the soul; (c) denial of the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell; and (d) “Oneness” Pentecostalism of the Godhead, which essentially denies the Trinity.

All heresies can be traced to man’s pride or his misunderstanding the meaning, sense and intent of Holy Scriptures, as our Lord Jesus has pointed out [John 5:39, John 6:63] to the Pharisees and Jews. The Jews had the words of Life in the literal sense, yet they failed to comprehend its true meaning and act on it.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 2
2 JOHN**

THOUGHT

The foundation of our knowledge is anchored to the historical figure of Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON

3 John

LESSON

Missions in the early church

VERSE 5

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

John's writing here is made clearer using this paraphrase: "Dear friend, you are being faithful to God when you care for the travelling teachers who pass through, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church here of your loving friendship. Please continue providing for such teachers in a manner that pleases God, for they are travelling for the Lord, and they accept nothing from people who are not believers. So we should support them so that we can be their partners as they teach the truth."

A group of travelling missionaries was on its way to the church of which Gaius was a member, and John urged him to receive them, to give them every support and to send them on their way in a true Christian manner.

In the early church, the Christian home was the place of the open door and the loving welcome. There can be few nobler works than to give a stranger the right of entry to a Christian home. This is especially so if the strangers are wandering missionaries who have given up home and comfort to carry afield the Word of God.

These missionaries have gone forth "for the sake of the Name" of Jesus Christ. It was not for advancing their career, a cause or a creed. It is solely because "the love of Christ constraineth [them]" [2 Corinthians 5:14a]. Furthermore, they took nothing from the Gentiles. If they had done otherwise, they might have been suspected of mercenary motives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 3
3 JOHN

THOUGHT

A person may not be a missionary or a preacher but instead employed in a secular job. Where he cannot go, he can make himself an ally in the truth through his gifts and prayers.

BIBLE LESSON

Jude

LESSON

Apostasy and God's judgement

VERSE 15

To execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH I
JUDE**

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, addresses this epistle to all who are sanctified and called by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ. He had originally intended to write a formal treatise on the common salvation but found it more needful to exhort believers against apostasies. He urged them to earnestly contend for the faith that was delivered unto the saints [v. 3].

The doctrines of these false teachers were corrupt and their morals abominable. They deliberately opposed wisdom, claimed superior spirituality, and had created trouble and caused divisions in the Church. They had turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. They denied the one Sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude quoted some historic examples of judgement for apostasy, including rebellious Israelites, fallen angels and the sexual perverts in Sodom and Gomorrah. He also reminded them of Cain's wickedness, Balaam's avarice and Korah's rebellion. Judgement would surely fall as Enoch had foretold. "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" [v. 16]. They desired the praises of man rather than God's. They would be convicted and sentenced.

As Christians, we should build ourselves up in the most holy faith, keeping ourselves in the love of God and trusting the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus. It is also worth noting that Jude has further instructed believers to have compassion on brethren who have erred in their doctrines. How willing are we to show mercy and love to others?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, grant me the wisdom that I will not be susceptible to wrong doctrines and help me to be vigilant against false teachers.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 1***LESSON**

**Blessed are they who
read, hear and keep**

VERSE 3

*Blessed is he that readeth,
and they that hear the
words of this prophecy, and
keep those things which are
written therein: for the time
is at hand.*

The Book of Revelation records the consummation of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. No man can discover God by his own intuition [Job 11:7]. The God of the universe is neither fiction nor fantasy.

We know God because He has revealed Himself to us, and we know Him only to the extent that He has revealed Himself. God has revealed Himself in creation [Psalm 19:1–3], in the incarnation of His Son [Hebrews 1:2] and in the inspiration of His Word [John 5:39; Hebrews 1:1].

The Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos was given the responsibility of bearing “the word of God ... the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw” [v. 2]. Just as John has this responsibility, we also have the responsibility to read and hear the Word. In the first [v. 3] of the seven beatitudes in Revelation [14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14], “blessed” means “well-being” and verse 3 can be rendered as “all is well with the person who reads, and hears and keeps the Word of God”. All three verbs are active, meaning that reading, hearing and keeping the Word of God is the way of life for the believer.

