

MICA (P) 022/12/2010

DAILY *manna*

APRIL – JUNE 2015

GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Day by day. Month by month. And all these days and months add up to years. Karolina Sandell-Berg begins the hymn, *Day by Day* with these words:

Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find, to meet my trials here;

Whither that strength? She continues:

Help me then, in every tribulation
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation
Offered me within Thy holy Word.

That is the goal of *Daily Manna*: to offer consolation, guidance, strength through the Word of God. Over the next two years, we will be covering the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be faithful in your reading of God's Word day by day, and I am sure that ...

One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,
Till (we) reach the promised land.

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 New Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the NT books.

A step-by-step approach

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

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

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 9:14–17

LESSON

New wine, new bottles

MATTHEW 9:16

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

The disciples of John the Baptist were a little confused by the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. John was now imprisoned, his future looked dim. They were fasting, which usually accompanied earnest prayer and also taken to be an expression of sorrow. So John’s disciples asked Jesus—a question that is more of a rebuke than a genuine enquiry: “Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?” [Matthew 9:14].

Our Lord Jesus replied with three illustrations. He said that there was no reason for the children of the bridechamber—wedding guests—to be sorrowful when the groom was with them. The lesson is that sorrow is not an appropriate response in all circumstances. Fasting—a sign of grief—is fitting to one who mourns for his sins. But the friends of the groom would be out of place for one who has tasted the sweetness of saving grace.

Our Lord Jesus continued by saying that it was folly to mend an old garment with a new cloth because it would shrink and cause a worse tear. Likewise, it was folly to store new wine in old wine skins. The fermentation of the new wine would cause the old wineskin to burst.

The lesson here is that some things just do not mix. Both the old and the new are lost when they are mixed. One commentator writes: “New spiritual forces cannot be bottled up in antiquated customs.” In other words, the old thinking and old ways of Judaism are incompatible and incongruous with the new dispensation of grace.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 1
COLOSSIANS 2

THOUGHT

The Gospel of grace is more than just a patch covering up our sinful nature, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” [2 Corinthians 5:17].

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:1–15***LESSON****Jesus heals the impotent man****JOHN 5:8***Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

Our Lord Jesus was in Jerusalem to observe a feast. Passing by the pool of Bethesda [meaning house of mercy], He saw a multitude of sick and infirmed waiting at the pool. It seems that this pool has healing properties only when it is stirred. The people attributed the stirring to an angel. It also seems that only one person can receive healing at one stirring, by being the first to go into the pool.

Thus, there was a large number of desperate people waiting by the pool, everyone hoping that he would be fast enough to beat the rest to the water at Bethesda. There was a man who had an infirmity for 38 years. All these years, he never succeeded because he was never fast enough, and there was no one kind enough to let him be the first. When Jesus asked him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” instead of giving a simple answer which is all that the question requires, the man went into a litany of reasons why he could not be made whole.

This man was aware of his own impotence. Besides, the last 38 years of waiting at the pool taught him that he could not count on the kindness of others. He was so resigned to his own infirmity that he could only see his own hopelessness and not the Hope-giver standing before him. Our Lord Jesus told the man to rise up and walk, and he did. And he was made whole!

Hallelujah! A look at the Saviour, taking Him at His word, and the infirmed man was made whole; so can you!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 2–3
COLOSSIANS 3

THOUGHT

There is no situation so dark that the light of Christ cannot dispel.

BIBLE LESSON

John 5:6

LESSON

Wilt thou be made whole?

JOHN 5:6

Wilt thou be made whole?

Wilt thou be made whole?" It would seem that the answer to this question is obvious: a simple 'yes' or 'no'. But the man who had been infirmed for 38 years told our Lord Jesus his four decades of hopelessness. The healing at the pool in Bethesda was given on a first-come-first-served basis. And this poor man had no strength to come on his own, and he was never served.

"Do you want to get well?" Our Lord Jesus, being the omniscient, knew why this man did not get healed. He asked the question not to know more but to solicit a response. "Do you want to get well?" is similar to the question: "Do you want to have your sins forgiven?" There are three possible responses to this question. First, "No, because I do not think that I am a sinner." Such a person does not care who Christ is, or what He has done.

Second, "Yes, but I will do it by myself." This is the response of works-based religions. Forgiveness of sins will be given if we do this and that. Walk so that you might be healed. That is absurd because walking is exactly what the infirmed man cannot do; and in the same way, a sinner cannot do the things that he is required to have his sins forgiven.

The third and the only right response is Jesus would forgive us. He told the man, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked" [John 5:8–9]. And it was only after that Jesus told the man "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more" [John 5:14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 4
COLOSSIANS 4

THOUGHT

**The Gospel of grace is this: Christ has saved us.
We are made whole. Rise. Walk. And sin no more.**

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:16–18***LESSON****Unholy thoughts on the Holy Day****JOHN 5:17**

*But Jesus answered them,
My Father worketh hitherto,
and I work.*

John adds that the healing of this infirmed man took place on the Sabbath [John 5:9]. The Jews seeing him, said, “It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed” [John 5:10; Jeremiah 17, Nehemiah 13].

The conversation that follows is interesting. The Jews wanted to know the man who asked the lame man to take up his bed and walk. Note that they did not ask: “Who is the man who healed you?” When the man later returned and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him, the Jews “sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day” [John 5:16]. Jesus is saying, “I work because My Father works—even on the Sabbath. I am His servant. I am in union with Him.” For this cause, the Jews hated Jesus all the more because He not only broke the Sabbath, but He also made Himself equal with God.

This reveals the depth of depravity of the human heart. The Jews taught it was unlawful to heal and to carry a bed on the Sabbath, and yet they thought nothing of plotting murder on the holy day. Jesus stopped to help the man who had been impotent for 38 years.

The Jews not only censured the man for carrying the bed on the Sabbath, but they also conspired to kill Jesus who healed the man. Their hatred for Christ hindered them from seeing the work of grace that He had done. Likewise, our prejudice should neither blind us to nor hinder us from doing the work of grace.

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

THOUGHT

Truth does not inspire hatred. Paul exhorts us to speak the truth in love [Ephesians 4:15].

BIBLE LESSON

John 5:19–22

LESSON

As the Father, so is the Son

JOHN 5:19

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

In response to the Jews' accusation that He was breaking the Sabbath, our Lord Jesus reveals His Son-Father relationship with God. The relationship can be framed in this sentence structure: "As the Father ..., so is [or does] the Son." In addressing God as 'My Father', our Lord Jesus is claiming that He has the same nature as His Father. This speaks of the equality of the Father and the Son [see John 10:30]. It also denoted the eternity of the Son. "As the Father, so does the Son" [John 5:17, 19]. This speaks of the equality of power of the Father and the Son. Our Lord Jesus links His own deeds directly with God's deeds. The implication is that if the Jews accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath, they are also accusing the Father of the same.

When Jesus says, "The Son can do nothing of himself" [John 5:19], but only what the Father does, He is not saying that He is weak; rather He is speaking of the absolute unity with the Father in nature and in will. It is impossible for the Son to act independently of the Father because they share the same nature. "As the Father, so does the Son"

"As the Father, so is the Son" also applies to the love and knowledge of the Son [see John 5:20]. The Father's love for the Son is seen by His disclosing to the Son everything that He is doing. "As the Father, so is the Son" in sovereignty [John 5:21]. Like the Father, Jesus gives life to whom He wishes. "As the Father, so is the Son" in judgement [John 5:22, 27].