In the days before the modern printing press, few could read, but all could hear. Today, the Bible is freely available, and most could read and hear. However, the blessing is to the man who keeps the Word as well. To hear and not do is foolish and deluded [Matthew 7:26; James 1:22]. To hear and do is wise [Matthew 7:24].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 2
REVELATION 1**

THOUGHT

The power of God’s Word will be seen in our obeying it.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 2***LESSON**

**Remember! Repent!
Redo!**

VERSE 5

*Remember therefore from
whence thou art fallen,
and repent, and do the first
works; or else I will come
unto thee quickly, and will
remove thy candlestick out
of his place, except thou
repent.*

Revelation 2 and 3 contain the letters of our Lord Jesus Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). In these letters, our Lord commended, censured, and criticised the churches. However, each letter ends with an exhortation to heed His warnings. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ...” [v. 7, 11, 17, 29; Revelation 3:6, 13, 22].

The first letter was addressed to the church at Ephesus, a rich and vibrant commercial city. It was known as the Marketplace of Asia. This church took on the vitality of the city. Our Lord commended the church for their labour, patience, perseverance and spiritual discernment [v. 2–3].

However, there is a severe criticism of this church. The congregation had left its first love [v. 4]. It is not that the Ephesians had no love at all for God. The emphasis is on “first”. The Ephesians might be busy in their labours but they were lacking in love and in a spiritual rut. They had allowed activities to crowd out their relationship with God. They were so busy doing the work of God that they had no time for God.

This departure from their first love can be seen in two ways. First, they left their love *for* Christ. They did everything right but it was not moved by love for Christ. Second, they left their love *of* Christ. They preached the truth but not out of love for the brethren [Ephesians 4:31–5:2]. The warning is that we can do everything right but without love, it is nothing [1 Corinthians 13:1–3].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 3
REVELATION 2**

THOUGHT**Truth without love is dead orthodoxy.**

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 3***LESSON****The open door****VERSE 8**

*I know thy works: behold,
I have set before thee an
open door, and no man can
shut it: for thou hast a little
strength, and hast kept my
word, and hast not denied
my name.*

Philadelphia means “brotherly love”. What a beautiful name for a city. The church at Philadelphia is one of two churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that received only commendations from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord is identified as He Who is holy and true, and He “hath the key of David” [v. 7]. To have the key is a symbol of authority [Revelation 1:18]. In other words, our Lord Jesus has authority over life and death. Our Lord set before the Church at Philadelphia a wonderful opportunity [v. 7]. He had opened a door for the believers that even their enemies could not close. The “open door” is the God-given opportunity to preach the Gospel. The Gospel door was opened long ago, and it remains open now. But an open door is not necessarily an easy one.

Our Lord Jesus knows the ability of the believers, “thou hast a little strength” [v. 8]. This means that the church at Philadelphia were fewer in number and they were weaker in resources. However, it is not power or wisdom or the resources of men that determine the strength and success of a church. To be little in strength is a good start for serving God. Our Lord has promised, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” [2 Corinthians 12:9a].

The key to an enduring Gospel ministry is obedience. The church at Philadelphia “hast kept” God’s Word [v. 8, 10] and He will keep them “from the hour of temptation” [v. 10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**HAGGAI I
REVELATION 3**

THOUGHT

Pray for God’s open doors and God’s help for our little strength.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 4***LESSON****The throne of God****VERSE 3**

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

The first three chapters of Revelation focus on things on earth, things that John had seen and things that are [Revelation 1:19]. Then John deals with “things which must be hereafter” [Revelation 4] and the chapter marks a turning point in Revelation. The focus shifts from the sinfulness of man and the weakness of the church to the glory of God and the splendour of heaven. John was invited into heaven, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” [v. 1].

John saw a throne. The throne is a symbol of power and authority. And on the throne sat One whom John describes in terms of colours emanating from precious stones—jasper, sardine stone and emerald.

Jasper is described as “a stone most precious ... clear as crystal” [Revelation 21:11; Exodus 28:20]. The sardine stone [sardius] is a dark red gem [Revelation 21:20; Exodus 28:17]. John also saw a rainbow in a shade of green. Emerald is a green stone [Exodus 28:18; Revelation 21:19]. All three stones are used in the breast plate worn by the high priest [Exodus 28:17, 18, 20]. All three stones are also material for the heavenly city [Revelation 21:19–20].

The colours of the precious stones are glorious, and it is quite obvious that the colours emanating from these stones represent the glory of God. Paul describes our Lord Jesus Christ as “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” [1 Timothy 6:14–16]. What glory! What manner of God is our God!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HAGGAI 2
REVELATION 4

THOUGHT

Worship in the purest form is to adore God for who He is.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 5***LESSON****The Lion of the tribe of
Juda****VERSE 5**

*And one of the elders saith
unto me, Weep not: behold,
the Lion of the tribe of Juda,
the Root of David, hath
prevailed to open the book,
and to loose the seven seals
thereof.*

John continues with his visit in heaven and now focuses on the One who sat on the throne [Revelation 4]. Then his focus shifted to the book—or scroll—that was in the right hand [Revelation 5]. The book was sealed with seven seals. It was a book that neither man nor angel deserves to open and read.

John wept over this helplessness until he was informed that “the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals” [v. 5].

The title “Lion of the tribe of Juda” was first used in Jacob’s blessing for his son [Genesis 49:9–10; Psalm 60:7]. The “Root of David” is also used by Old Testament prophets to refer to the Messiah [Isaiah 11:1, 10; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8]. Both titles refer to the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ. God promised David that his kingdom would be established forever through his Son [2 Samuel 7:16]. Our Lord Jesus is that Son of David [Matthew 1:1; Hebrews 7:14]. Our Lord Himself testifies, “I Jesus ... I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star” [Revelation 22:16].

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who is worthy to break the seals and open the book because He “hath prevailed” [v. 5]. Christ is the victor. He has overcome. Our Lord Jesus paid the ultimate price by his death on the Cross. He alone has earned the right to loose the seals to bring judgement on those who continue to reject His offer of redemption [John 3:35–36].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH I
REVELATION 5**

THOUGHT

The Father gave His Son, and the Son gave His life for us.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 6***LESSON****Testimony of the saints****VERSE 9**

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

Having taken the scroll from the Father, the Lamb now begins to open the seals. As each of the six seals is opened, a new judgement comes upon the earth, which is recorded in this chapter.

The first four seals ushered in four coloured horses. The first is a white horse, and its rider is an armed and crowned conqueror [v. 2], a symbol of tyranny. The rider of the red horse has a great sword [v. 4], a symbol of bloodshed and violence. The third is a black horse, and its rider comes with a pair of balances [v. 5]. This horse symbolises scarcity and economic ruin [v. 6]. The pale horse is the most menacing because its rider is Death [v. 8]. The four horsemen combine to paint a picture of oppression, violence, famine and death. These also represent the chief concerns of man over the course of history. Today, we face the same issues: acts of terror and violence that rob us of our security, economic ruin that threatens our livelihood, and death, the perpetual enemy.

The fifth seal opens to the suffering church. It reveals the tragedy of the suffering and death of those who had been “slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” [v. 9].

Like Stephen [Acts 7:59] and Antipas of the church at Pergamos [Revelation 2:13], they were slain for the Word of God. They were faithful in death because they had been faithful in life. That should be our goal as God’s redeemed.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 2
REVELATION 6

THOUGHT

You will not be ready to die for God until you are ready to live for Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 7***LESSON****Seven-fold praise****VERSE 12**

Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

After the first six seals were opened, there was a reprieve. The seventh seal will not be opened straightaway, hence this interlude chapter between God's judgements. However, there is a shift in focus away from God's judgement upon the unbelievers to God's sealing of the saints. As God's enemies cry unto the mountains to fall on them than to face divine judgement, the saints sing a victory song unto God, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" [v. 10].

Who are these who praise God? They are not the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel [v. 1–8]. Rather, they are of the "great multitude ... of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues ..." [v. 9]. They are clothed in white robes, which are the garments of righteousness. They have access to the throne and our Lord Jesus, which means that they are believers. They have in their hands palms, which are symbols of deliverance.

What is the content of their praise? "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" [v. 12]. "Blessing" (literally, "good word") praises God's goodness; "glory" praises God's beauty; "wisdom" praises God's truth; "thanksgiving" (literally, "good grace") praises God's favour; "honour" praises God's worth; "power" praises God's mighty works; and "might" praises God's strength.