All these claims of Jesus come to one conclusion: Either Jesus is crazy or He is God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 6
1 THESSALONIANS 2

THOUGHT

Ye believe in God, believe also in Me ... He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. – John 14:1, 9

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:23***LESSON****Honour to the Father and
to the Son****JOHN 5:23**

*That all men should
honour the Son, even as
they honour the Father. He
that honoureth not the Son
honoureth not the Father
which hath sent him.*

As the Father, so is the Son” in honour. “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him” [John 5:23]. This last statement makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is God, the litmus test of biblical Christianity. If a person claims to believe in God and yet he believes Jesus is only a good man, he is not a Christian. His god is not the God of the Bible.

On the deity of Christ, CS Lewis writes: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say.

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell ... You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” – *Mere Christianity*

So either worship Jesus as God, or cast Him off as a fraud.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 7
1 THESSALONIANS 3

THOUGHT

Call Christ ‘Lord’ and serve Him with your all, or call Him not at all.

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:24–25***LESSON****A matter of life and death****JOHN 5:24**

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Our life in this human body is short. If by virtue of strength, we can live to 80 years, it would be considered good, and even that is often marked by labour and sorrow, as we endure the vagaries of life and eventually the pains of dying [Psalm 90:10].

Yet beyond the physical, is the prospect and promise of the eternal, whether we believe it and like it or not. And eternity, be it of life or of death, will begin that day when the silver cord breaks and the last breath escapes our lips.

Listen to Jesus' words as He remonstrates so tenderly with us today. He has come to make the way clear and plain to all, for He is the Way. He tells us what we must do to secure that eternal life, and we must reckon His words trustworthy because He is the embodiment of truth. His life for ours was the exacting price that was paid. And henceforth Jesus, the great life giver has forever given us the combination that unlocks the gate of heaven, to be in the presence of God forever [John 14:6]. The alternative is the judgement of condemnation, and banishment to a real place of eternal torment called hell. It is too fearful and tragic to consider. What must we do to be saved?

Hear the words of Jesus; believe what you have heard. Jesus has spoken the Truth. Are you listening? More importantly, will you believe?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 8
I THESSALONIANS 4

THOUGHT

Alas like many, King Agrippa heard and was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Rather, be like the man who cried out, "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:26–29***LESSON****When the roll is called
up yonder****JOHN 5:28***Marvel not at this: for the
hour is coming, in the which
all that are in the graves
shall hear his voice,*

God is the Source and Giver of all life. When man fell into sin and death claimed the human soul, God provided the means to redeem what was lost, and in so doing, gave life back to man. This means was Jesus, the Son of God who became the Son of Man in order that He might be the mediator between a holy God and sinful humanity [1 Timothy 2:5].

Jesus, in His human manifestation carrying out the Father's will, was vested with every authority equal with the heavenly Father—in His power to bestow both physical and spiritual life, and in the execution of His final judgement upon mankind. That hour is coming, and no man can avoid this appointment. Even physical death cannot provide an escape from this meeting with our Maker.

“All that are in the graves shall hear His voice.” But mark Jesus' words just preceding [v. 25], “the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God”. For those who are alive today, there is still time and hope. Indeed, “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” [2 Corinthians 6:2b]. The Giver of life is inviting you to enter into that eternal life without further delay.

For those in the grave, the window of grace is forever shut. They will still respond to that call, but on that day, it would be a call to receive the closed verdict—the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 9
I THESSALONIANS 5**

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be a good testimony of Your saving grace. Grant me a sense of urgency and a love for souls, while it is still day and we can work for Your kingdom's sake.

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:30–32***LESSON****Five-fold witness to the Son (Part 1)****JOHN 5:32**

There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

The Jews could accept Jesus as a great teacher and even a prophet from God. But alas they sought “to kill Him because He not only had broken the Sabbath but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” [John 5:18]. Jewish law requires the witness of two or three to condemn a man [Deuteronomy 17:6]. But Jesus the divine Lawgiver would turn the tables on His accusers, by providing not two or three but a five-fold witness to confirm His testimony, to establish His co-equality with God, and by so doing, bring a judgement of condemnation on those who denied Him.

First, Jesus testifies for Himself. He asserts His accord with the Father in doing only His Father’s will. “I can of mine own self do nothing.” There is perfect agreement between God the Father and God the Son. The actions of Christ were sanctioned by the Father for in His present office as the agent of mankind’s salvation, Jesus was executing the Father’s will in total dependence and obedience, an obedience born out of a perfect unity between them.

Jesus asserts His judgement to be righteous. Righteous because His judgement is also the Father’s, and it is with the authority and in accord with the counsel of His heavenly Father. If the Jews truly knew their God, they would have known Jesus. By denying Jesus the Messiah, the Jews had rejected Jehovah Himself.

Jesus further declares that His personal testimony is admissible because there is another that will bear witness for Him—the witness of John the Baptist.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 10
2 THESSALONIANS 1

THOUGHT

I and my Father are one. – John 10:30
Know the Son and you will know the Father.

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:33–36***LESSON****Five-fold witness to the Son (Part 2)****JOHN 5:36**

But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

John the Baptist was appointed by God to be the forerunner of Christ. He was a witness to the God incarnate, commissioned to prepare the hearts of man so that Christ could freely enter in. He was the greatest of prophets because He would usher in the Messiah both in word and person.

When the priests and Levites went to him to question his identity and message, John pointed unequivocally to one infinitely greater coming after himself. John was a shining lamp and a witness used of God to give man the opportunity of salvation. If they believed John's message, they would be saved. Yet even a great man like John was inadequate to testify for the great God. His ministry would be cut short, giving way to the greater ministry of his Lord. And the light that John carried would pale in the brightness of the Light of Life, the Sun of righteousness.

But greater still than the witness of a man, would be the witness of the mighty works and miracles that Jesus performed during His public ministry of three years among the people. Miracles of healing and resurrection, mastery over the natural elements, supernatural acts of provision and power, these were the manifestation, not of human origin, but of divine authority never witnessed before.

Indeed "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" [John 1:3–4]. Herein was the sovereign Lord in human form.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 11–12
2 THESSALONIANS 2

THOUGHT

Despite overwhelming evidence, the Jews still denied Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah and Mediator. They were thus condemned. Anyone who denies Him today will likewise be condemned.

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:37–39***LESSON****Five-fold witness to the Son (Part 3)****JOHN 5:37**

*And the Father himself,
which hath sent me, hath
borne witness of me. Ye
have neither heard his voice
at any time, nor seen his
shape.*

Jesus also has the witness of God the Father. At Jesus' baptism, we are told the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove. A voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Such a miraculous manifestation and extraordinary event that day was undoubtedly witnessed and spoken of by many thereafter. Furthermore, concerning God's endowment of the Spirit, the apostle John tells us, to Jesus was given the Spirit not in small measure but in "entire fullness of divine life and divine power". (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary, John 3:34).

But the Jewish rulers failed to hear and refused to see, and there was no room in their hearts for the testimony of God for His Son. Hence they rejected the Saviour.

There is also the witness of the Scriptures. The Old Testament writings of Moses and the prophets bore witness to a coming Messiah through its prophecies, shadows and types of Christ. In personages such as Melchizedek, Isaac, Joseph, the high priest, we see a type of Christ. In the temple sacrifices, we have a shadow of the Lamb of God. In the angelic visitations to saints of old and in the Angel of the Lord, we have a prefigurement of Christ. Through the prophets, we are given to know that a Messiah would come. Jesus Christ, by His birth and life and death, would fulfil every prophecy concerning Himself.