These seven praises are by no means exhaustive. Seven is the number of completeness. The seven-fold praise serves as a picture of the saints' total devotion and worship of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECARIAH 3
REVELATION 7

THOUGHT

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, all creatures here below.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 8***LESSON****Shhhhh!****VERSE 1**

*And when he had opened
the seventh seal, there was
silence in heaven about the
space of half an hour.*

The first six seals opened to devastating judgements of geologic and cosmic upheavals [Revelation 6:12–14]. Even the mighty men in the world would rather face death than the wrath of the Lamb [Revelation 6:16–17]. The seventh seal is introduced by “silence in heaven about the space of half an hour” [v. 1].

Why the silence? Those who see Revelation as completed history interpret the half-hour silence as a 70-year lull period in Roman history. Others equate the silence as the “time of incense” when silent prayer was offered to God in Jewish liturgy. Others regard the silence as the calm before the storm. Matthew Henry describes it as “a silence of expectation ... the church of God, both in heaven and earth, stood silent, as became them, to see what God was doing”. Another says that it is a “silence of foreboding that precedes the onslaught of judgements”.

The prophesy of Zephaniah reveals that silence will accompany the Day of the Lord. “Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand ...” [Zephaniah 1:7a]. The Bible reveals a pattern of silence associated with the recognition of God’s holiness and righteous judgement [Psalm 76:8–9; Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13].

What we can be sure of is that this silence will neither be passive nor meaningless. It is a silence of God’s sovereignty; it is a silence of God’s longsuffering and holy restraint. It is also a silence for our introspection.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 4
REVELATION 8

THOUGHT

Speak Lord, in the stillness **while I wait on Thee;**
Hushed my heart to listen, In expectancy.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 9***LESSON****The work of man's hands****VERSE 20**

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 5
REVELATION 9**

After the half-hour silence, the trumpets sounded, bringing a new series of judgements. After the first four trumpet judgements, one third of the world's vegetation and sea creatures will be gone [Revelation 8:7–12]. The sun, moon and stars will lose one third of their light.

The fifth and sixth trumpets will summon the spiritual forces of destruction, causing so much chaos that “in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” [v. 6]. By the end of the sixth trumpet judgement, one third of the world's population will die [v. 15]. This death serves as a warning and a witness to the remaining two thirds to repent and turn to God. But they will not!

They will not repent of the “works of their hands”, the gods that man worships. However, the problem is not just with man's hands but also his heart. It is man's rebellious heart that moves his hands to make the gods of this world and causes his knees to bow to them. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ... changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man ... birds ... fourfooted beasts, and creeping things ... and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” [Romans 1:22–23, 25].

Idolatry is never an end in itself. It is always the reason behind immorality. The man who will not repent of the work of his hands will also not repent of his murders, sorceries, fornication and thefts. The hardened heart hardens still.

THOUGHT

Meditate on Joel 2:12–13.

BIBLE LESSON
Revelation 10

LESSON
**God reveals His own
mystery**

VERSE 7

*But in the days of the voice
of the seventh angel, when
he shall begin to sound,
the mystery of God should
be finished, as he hath
declared to his servants the
prophets.*

The judgements of the first six seals and first six trumpets have passed. Only the seventh trumpet, which is within the seventh seal, remains [Revelation 8:1]. This chapter is another interlude, between the sixth and seventh trumpets. John's attention was directed to a mighty angel from heaven who had a book in his hand. He would be asked to eat this book, the taste of which would "make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey" [v. 9], referring to the intermingling of God's hope and judgement.

The mighty angel also cried with a loud voice, as a lion's roar and the noise from "seven thunders" [v. 3]. There was new revelation from the angel but John was forbidden to write down what he would hear [v. 4]. The time had not come for the mystery of God to be revealed [v. 7].

What is this mystery of God? Some say that it is the "mystery of retribution ... the mystery of the great struggle between light and darkness and good and evil". Others say that the mystery of God is truth concerning God Himself, which He will reveal to the prophets [v. 7; Daniel 2:28; Amos 3:7].

At the ordained hour, God's mystery will be accomplished and revealed. At the right time, when the trumpet sounds, the time will come for God and his Christ to rule the kingdom of the world and judge the dead [Revelation 11:15–18]. Prior to that, God's prophets must proclaim His message of salvation and judgement.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 6
REVELATION 10

THOUGHT

Be alert! And be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" [Titus 2:13].