If the Jews were to search the Scriptures, they would without fail find Christ and eternal life. May it be so with us too.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 13
2 THESSALONIANS 3**

THOUGHT

Consider the Bereans, they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily. Let us emulate them.

BIBLE LESSON*John 5:40–47***LESSON****Believe the Word to
believe the works****JOHN 5:45***Do not think that I will
accuse you to the Father:
there is one that accuseth
you, even Moses, in whom
ye trust.*

The accusers now stood accused. The Jews were a privileged people. They were chosen by God to be His special nation [Deuteronomy 7:6]. They had been entrusted with the oracles of God [Romans 3:2] through Moses and the Law so that they would know the mind and character of God by revelation and through God’s personal dealings with them. In these they took great pride. But spiritual pride, unbelief and hardness of heart corrupted them. They became puffed up and sought the esteem of man rather than approval from God.

The law became to them an idol and the great giver of the law was forgotten, for they had made the commandments of God of none effect through their traditions and hypocrisy [Matthew 15:6–9].

The greatest privilege was even now being accorded them in that Messiah incarnate dwelt among the Jews but they had rejected Him also. And this damning verdict was now declared—“ye have not the love of God in you”, for in truth, they believed neither the word nor the works of God.

How tragic is this account we read. But lest we are quick to deride the Jews for their failings, let us first examine our own hearts. Has pride and idolatry crept into our hearts? Is our conduct consistent with our profession of faith and love for our God and our Saviour? How do we regard the Scriptures that we possess? How do we treat the Spirit of God that resides within us? Remember, “not he that commendeth himself is approved but whom the Lord commendeth”.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 14
I TIMOTHY I

THOUGHT**Read Hosea 8:11–14.**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 12:1–5

LESSON

Works of necessity

MATTHEW 12:5

Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

Keeping the sabbath day holy” is the only commandment in the Decalogue that begins with the word ‘Remember’. It is as if God knows that His children tend to forget the day of rest, when man recuperates physically, mentally and spiritually. God wants us to rest. God made man such that he has to rest one day out of every seven.

Yet the Pharisees during Jesus’ time carried things to the other extreme and interpreted God’s command for rest as an imperative to not do any work at all. By doing so, they had kept the letter of the Law and missed the spirit of it.

Our Lord Jesus corrected this legalistic interpretation of God’s instructions. On the Lord’s Day, one still needs to do work that is of necessity [v. 1]. To rebuke the Pharisees, our Lord cited two examples. David, when he was hungry while fleeing from Saul, had gone into the tabernacle and ate the shewbread meant for the priests [v. 4]. This seemed to violate Old Testament laws but it was a work of necessity and David had not done it out of disrespect. The same applies to the priests who ‘worked’ in the Tabernacle on sabbath days. What they did were works of necessity and they had not tainted the ‘holiness’ of the sabbath.

However, emphasis on the spirit of the Law and the condition of our heart does not give us an excuse by labelling anything to be necessary. We need to be careful lest we misrepresent the liberty that our Lord has given us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 15
I TIMOTHY 2

QUESTION

Do I really need to do this on the day that God has set apart for Himself?

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:6–8***LESSON****Lord of the sabbath****MATTHEW 12:8***For the Son of man is Lord
even of the sabbath day.*

The Pharisees in this passage were trying to use the legalistic observance of sabbath rest to trap Jesus. This is absurd. Our Lord Jesus is Lord over all, and that necessarily includes the sabbath day. He is God Himself. He is the One Who gave the people the Ten Commandments. It follows that He is the One Who knows what the Laws really mean.

Christ was not teaching us the exceptions to the Fourth Commandment here. Neither was he changing God's instructions. He was actually teaching the people how to interpret God's law rightly—in the way God wants them (and us) to interpret. Jesus has the authority to tell us the true meaning of sabbath. He gave us the Law and had even obeyed God's laws perfectly while He was on this earth.

Jesus being the Lord of the Sabbath also has implications on the day that Christians would observe Sabbath after His resurrection. Jesus rose on a Sunday. From then on, Jesus' disciples have used this day of Jesus' victory over death to remember Him and the victory He has secured for us.

The main reason for keeping sabbath on a Sunday is simple. 'Rest' in the Christian sense is not merely 'stop working'. Instead, it means resting by casting everything associated to this world aside and focusing on worshipping God. Thus there is no better day to remember God than a Sunday when His Son has conquered death for us. Jesus is Lord over death and evil. He is Lord of the sabbath. He is the Lord of all.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 16
I TIMOTHY 3

REMINDER

The Commandments are essentially not about man; they point us to God.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 12:9–14

LESSON

Works of mercy

MATTHEW 12:12

*How much then is a man
better than a sheep?
Wherefore it is lawful to do
well on the sabbath days.*

In one single day [Matthew 12:1–14] our Lord has made use of many teachable moments to tell us the true meaning of sabbath rest. Yet one group of people was definitely not as teachable. They followed our Lord from the cornfield and into the synagogue, but in there, the Lord taught them (and us) another lesson on what it meant to keep the sabbath day holy.

Jesus healed a man with a withered hand. This apparently caused a huge uproar among the Pharisees that they called for a council to discuss ways to destroy Him after that.

What exactly did Jesus do? He saw this man with need; He showed mercy and healed him. His rationale was simple. “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?” If we are quick to lift our fallen sheep out of trouble on a sabbath day, why can’t we help a fellow man who is in need [v. 11]?

Being merciful is one characteristic of a true Christian, for by showing love to others, we have magnified God’s name, being a good testimony for His love that flows through us. On a day of rest when we should worship our Lord Who has saved us, it makes no sense for us to turn away anyone who sincerely and truly needs mercy. In fact, using sabbath rest as an excuse to exempt oneself from doing any good contradicts the very purpose of the day of rest.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 17
1 TIMOTHY 4

THOUGHT

What Jesus teaches us here is rather, sabbath should not keep us from doing good.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:14–16***LESSON****How they might destroy
Him****MATTHEW 12:14***Then the Pharisees went
out, and held a council
against him, how they
might destroy him.*

The Pharisees are respected religious teachers in Jesus' days. They prided themselves in their strict keeping of God's commandments. In their own eyes, no one loved God like they did. As such, nothing could disturb them more than a person who teaches God's laws in a way different from how they have always understood. To them, Jesus was not only a threat to their authority—our Lord had questioned the very faith they had held on dearly through generations.

Besides, the miracles Jesus performed had brought him many supporters. His wondrous works went hand in hand with His powerful teachings. It was never our Lord's intention to win the hearts of man through those works. He did them for various reasons. For one, His works show that He is the Son of God. It might be the case that many of God's elect are such that they would not believe unless they see the miracles of Christ. For another, He has compassion for the suffering people.

Our Lord knew what the Pharisees were thinking and planning. Since He is the Son of God, He could summon legions of angels to destroy all the wicked people who plotted against Him. Yet He knew He came to this world for a higher purpose, and thus He withdrew Himself from the limelight.

Nevertheless, great multitudes followed Him. Many needed to be healed both physically and spiritually. What our Lord did was He helped them, and told them not to let those healings be made known. Herein lies a great lesson on both submission to God and compassion for man.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 18
1 TIMOTHY 5

THOUGHT

How often are we tempted to retaliate against the evil deeds of others? Yet many a time, it takes more courage and grace to make peace for the sake of a higher purpose.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:17–21***LESSON****Our gentle Saviour****MATTHEW 12:20**

*A bruised reed shall he not
break, and smoking flax
shall he not quench, till he
send forth judgement unto
victory.*

The prophecy of Isaiah referred here is recorded for us in Isaiah 42:1–9. The analogous language used in verse 20 is both apt and beautiful. When the Lord Jesus walked on this earth, He was meek and gentle—not breaking a reed that was already bruised and not putting out a flame that was dying. Yet He is also the One Who will bring judgement on the world and victory for God’s children.

Such a combination of love and justice and of grace and glory is exactly the precise portrayal of Christ Himself. He is the God Who has taken on flesh, condescended to the level of man, and patiently taught us repentance. He endured the ignorance and malice of the wicked people. He forgave even His faithless and unbelieving disciples. Yet the same Christ is involved in the glory of creation, judgement and final victory over sin, death and Satan.

A crucial element must not be overlooked in this passage. Christ will “shew judgement to the Gentiles” [v. 18] and “in His name shall the Gentiles trust” [v. 21]. Our Lord’s Great Commission towards His disciple is for them to preach the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the world, extending far beyond Israel. No matter who or where you are, this gentle yet glorious Saviour is yours if you trust in Him.

This is the Christ Whom God the Father has given us as the new covenant and light. He opens blind eyes, to bring out sinners lost in the prison of their transgressions. In Him is all of God’s grace and glory [Isaiah 42:6–8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 19
I TIMOTHY 6

THOUGHT

The prophet Isaiah thus said, “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” – Isaiah 42:9

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 3:8–12***LESSON****A mixed crowd****MARK 3:9**

And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

The gospel of Mark tells us how popular Jesus became even in the beginning of His public ministry. Even people who touched Him were healed [v. 10]. Unclean spirits fell down before Him and identified Him as the Son of God [v. 11].

A great multitude would gather wherever He went and sometimes the crowd could get too big [v. 8–9]. Jesus would then tell His disciples to get a small ship to wait on Him. This ship might serve as a higher platform from which He could teach the multitudes [Luke 5:3], or it might provide the transport needed for them to leave if need be.

When there are good things, many will come. This applies even today. The crowd that gathered around Jesus might not have come because they believed or had wanted to trust in Him. Some might want to be healed but did not want to follow Christ. Some might just be curious. Some might even come so that they could report what they saw or heard to the authorities.

We do not know which of those among the crowd are God's chosen ones. This is the reason why Jesus often speaks in parables. To God's children, parables will make doctrines easier to understand; to the unsaved, they would not be able to comprehend [Matthew 13:13]. We do not know if Jesus chose to heal God's children only, but it might be the case that He would use a healed unsaved to magnify God's name to a child of His and bring the latter to Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 20
2 TIMOTHY I

THOUGHT

**God works in wondrous and mysterious ways.
Our commission is to spread the Gospel to all.**

BIBLE LESSON

Luke 6:12

LESSON

Jesus the ‘Pray-er’

LUKE 6:12

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

If we look back at the former chapter, we would read that this was a time when the Pharisees were filled with rage and madness against the Lord Jesus Christ, and had conspired to take away His life. Yet, as we read on, the next verse tells us that our Saviour had also chosen this time to appoint His 12 apostles.

If enemies will take wicked counsel together, the Lord will seek the quiet solitude of the presence of God in a mountain above the common level, and continue all night in prayer. In appointing the 12 apostles, Christ thought so great a work must be done with solemn and extraordinary prayer. His lowly dependence on God for the steadfast continuance of His work is beautifully evident here. If it were asked why the Son of God should pray at all, it may be replied that He was also the Son of Man. Such is the beauty of His perfect Manhood.

Here Christ sets us an example that we should follow. In times of great emergencies, when we have important duties, or are about to encounter special difficulties, we should seek the divine blessing and direction by prayer. We should set apart an unusual portion of time for supplication.

Nay, even if we pass the ‘whole night’ in prayer, it should not be charged as enthusiasm. Men of the world often pass whole nights in plans of gain or in dissipation, and it shall not be esteemed strange that Christians should spend an equal portion of time in the far more important business of the Gospel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 21
2 TIMOTHY 2

HYMN

O let the place of secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot on earth. – Author unknown

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:13–16***LESSON****The calling of the twelve****LUKE 6:13**

*And when it was day,
he called unto him his
disciples: and of them he
chose twelve, whom also he
named apostles;*

As the Jewish church arose from 12 patriarchs, also was the Christian church planted by 12 apostles. There can be no doubt that the number 12 was intended to correspond to the 12 tribes of Israel. Apostles are messengers, envoys or ambassadors, persons sent on a mission.

It would interest our finite minds to consider whom the Lord chose to be His 12 apostles among many of His disciples after a whole night of prayer-conference with God the Father. What unusual abilities, extraordinary talents, great intellects, influential or noble rank that separated them, made them stand out head and shoulders above the rest, and qualify them to be His apostles? The Blessed One took counsel with His Father, presenting, as Godet phrases it, one by one to the All-seeing, while God's finger pointed out those to whom He was to entrust the salvation of the world. From that choice sprang the little volume of the New Testament, words of eternal life; from it great multitudes which no man can number will be translated from the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom of light.

Contrary to human wisdom or worldly view, none of those chosen seemed to have been of high social rank. In fact, the religious elite of their day viewed them as "unlearned and ignorant men." True, among them were mere fishermen, despised tax collector, just to name a few.

What then did Christ see in them to appoint them as His representatives? They loved their Master and believed in Him. They were fully committed to Him and faithful to His calling despite their apparent weaknesses. That makes the difference!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 22
2 TIMOTHY 3

THOUGHT

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:17–19***LESSON****After praying is doing****LUKE 6:17**

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

We have read how our Lord spent a whole night in prayer. In the morning, after the prayerful view of the whole case before the Father, He ordained His 12 apostles among His many disciples. It was the moment in which He was to lay the foundation stone of the Church—those to whom He was to entrust the spreading of the Gospel. These individuals were selected under the special direction of God Himself.

From the mountain-top of prayer, Jesus descends to the valley of opportunity with His 12 ordained apostles, and there finds a vast multitude from the heathen parts of Tyre and Sidon, as well as from the Jewish districts of Judaea and Jerusalem, who have come to hear His teaching and to be healed of their diseases. He was engaged in the work of healing and ministry of preaching and teaching. There is a fullness of grace, and healing virtue in Him, ready to go out from Him that is enough for all and enough for each.

We see that prolonged communion with God in prayer gives clear direction, knowledge of God's will, endowment of grace and power from on high, to labour and to advance the kingdom of God. It is not passive or idle waiting upon God but an earnest effort set forth to accomplish that which was presented before the Lord. It was a night of prayer, and a morning of work. Therein we labour to accomplish that which God has entrusted us, without which, the arm of flesh will fail us.

If the Master deemed it an important task, should we as His followers dare bypass it?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 23
2 TIMOTHY 4

THOUGHT

Prayer girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives to troubled mortals the peace of God. We know not what prayer can do. – CH Spurgeon

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:20–23***LESSON****Blessed are the poor****LUKE 6:20**

*And he lifted up his eyes
on his disciples, and said,
Blessed be ye poor: for yours
is the kingdom of God.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 24
TITUS 1

Luke's record of the discourse of our Lord commonly termed 'Sermon on the Mount' parallels that of Matthew in Matthew 5. Although certain differences are alleged to exist in the framework of the two discourses, whether they were spoken separately or not is not our meditation here. The sermon outlines the character of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

The blessedness spoken here does not belong to those addressed in virtue of their earthly poverty and misfortunes, but in virtue of their faith and piety. For many are poor in their possessions, yet most covetous in their disposition. Poverty of this sort does not save—their affections bring condemnation.