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 11***LESSON****Rewards and judgements****VERSE 18**

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

John was now given a reed-like measuring rod and ordered to measure the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there. Two witnesses dressed in sackcloth will appear and preach for a period of 1,260 days [v. 3]. These two witnesses will not be killed until they have “finished their testimony” [v. 7]. They will be steadfast in their faith unto death. This is the first half of the seventieth week.

Then the two witnesses will be killed. Their corpses will be displayed and the world will rejoice over their deaths, following which the seventh trumpet will sound and evoke two reactions. The voices in heaven will praise the reign of Christ [v. 15] and the 24 elders fall down upon their faces in worship [v. 16].

But “the nations were angry” [v. 8]. This is the rage and defiance of sinners, as well as God’s response to it. “Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure” [Psalm 2:5]. The nations were angry because “thy wrath is come” [v. 18]. The wrath of God refers to the entire period of judgements upon the world, beginning at the first seal [Revelation 6:1] to the last bowl judgement, until it is “filled up the wrath of God” [Revelation 15:1].

As surely as there is judgement for sinners, there is reward for God’s “servants the prophets”, which is the common designation of all believers, or those who have witnessed for God. Part of the reward is the destruction of the destroyer [v. 18]. We are to be the Lord’s “servants the prophets”.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 7
REVELATION 11

THOUGHT

We are saints; our position in Christ. We are servants; our responsibility for Him. Therefore, serve the Lord with holy fear and look to Him with earnest expectation.

BIBLE LESSON
Revelation 12

LESSON

**God's people not be
harmed by Satan**

VERSE 11

*And they overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word of their
testimony; and they loved
not their lives unto the
death.*

God was preparing John to stand in awe and reverence through the “lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” [Revelation 11:19b]. Something significant and momentous is about to be disclosed. This is the first of seven “wonders” or “signs” that John relates. He describes it as a “great wonder”.

When we read, “a woman clothed with the sun” [v. 1], it should not be taken in the literal sense of the word. In the Book of Revelation, women often represent religious systems [Revelation 2:20; 17:2; 19:7–8]. The nation Israel is often represented as a woman as well [Isaiah 54:1–6; Jeremiah 3:20; Hosea 2:19–20]. Through her has come the Messiah, the seed of the woman, Who will eventually come to rule the world at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period [Revelation 6, 14].

“Behold a great red dragon” [v. 3] conveys the nature and character of Satan. The descriptions suggest his fierce power and murderous nature. His wrath is focused against God's Son and God's people. There will be fierce persecution of all who will not worship this great dragon. The “blood of the Lamb” [v. 11] will overcome Satan's accusations, as Christ has already paid the price of our redemption [Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:14]. The “word of their testimony” can overcome his lies and falsehood. And those who “loved not their lives unto the death” can overcome Satan's violence against them. Thus, there is really nothing that Satan can bring against the people of God.

Rest assured that your only hope and safety lie in the Son of God, Who alone can defend you against the wiles of the devil.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 8
REVELATION 12

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, our hearts are thankful for Thine accomplishment and through it Thy people will be safe forevermore.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 13***LESSON****The steadfastness of
God's people****VERSE 10**

*He that leadeth into
captivity shall go into
captivity: he that killeth
with the sword must be
killed with the sword. Here
is the patience and the faith
of the saints.*

Now the scene of John's vision shifted from heaven to the earth. The Jewish people in Biblical times regarded the sea "as a wild, untamed, frightening place". Ancient Israel was always wary of the sea, for they considered it a figure of evil and chaos that resisted God and His truth [Psalm 89:8–9; Isaiah 57:20]. True enough, there is deep-seeded hatred and blasphemy against the God of heaven [v. 1, 5–6].

This "beast" is distinct from the dragon [Revelation 12:3] but it is closely identified with and empowered by Satan [v. 2, 4, 5, 7]. It is a strange-looking creature with "seven heads and ten horns" [v. 1; Revelation 12:3], indicating its power and great authority. Its likeness to Satan identifies it immediately as the Antichrist, of which John has spoken before [1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7]. This individual will capture the beliefs of many people in the world [v. 7, 12, 14].

During the "forty and two months" [v. 5] of his reign, the whole world of unbelieving people will be brought to their knees to worship the devil [v. 8]. However, the true people of God will be persecuted for their refusal to bow. Though they will be viciously attacked by the Antichrist and his followers, the saints of God will keep to their faith steadfastly even unto death [v. 10, 15].