Instead, those spoken here were not simply poor men and women, but poor men and women who felt their needs and had fled to the Saviour to seek the favour of God, thereby confessing the deep sense of their own unworthiness, insufficiency, spiritual poverty, and their reliance upon Him. The rich will say, "Because I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"—How hard then is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! The poor will say, "I know that I am wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" in the sight of God.

This is indeed an admirably sweet, friendly beginning of His doctrine and preaching. He does not proceed like Moses ... with command, threatening and terrifying, but in the friendliest possible way with pure, enticing, alluring, and amiable promises. — Luther.

THOUGHT

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? – James 2:5

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:20–23***LESSON****Blessed are the hungry****LUKE 6:21**

*Blessed are ye that hunger
now: for ye shall be filled.
Blessed are ye that weep
now: for ye shall laugh.*

On the same principle of interpretation as that which applies to the preceding verse, we conclude that our Lord Jesus is referring to those who hunger after righteousness [Matthew 5:6]. Here are those who are affected by a keen spiritual appetite, with an earnest longing for that right relation to God in which they were so lacking. Such can only be compared to that of a starving man for food—satisfaction is sure.

Righteousness here is equivalent to holiness—personal, spiritual holiness, holiness of heart and life. It is the sum of all Christian graces. But we have no righteousness of our own: “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Christ is made unto us Righteousness [1 Corinthians 1:30].

This is a desire for righteousness on its own account, and not for its rewards. It is very different from the mere selfish wish to escape from the penalty of sin. Righteousness is regarded as an end in itself. It is rewarded by its own satisfaction. These hungry ones are to be filled. Nothing but the object of the appetite will appease its craving. The Christian soul hungers after this righteousness. It is not simply happiness hereafter, but righteousness now. It is not a faint hesitating wish, but a strong longing desire that cannot be satisfied till it has attained its object.

The Law cannot secure righteousness but the Gospel can. Christ brings to us a God-made righteousness, and He gives us the power to be all that He expects of us [Romans 3:21-22]. His demand is only that we do not frustrate the working of His grace in us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 25
TITUS 2

THOUGHT

**He that cometh to me shall never hunger ... –
John 6:35**

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:20–23***LESSON****Blessed weepers****LUKE 6:21**

*Blessed are ye that hunger
now: for ye shall be filled.
Blessed are ye that weep
now: for ye shall laugh.*

Our Lord blesses those who weep, not those who merely drop tears from their eyes, for the latter is common to both the believing and unbelieving when sorrow befalls them. Rather, He calls those blessed, who shun a careless life, mixed up with sin, and devoted to carnal pleasures. These blessed ones refuse enjoyments almost weeping from their hatred of all worldly things. God counts them blessed who weep for their past sins and unworthiness, mourning for the slowness of their spiritual progress.

There is a mourning which, as Augustine says, “has no blessing from heaven attached to it, at best only a sorrow of this world and for the things of this world. What the Lord Jesus speaks of is a nobler grief, a weeping for our sins and the sins of others, for our weary exile here.” A sinner looks on the One whom he has pierced, and mourns for Him. He must mourn, in sympathy with the Saviour’s sufferings, in sorrow for his own unworthiness of the Saviour’s love, for his many sins against that great love, for his want of gratitude, for the coldness of his heart.

We Christians, who live under the shadow of the cross, must learn the blessedness of weeping. It may seem like a paradox for sorrow and joy are often opposed to each other, yet the Lord says that there is a sorrow that is blessed.

Our Lord does not refer here to the laughter of senseless, frivolous, ungodly mirth—to the pleasure and amusement that the world runs after. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of” [2 Corinthians 7:10a]. Blessed are they who mourn with godly sorrow.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 26
TITUS 3

THOUGHT

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. – 2 Corinthians 6:10

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:1–8***LESSON****Spiritual desires****MATTHEW 5:6**

*Blessed are they which do
hunger and thirst after
righteousness: for they shall
be filled.*

Hunger and thirst are expressive desires of a natural appetite for food and drink. These are necessary for nourishment and refreshment to a physical body. Without them, one will starve and eventually die. What is true of the physical being is also true of the spiritual as well. As the body depends on these earthly elements for health and strength, so does the soul upon heavenly things for spiritual survival.

Jesus declares that the deepest desire of every person should be to hunger and thirst after righteousness. This is the right way to spiritual happiness. It is clear that this spiritual hunger and thirst is not an optional exercise but a true necessity in order to enjoy God's blessings. Every person is created with a deep sense of emptiness in his heart. He will not be fully satisfied until he is drawn to find this fulfilment in God alone. Nothing in the world can quench this craving except in Jesus.

But what is this righteousness? Here, there is a double meaning, one is to be right and the other to do right. In another word, one has to be good and to do good. This can only be realised in Christ who will be made unto us righteousness and goodness before God.

Righteousness should characterise our earthly life, so that we are living like Christ in every way. Learn from the Psalmist who prayed, "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" [Psalm 63:1].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 27
PHILEMON

PRAYER

O Lord, grant us the longing of our hearts to be more like Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:1–8***LESSON****To be merciful****MATTHEW 5:7***Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

This is one of the grandest attributes of God, as expressed in Exodus 34:6, “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” He is a God of mercies [2 Corinthians 1:3]. He delights in showing mercy to especially piteous sinners. His mercy is demonstrated in His not sparing His Only begotten Son, but giving Him to die on the cross for us. By it He expressed His willingness to pardon and save men from sin and destruction.

In similar manner, God would require His people to follow His example by extending mercy to others. A merciful man is one who enters into the miseries of his neighbour, feels for, and mourns with him. This virtue is a lively emotion of the heart, which is affected when one discovers the miseries of others. He would desire to alleviate them.

God will pronounce His blessing on those who show mercies like how He has done and will continue to do for His creation, “for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” [Matthew 5:45]. Moreover, He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” [2 Peter 3:9b].

As we have enjoyed God’s mercies in our lives, may you and I also display such virtue in our daily life with the people we meet each day. Seek to bring them in so that they too will experience the mercy of the Lord in the forgiveness of their sins.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS I
HEBREWS I

PRAYER

O Father of mercies, we thank Thee for the sweetness of Thy mercies towards us.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:1–8***LESSON****To be pure****MATTHEW 5:8**

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

In the days of our Lord Jesus, religious people were more concerned about their outward appearances than their inward lives. This was particularly true with the Pharisees. They sought outward purity but their hearts were full of corruption and defilement. A major part of the Jewish religion consisted in outward washings and cleansings of pots and pans. No wonder it was once said, “Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.”

Here Christ shows that a pure heart is most essential in order for us to enter into the kingdom of God. Thus the writer in Hebrews states, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” [Hebrews 12:14]. This purity of the heart is in fact declared to be a condition to our communion with God.

The blessing the Lord pronounced is that a man will be able to see God. To see one’s face is to be in one’s presence. Among the Jews, this term expressed great favour. It was regarded a high honour to be in the presence of kings and princes, and to be permitted to see them. Those who could see the face of the king were actually his favourites and friends. Thus to see God means to be His friends and favourites, and to be granted the honour to enter into His kingdom.

Would it not be wonderful to be able to see the beauty of God in His Church and then to enjoy Him forever in heaven someday? The Lord Jesus Christ is the way that will lead you into this blessed possibility.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 2
HEBREWS 2

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, allow me to have a glimpse of Thy beauty and glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:1–8***LESSON****To be a peacemaker****MATTHEW 5:9**

*Blessed are the
peacemakers: for they shall
be called the children of
God.*

To the kingdoms of the world, those who make wars and win them, are esteemed the greatest. But in the kingdom of God, those who are peacemakers are regarded by God as His people! This is because God Himself is a great Peacemaker. He is called the God of peace [Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11].

A peacemaker is one who loves peace, and will labour for peace. He will also promote it among others so that there will be harmony and peace. He will use his utmost powers and prayers to prevent “wars, law-suits, feuds, domestic broils, and religious controversies”. Moreover, he will make it his highest joy to seek to promote true reconciliation between God and sinners.

It was the expectation of the Jews that their Messiah would lead them forth to war and revenge, and bring them victory over the dominion of their cruel master, the Romans. In man’s mad ambition and pursuit, this world is in a miserable and confused state. But the Prince of Peace has pronounced the peacemakers happy for they bear the image of their heavenly Father and Master.

What a blessing it is for you and me to enjoy the inward peace through the reconciliation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though we had gravely offended God, our Peacemaker had brought us to that place where we acknowledged our sins and gained His acceptance and forgiveness. Let this be our passion likewise in leading poor lost sinners to the loving arms of God.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 3
HEBREWS 3**

PRAYER

Lord, grant that I may be the peacemaker to those who are at war with Thee now and they may be at peace with Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:9–12***LESSON****Persecuted for
righteousness****MATTHEW 5:10***Blessed are they which
are persecuted for
righteousness' sake: for
theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.*

This is the last and final Beatitude spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. He associates blessedness with sufferings. This seemingly negative circumstance is indeed strange and absurd to the world at large. In fact, all the previous responses mentioned are not to the world's preferred ways of getting happiness. And yet our Lord has emphatically pronounced blessings on the ones who bear such dispositions.

Every disciple and follower of Christ who lives in a holy and inoffensive manner in this world will have to expect sufferings and persecutions. The Apostle Paul also makes it clear with these words of expectation: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" [2 Timothy 3:12].

Christians do not need to seek for persecution or to provoke it by some strange behaviour. Neither do they need to violate some civil laws nor be offensive to others. Just simply live a righteous life and you will immediately meet with oppositions. Peter reminds his readers, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" [1 Peter 3:14].

Peter says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" [1 Peter 4:12]. We must be prepared that Christians will constantly be the target of the world's arrows of scorn and criticism, especially in the area of living that is very often contrary to theirs. Note these words of the Saviour, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" [John 15:19].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 4
HEBREWS 4

PRAYER

**O Lord Jesus, help me to be ready and willing to
bear the cross like Thee.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:9–12***LESSON****Reviled and yet rejoicing****MATTHEW 5:12**

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Our Lord's sermon, which begins with beatitudes and good news, also ends with blessings and promises of reward. His lips are indeed full of grace and truth. We can always find encouragement and assurance for our obedience to God, even if it often means suffering for the cause of Christ.

To a believer, persecution is but a part of a normal Christian life. In fact, it would be abnormal for a Christian to be well accepted and welcomed by the world. If he has never experienced ridicule or rejection, he has every reason to be concerned for the genuineness of his faith.

In this last message, Jesus focuses on three different aspects of persecution—bodily afflictions, verbal insults and false accusations. Suffering pains of such for the name of Christ, a true believer will continue to endure and bear a constant attitude of faithfulness towards Jesus. We will even also have a joyful spirit in us. This is not merely because we are exhorted to do so, but it is the right and appropriate response towards persecution. He will be doubly blessed, who maintains his faith in the face of strong opposition and even martyrdom.

The world can take away some things from us, but it can never take away our joy and happiness that we have in Christ. Like Him who endured the cross and despised the shame for the “joy that was set before Him”, we should press on, thanking God for the joy in having a part to play in the fulfilling of our Father's will on earth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 5
HEBREWS 5

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank Thee for the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory even in the face of earthly afflictions in life.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 5:13–16

LESSON

Salt and light

MATTHEW 5:13

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Christians who are facing persecutions in the world would sometimes ask why God does not remove us from this wicked world and place us in an environment where there are only saints (that is, Christians). A Christian environment would be less challenging as we would be able to practise our Christian virtues among brethren.

Our Lord Jesus likens the believer to salt. There are many uses for salt (such as a preservative, as food flavour and so on). By itself salt is of no use. Adding more salt to salt does not make it saltier.

Living among unbelievers will allow us to exercise our faith and our testimony to shine all the brighter for our Lord Jesus. Just in case you think that the Christian environment is ideal, you will be soon shaken by the quarrels among Christians too. Christians too are humans and sinners.

Scripture uses salt to serve as an object lesson so that we can be useful for Christ in the world. We have been instructed on the commandments of God and are expected to be an honour to His name. Remember that we carry the name of Christ if we are truly a Christ(ian). We ought to bear good testimony and to show that we are different from the normal unsaved person. It is also expected that we be a good witness. Bear in mind that we should not be a stumbling block but a blessing so that others can see the beauty of Jesus through us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 6
HEBREWS 6

THOUGHT

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? – Luke 13:7

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:16***LESSON****Let your light shine****MATTHEW 5:16**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

God is light. Our Lord Jesus says that He is the Light of the world. When you have the light you will know what is right and wrong. In the dark we have no idea if we are on the correct path. Taking the wrong path is dangerous and can lead to disaster and even death. When we receive the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we have the light.

It also means that others must be able to see the light in us so that they can follow us to the path that leads to eternal life. We are to shine to illuminate the pathway so that others will not stumble, but they following us may be led to the God of glory.

Light is more prominent in a darker area. The world without the truth from God is in darkness and would not be able to find the way to heaven. For this reason those who have the Word of God have the light. We are a little light made for use by the Lord. So when we are placed in the world of darkness, our light becomes a beacon.

Our testimony can either bring glory or shame to God. We are to be watchful of our behaviour and our words. Unless we have a good testimony our witness and preaching the Gospel will not be effective.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 7
HEBREWS 7

THOUGHT

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. – Psalm 119:105

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:17–18***LESSON****Christ came to fulfil the Law****MATTHEW 5:17***Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

God is perfect and naturally His dwelling place is sinless. He cannot let any tint of sin contaminate heaven. Man was created without sin but our forefather, Adam, yielded to temptation and fell into sin whose eventual end is death.

Adam disobeyed and broke the commandment of God. Since then man lost the fellowship and the relationship was severed. There is no way to reconcile with God no matter how man may try. Man cannot go to heaven by any means that he may devise. In vain, Adam and Eve tried to conceal their sin by covering their shamefulness with fig leaves [Genesis 3:7]. In vain the people of the land of Shinar tried to build a tower that would reach unto heaven [Genesis 11:4]. And in vain, we tried to cover our sin by a cloak of our own righteousness. But alas! We still fall short of the glory of God.

The Ten Commandments were given as the set of laws that man need to obey. On top of that, there is a need to perform a series of sacrifices. And in vain, the children of Israel in the Old Testament offered their sacrifices. Our sins cannot be washed away by the blood of animals.

Christ is our perfect sacrifice for sin and through His perfect obedience, He did for us what we can never do for ourselves. He came to fulfil the law which condemns us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 8
HEBREWS 8

THOUGHT

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. – John 1:17

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:19–20***LESSON****The importance of the
Law****MATTHEW 5:20**

*For I say unto you, That except
your righteousness shall exceed
the righteousness of the scribes
and Pharisees, ye shall in no
case enter into the kingdom of
heaven.*

During the time of Jesus, there was a group of religious people who thought that by their outward deeds, they had earned their righteousness. The scribes and Pharisees thought that they had kept all the laws of God. They perceived that they had not sinned and had not broken the law of God. While they deceived others they were also not honest with themselves. Jesus said that there is no one that is sinless including all those very religious people.