The day may come for your faith to be tested in the world. How will you fare? Will you deny the Lord Who loved and bought you? Or will you be faithful to Him even if it means dying for your faith?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 9
REVELATION 13**

PRAYER

O Lord, help us to remain steadfast and faithful to Thee in the face of persecution in this evil and adulterous world.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 14***LESSON****Eternal rest from all our
labour****VERSE 13**

*And I heard a voice from
heaven saying unto me,
Write, Blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord from
henceforth: Yea, saith the
Spirit, that they may rest
from their labours; and
their works do follow them.*

These 144,000 were last seen in Revelation 7 during the beginning of the Great Tribulation. They have been identified as a group of Jewish believers who will minister during this period. They have been given a seal of God's protection. However, when they come to the end of their ministry, they will seem to be overcome by the Antichrist and his followers [Revelation 13:7].

But the beast has not defeated these witnesses, as they firmly stand with the Lord Jesus Christ and sing the praises of their God triumphantly [v. 1–3]. These faithful servants of God have proven themselves to be pure, as they have not been defiled with the corruption of the world, which Satan controls. In God's eyes, they are sincere and true to their profession [v. 4–5].

It is clear that these redeemed saints will not give their allegiance to Satan. They worship the one true and living God. For their refusal to bow to the devil, many of them will evidently be persecuted and suffer martyrdom. Herein, they evince their patience and obedience towards God and His Word. They shall be held in memory as the blessed of the Lord, for they have served their Lord well in their lifetime. As such, they shall find eternal rest and the rewards of their good works will follow them into the eternal world.

Here is the lesson. There is a price to pay if we want to experience the joy of living for the Lord Jesus. It may be at the expense of our own comfort, convenience and even our life. But it is all worth it.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 10
REVELATION 14**

PRAYER

O Lord, may we be found blameless and spotless before Thee when the day comes for us to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON
Revelation 15

LESSON
**Glorifying God
throughout eternity**

VERSE 3

*And they sing the song
of Moses the servant of
God, and the song of the
Lamb, saying, Great and
marvellous are thy works,
Lord God Almighty; just
and true are thy ways, thou
King of saints.*

Another scene is presented in heaven that is of great significance and will cause one to wonder. Seven angels appear to herald the coming of the last seven plagues, which represent the complete wrath of God ready to be pronounced on His enemies. There will be a complete overthrow of the formidable power of the Antichrist [v. 1–2].

However, in the midst of this unprecedented event, there is still the sacred moment for worship by the redeemed of the Lord [v. 3]. They happily sing the praises of Him Who with great power has wrought deliverance for them from the tyranny of the evil one. This song derives from both Moses and the Lamb. Here is a perfect union between law and love, between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Moses is the servant of God while the Lamb is the sacrifice of God. In both, we see God's salvation of His people. These martyrs are only focused on God instead of their own glorious victory. This is the heart of true worship [v. 3–4].

God has not forgotten the deeds of the evildoers. They must be brought to justice. So He prepares and sends out His angels to execute His wrath upon those who oppose His rule and persecute His people. God will vindicate on their behalf [v. 5–6].

Let us be encouraged to know that when we do right we will never be on the losing side, for God will bring out our righteousness as the light. All unrighteous people shall suffer the consequences of their sinful plots [Psalm 37:6–12].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 11
REVELATION 15

PRAYER

O Lord God, how great and marvellous are Thy works and ways, all Thy saints do adore and praise Thee forever and ever.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 16***LESSON****The righteousness of God
declared****VERSE 5**

*And I heard the angel of
the waters say, Thou art
righteous, O Lord, which
art, and wast, and shalt be,
because thou hast judged
thus.*

These vials or bowls of judgement constitute the “third woe,” as described [Revelation 11:14]. They describe the wrath of God. Images from Israel’s exodus are prominent in these bowl judgements, as in the days of Moses. God sent plagues upon Egypt that included water turning to blood [Exodus 7:14–25], plagues of boils [Exodus 9:8–12] and darkness [Exodus 10:21–29]. These occurrences will be at the end of the seven-year period, just before Jesus’ second coming.

The judgements carried out by the attending angels are in quick succession. No time is wasted in persuading the offenders to stop their crimes against the people of God. Indeed, they are bloodthirsty. Therefore it is completely fitting that those who have delighted in shedding the blood of the saints should now be forced to drink “blood” [v. 3–6]. And since they have refused the Living Water, they will be given the water of death. God’s justice is fair as well as pure and appropriate.