Even today, there are some people who think the same way. There are people who still think that they can go to heaven on their own merits. They think that entrance into heaven is not like passing an examination. One does not have to score a distinction; just do not fail.

Entrance into heaven demands more than just a distinction. The key to heaven is opened by perfection—perfect obedience. In case there are those who want to try going to heaven on their own Jesus said that they have to achieve perfection by not breaking any of God’s laws. Humanly speaking, this is impossible. Has any reader here not told a lie, even a white one? This is enough to disqualify us from heaven. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” [James 2:10].

But God knows that we will fall short of His glory. He knows that we cannot make it to heaven on our own. We need to give excuses for our depravity and inability. God knows. That is why He sent His Son, our Lord Jesus to die as a penalty for our sins.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 9
HEBREWS 9**

THOUGHT

**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. –
Romans 6:23**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:21–26***LESSON****It was said ... but I say ... (1)****MATTHEW 5:22**

*But I say unto you, That
whosoever is angry with his
brother without a cause shall
be in danger of the judgement:
and whosoever shall say to
his brother, Raca, shall be
in danger of the council: but
whosoever shall say, Thou fool,
shall be in danger of hell fire.*

We are often so engrossed with our pride that we are only concerned with our personal views and opinions. We set our own standard of morality and truth and godliness. We take offence at any deviation from our norm. We regard with disdain those who would not subscribe to our views. We get upset and angry because things are not handled in the way that we perceive as best.

This is the root cause of us getting angry with our brother or sister without a cause. Take a step back. Take a deep breath. And we will soon realise that this is but a standard fixed in our own personal mind.

Remember that we are sinners too. When we focus on ourselves we become self-centred. Self-centredness is great sin because we have made ourselves the centre around which everything must revolve. God calls us out of our self-centredness, and He instructs us to love and do good to all and especially those who are our brethren and fellow believers. There are those who may be lacking behind us in some aspect of life. They may not have the same experience. They may not have the knowledge. They may not have the maturity.

God calls on us to be kind. And as we ask God to forgive us, should we not forgive those who have failed us and sinned against us? As God's beloved, we cannot pass judgement on our brethren; instead we should learn to counsel, provide our support and to pray for them. God is merciful and He is the judge.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 10
HEBREWS 10**

THOUGHT

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. – Galatians 6:10

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:27–30***LESSON****It was said ... but I say ... (2)****MATTHEW 5:28**

*But I say unto you, That
whosoever looketh on a
woman to lust after her hath
committed adultery with her
already in his heart.*

The fruit caught Eve's eyes just before she took it off the tree. It was pleasant to the eyes [Genesis 3:6]. God created our eyes so that we can admire the beauty of His creation and it is to facilitate us to read His Word with ease.

Our sight and all other senses are to be used for the glory of God. Both Adam and Eve sinned because they could not resist the temptation of lust. They were gullible in believing a lie and so lusted to be equal with God.

Three of the Ten Commandments instruct us not to covet. To lust is to desire for satisfying our sinful need. To covet is quite similar in that we desire to own what does not belong to us. Lust and covetousness will cause us to scheme and to cheat to acquire so as to satisfy our greed. If by looking we fall into sin then we should all shade our eyes. The act of looking is not sinful. Do not get into extreme misinterpretation of God's Word. It is the lust on what we have seen that is sinful.

In lusting, our imagination goes wild, our hearts are open to sinful suggestions. And we crave in our hearts what we are too ashamed to do externally. But it is the heart that matters. A lustful thought is as bad as a lustful act. Job 31:1 gives us a practical principle, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 11
HEBREWS 11

THOUGHT

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. – Matthew 5:29

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:31–32***LESSON****It was said ... but I say ... (3)****MATTHEW 5:32**

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

The Old Testament verse referred here is Deuteronomy 24:1, which was abused by the Israelite men then. Many had married a woman and later sought excuses to put her away so that they could get another. The Old Testament reference seemed to make this easy for them—what the man had to do was just to give the woman a writing of divorcement and he could send her away.

Jesus warned against this flippant attitude towards marriage by tying the dissolution of marriage to the possible transgressions involved. The commandment concerned here is the seventh. The general rule on divorce is stated in Luke 16:18: whoever remarries when his or her spouse is still alive, commits adultery with the one he or she remarries.

Read in this light, unless one wife's is found to be unfaithful, a man who divorces his wife thus (a) tempts her to commit adultery if she were to later marry another; (b) causes the person whom she remarries to commit adultery; and (c) as elaborated in Luke 16:18, if this man were to remarry, he will be committing adultery with the next woman as well. The implications of a divorce apparently go way beyond the two persons involved.

Jesus' clarification of the law pertaining to divorce returns marriage to its solemnity. Marriage is an ordinance of God. The human race started with one man and one woman, joined in one flesh. It is a bond that God has joined together and no man should break asunder. No one should enter or break a sacred bond without serious consideration.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 12–13
HEBREWS 12**

REMINDER

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:33–37***LESSON****Yes is yes, and no is no****MATTHEW 5:37**

*But let your communication
be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for
whatsoever is more than these
cometh of evil.*

Can a Christian take an oath? It is quite common for people to swear in the name of the Lord in the Old Testament. However, Leviticus 19:12 warns us against swearing falsely in God's name. This is obvious as it directly violates the Third Commandment. Yet what underlies this warning seems to be an approval on swearing—only that we should not take any oath lightly. But Jesus has more to teach us in this passage.

Swearing involves invoking the name of something or someone. Verses 34 to 36 tell us of the great amount of things and places people used to swear by. Yet the truth is, those things which people name in their oath, do not even belong to them. Heaven is God's throne, Jerusalem belongs to the great King, and even the hairs on our head—we cannot even prevent them from turning white.

We cannot claim any of the above as ours, and thus it makes no sense to swear by them. In fact, those things are nothing by themselves. In Matthew 23:16–18 Jesus said that the temple, gold and altar by which people swore by were nothing.

The true question is this, what should a Christian base his credit on? Why should anyone trust a Christian? It is not by the names of the things, places or persons he so fiercely swears by. It is by his integrity. A Christian should be known as a trustworthy person whose yes is yes and no is no. If this is recognised, he need not back himself with any other thing.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 14
HEBREWS 13

THOUGHT

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. – James 5:12

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:24–26***LESSON****Woe to the rich, full and popular****LUKE 6:26**

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

The Bible is not against those who are wealthy, filled and well-liked, the same way God is not more for the poor, hungry and shunned. It is our attitude and behaviour when we are in either condition that matters to God. And it is in this light that we understand Proverbs 30:8–9. Agur had understood the temptations that came with poverty and riches, and had asked God to give him neither.

What is the rich especially susceptible to? Proverbs 30:9 tells us they tend to deny God. They claim everything as theirs and thus theirs to keep. Thus those who are rich forget the poor and lose themselves in comfort and luxury. The ones who are full do not remember those who are poor and needy. Those who are busy merry-making, forget those who are mourning and weeping. There are even some who have become rich through ill means, but are spoken well of by the world. Jesus pronounced woes on all those people.

Conversely, God cares for the poor and needy, the widows and fatherless, not because of who they are. Nor does He condone their sins. Rather, it is because the poor are often made humble and broken by their condition and are thus more willing to surrender and submit to Him. However, if they were to stubbornly depend on themselves and even commit sins as a result, the woes on them would certainly not be less terrible than those on the rich.