“And they repented not to give him glory” [v. 9, 11, 21]. The failure of men to respond with repentance shows that the judgement of God, no matter how severe, will not change their sinful condition. In fact, they will persist in their hatred of God with words of blasphemy although He alone has the ability to halt the plagues. Those who will not be won by grace will never be won at all.

It is our prayer that you will not be in the same position as those who reject God, as they will suffer the consequences of their own evil deeds.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 12
REVELATION 16**

PRAYER

Merciful Father, grant us Thine forgiveness of our sins and help us to be pliable towards Thy tender dealings in our lives.

BIBLE LESSON
Revelation 17

LESSON

Our victory in the Lamb

VERSE 14

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

The fall of Babylon having been declared [Revelation 14:8; 16:19], it is now elaborated in greater detail. Besides Jerusalem, Babylon was mentioned more times than any other city in Scripture. To the Jews, Babylon “was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God’s people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed” [Tenney].

This spiritual Babylon is portrayed as one that “sits on many waters” [v. 1], that is, she presides over many nations and their kings [v. 3, 7, 10, 12–13, 15, 18]. She has an international character. She even seems to rule over the Antichrist but her rule will be short-lived, for he will not tolerate any other worship except of himself: “The son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” [2 Thessalonians 2:3–4].

The 10 kings on the earth who are connected to and under the influence of the Antichrist will ally with him in his war against Christ [Revelation 16:16] in the battle known as the Armageddon, which was alluded to in the sixth and seventh bowls [Revelation 16:12–21]. However, all their conspiracies will be powerless against Christ, Who will have the ultimate victory.

We live in momentous times when the whole world will witness the power of the man of sin and will come under his authoritarian rule. Only the Christians will escape his clutches through their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 13
REVELATION 17

PRAYER

Thanks be unto God for we are more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 18***LESSON****A call on separation from
the world****VERSE 4**

*And I heard another voice
from heaven, saying, Come
out of her, my people, that
ye be not partakers of her
sins, and that ye receive not
of her plagues.*

In this context, Babylon is viewed in its political and economic, rather than religious, character. Babylon is seen again as fallen and desolate [v. 2]. The reason this utter ruin had come upon her is that she had beguiled and corrupted the nations of the earth, leading them into estrangement from God, and into pollution and sin [v. 3].

The judgement of God upon her is doubled [v. 6]. Restitution was required in the Old Testament in cases of theft [Exodus 22:4–9]. This is a record of how Babylon made her wealth, which was likely through dishonest dealings. Her sins also include self-indulgence, self-glorification and self-confidence [v. 7]. All these are characteristics of worldly-mindedness and materialism.

A child of God is commanded to be separated from the world. “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” [v. 4; 2 Corinthians 6:17]. It is the duty of those who would be pure to come out from the world and to separate themselves from all associations to evil. By remaining in the world, a Christian can be contaminated by its sins and influenced by everything around him. This is a universal truth in regard to the nature of this sinful and adulterous world.

There is a choice to be made. We must choose whom we will follow, and then do it whole-heartedly. Follow not the world but the Lord of your life, Who alone can give you abundant life here and hereafter.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 14
REVELATION 18**

PRAYER

O God, we ask that Thou will not lead us into temptation but deliver us from all evil in this sin-cursed world.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 19***LESSON**

**Jesus reigns supreme
forever**

VERSE 16

*And he hath on his vesture
and on his thigh a name
written, KING OF KINGS,
AND LORD OF LORDS.*

As soon as the enemies of God's people are put down, the one united voice of the worshippers rings out in a mighty chorus in heaven. The saints offer praise and worship to the One who has avenged their blood on these bloodthirsty persecutors [v. 1–2]. The whole realms of heaven are to rejoice and lift up this most blessed and excellent God [v. 5]. And they responded with “the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” [v. 6].

It is obvious that the only One Who can deal with these adversaries is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There are names closely and directly linked to Him and they designate His attributes and natures. He is referred to as “Faithful and True” [v. 11], signifying that He is worthy of the confidence of His church in delivering her from all her enemies. He is true to all His promises that He has ever made to her.

The peculiar name “The Word of God” [v. 13] reveals the will of God. He is the medium of communication between God and man. Another name was conspicuously written on his garment [v. 16], “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”, where they spelt out His sovereignty over all on earth.

We should be persuaded to acknowledge such a one as Jesus Christ, Who is none other than God the very God. He has claim to our worship and adoration, which no mighty angels would dare to covet.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI I
REVELATION 19**

PRAYER

**Almighty God, we bow before Thee in humble
worship and giving Thee the honour and praises
which Thou art most deserving of.**

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 20***LESSON****The final warfare****VERSE 6**

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

It must be known that God has no equal. Satan, powerful as he may be, is no match to the Almighty God. God can easily stop all his wicked activities but He allows Satan to continue because, even in his evil works, he is indirectly serving the purposes of God. Here, only an angel can lay hold, “bound him ... cast him ... shut him up ... set a seal upon him” [v. 2–3].

The thousand years described in this chapter repeatedly must be a literal one [v. 2–7]. So far, we have seen some events mentioned as literal: the battle at Armageddon; the taking of the Beast and the False Prophet; and the slaying of the kings and their armies. However, these pertain to events in the future that are yet to occur prior to the coming of the Messiah on earth.

To the people of God, they are blessed beyond any words used to express what are in store for them. They shall escape the deception of Satan, the onslaught of the enemies of God and the final judgement of God with fire and brimstone [v. 8–10]. Instead, they shall be received into glory and “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”. Their names have been written in the Lamb’s book of life [v. 12–15].

As God’s people, we may have to suffer for the sake of the Gospel and for the name of Christ now but these will pale in comparison to the glory that shall follow.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 2
REVELATION 20

PRAYER

O gracious Lord, how I praise Thee for the blessings which Thou hast in store for those who love and serve Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 21***LESSON****All things shall be new****VERSE 5**

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

John revealed what he saw in the vision of the heavenly state. It was depicted under the image of a beautiful and enormous city called New Jerusalem [v. 2]. Jerusalem is regarded by the Jews to be the peculiar dwelling place of God and, as such, it is the natural emblem of the heavenly world. John noted that he saw in the interior of this great city precious stones being used to illustrate the majesty and glory of God [v. 11, 19–21].

Furthermore, it is distinguished by what it does not have: no tears, no sorrow, no death and no pain. There is also no temple, no sacrifice, no sun, no moon, no darkness, no sin and no abomination. Everything about it will be new; the old, where sin and death reigned, will be no more [v. 4–8].

The question that needs to be asked is: Who then shall be able to reside in such a beautiful city? The residents must certainly be the redeemed of the Lord, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” [v. 2, 9]. They are the people of God who have been saved and they shall walk in the glorious light of God [v. 23–24]. And God Himself shall be with them, and be their God [v. 3c].

Christians should rejoice that this New Jerusalem is their eternal residence. It is reserved for the children of God. None else can enter who does not belong to that people and whose names are not written in the book of life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 3
REVELATION 21

PRAYER

Gracious Father, thank You for Thy grace and mercy in having my name written in the Book of Life.

BIBLE LESSON*Revelation 22***LESSON****The high price for
preaching the truth****VERSE 20**

*He which testifieth these
things saith, Surely I come
quickly. Amen. Even so,
come, Lord Jesus.*

We see the finality of all things in this final chapter of the Bible. God Himself, Who is the cause and source of all things, will bring them to completion.

The paradise of God will be unlike the first garden in Eden. There will be a “pure river of water of life” running through this beautiful place [v. 1a]. No longer will there be a tree of the knowledge of life but “a tree of life”, bearing all kinds of fruits to the satisfaction of the dwellers. There will be no lack whatsoever for there will be great abundance.

While the Lord Jesus tarries in His return to earth, all those who serve Him must remain faithful and keep to His Word of instruction and promise. But for those who refuse to take heed, “he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still” [v. 11a]. This is a warning. The future judgements will be revealed that he shall reap that he has sown. But the holy and true, let them be encouraged to press on; they shall have their reward.

But best of all, our own God and our Lord Jesus Christ will be there and it is their presence that make heaven so heavenly. The best will be reserved for those who love Him, as Paul testifies: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” [2 Timothy 4:8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 4
REVELATION 22

PRAYER

**O gracious Lord, even so, come, Lord Jesus.
Amen!**