In other words, rich or poor, we are all to love God and our fellow brethren.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 15
JAMES 1

THOUGHT

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. – Acts 20:35

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 6:29–31***LESSON****Love, and love some more****LUKE 6:29**

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also.

Man, in his sinful nature, often chooses retaliation as a response to any offence against him. In the name of justice, he would prefer the Old Testament's Iron Rule of "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" [Matthew 5:38]. Yet if he is the offender, he will cry for mercy. A better law superseded this law of deterrence when Jesus came. The Golden Rule [Luke 6:31] becomes a great ethical principle in the Christian faith.

What happens to justice then? If a man were to smite me on one cheek for no reason, or to take away my possession against my wish, why should I tolerate such unfair treatment? If he were to make me do difficult tasks or fail to return the goods I have lent him, why can't I exact revenge? The Bible is clear about this. Vengeance is of the Lord [Romans 12:19]. Wait on the Lord and you will certainly be recompensed. Trust in Him and He will surely make all things right.

When we are slapped on one cheek, we should turn the other. This is definitely not to be taken in the literal sense. Rather, it means when someone offends us, we should forgive him. By doing so, we are making ourselves vulnerable. The person may take advantage of our meekness and demand more. Yet we are still to forgive nevertheless.

This is indeed difficult, but loving others, and especially loving our enemies, often involves more strength than we would like to muster. In times like these, pray for God's grace and learn to trust in Him to carry you through.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 16
JAMES 2**

THOUGHT

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? – Matthew 5:46

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:43–45***LESSON****It was said ... but I say ... (4)****MATTHEW 5:44**

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

It is easy for us to hate our enemies. The natural man can do that instinctively. We dislike those who use us for their own advancement. We strike back at those who bully and persecute us. The world trains us to do so since young. Some people would even see it as the key to survival. Those who meekly suffer unfair treatment are often deemed as weak.

Yet Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, to return evil with good and curses with blessings. For those who have done us wrong and yet refuse to repent, we are to pray for them. We know that the Lord is just and He will recompense in His time.

Loving our enemies does not mean being hypocritical. Neither is it a sign of cowardice. It does not mean we should suffer passively and not defend ourselves. Instead, it involves a compassionate concern for the spiritual condition of our adversaries. We pray for them because they do not know what they are doing. We ask God to turn them around so that they can behold God's love and be aware of His justice.

Yet not all will repent, for we live in a fallen world. Matthew 5:45 tells us of the common grace of God. The sun rises and the rain falls on both the evil and the good. Before the harvest, the wheat and tares will have to grow in the same field [Matthew 13:30]. It is only when Jesus returns that enmity between God's children and the world will come to an end. But till then, we should continue to pray.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 17–18
JAMES 3**

REMINDER**Read 1 Samuel 12:23–24.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:46–48***LESSON****Be perfect****MATTHEW 5:48**

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as
your Father which is in heaven
is perfect.*

There are two similar passages for our devotion today. Both begin by reiterating the same point we have been considering for the past few days—if we love only those who love us, there is no difference between the world and us. Loving our friends is the inclination of a natural man. Surely a regenerated man with a transformed mind can do more and much better.

Compare Luke 6:36 with Matthew 5:48. The former reads, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” The reason why we are able to forgive, love and pray for our enemies is because our Lord Jesus has forgiven, loved and prayed for sinners like us. We are able to love our enemies because God first loved us—He sent His Son to die for us when we were yet sinners [Romans 5:8]. In God’s strength, we can love our enemies too.

But the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18 reminds us that what we do for others is actually nothing compared to what God has done for us. In Matthew 5:48, God commands us to strive towards perfection, even as He is perfect. It does not mean we can attain perfection in this body, but it certainly sets the direction towards which we should work.

Understanding this sets us right before God. Any sacrifices on our part in choosing to love others are but what we should offer as a child of God. They are necessary for our spiritual growth till we see our Lord in perfection face to face.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 19
JAMES 4

THOUGHT

Check Genesis 17:1–2. The command for man to be perfect is as old as the Abrahamic covenant.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:1–4***LESSON****How to give****MATTHEW 6:1**

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

When we study the opening verses of Matthew 6, we are immediately confronted with one most important question—What is the place of the reward motive in the Christian life? It is very often stated that Christians should not do things while expecting rewards. This view is fine and very noble. Yet three times in this passage Jesus speaks about rewards. The right kind of almsgiving, the right kind of prayer, and the right kind of fasting will all bring rewards.

To the Jews, there were three great cardinal works in the religious life. Jesus would not for a moment have disputed these means of grace; what troubled Him was that so often in human life the finest things were done for the wrong motives.

It was Jesus' warning that, when these things were done with the sole intention of bringing glory to the doer, they lost by far the most important part of their value. A man may give alms, not really to help the person to whom he gives, but simply to demonstrate his own generosity, and to bask in the warmth of someone's gratitude and all men's praise. A man may pray in such a way that his prayer is not really addressed to God, but to his fellow men. A man may fast and ask for all the things he should not be asking; he may even fast as part of a ritual and do not know the meaning thereof.

Christianity is a faith of the heart. Great rewards await whoever does good sincerely to glorify God and benefit his neighbours.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 20
JAMES 5

THOUGHT

To banish all rewards and punishments from the idea of religion is in effect to say that injustice has the last word. That would simply mean that God does not care whether men are good or not.

BIBLE LESSON
Matthew 6:5–8

LESSON

How to pray

MATTHEW 6:5

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

By hypocrites here, our Lord meant especially the scribes and Pharisees during His time. They loved to be seen praying for they would then be deemed as pious men. In response to those acts of pretence, Jesus laid down two great rules for prayer.

Firstly, Jesus insists that all true prayer must be offered to God. The real fault of the religious people then was that they were praying to men and not to God. A certain great preacher once described an ornate and elaborate prayer offered in a certain church as “the most eloquent prayer ever offered to an audience.” The preacher was much more concerned with impressing the congregation than with making contact with God. Whether in public or in private prayer, a man should have no thought in his mind and no desire in his heart but God.

Secondly, our Lord stresses that we must always remember that the God to whom we pray is a God of love Who is more ready to answer than we are to pray. We do not come to a God who has to be coaxed, pestered, bribed or even battered into answering our prayers. God can give and is always willing to give. When we remember this, it is surely sufficient to go to God with all our desires in our hearts, and on our lips the words, “Thy will be done.”

Also we must not use vain repetitions in prayer. The fault is in making it a mere lip-labour of the duty of prayer, when it is not the service of the soul.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 21
I PETER I

THOUGHT

The God we pray to is our Father by creation, by covenant, and therefore our addresses to Him should be easy, natural, and unaffected; children do not make long speeches to their parents when they want anything. Let us come to Him with the disposition of children, with love, reverence, and dependence.

BIBLE LESSON
Matthew 6:9–13

LESSON
The Lord's prayer

MATTHEW 6:10

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will
 be done in earth, as it is in
 heaven.*

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray. It is a prayer only one who is committed to Jesus Christ can take upon his lips with any meaning. It is not a child's prayer, but is specifically and definitely stated to be the disciple's prayer. The Lord's Prayer can only really be prayed when the one who prays it knows what one is saying, and one cannot know that until one has entered into discipleship.

Note the order of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first three petitions have to do with God and His glory; the second three petitions have to do with our needs and necessities. That is to say, God is first given His supreme place, and then, and only then, we turn to ourselves and our needs and desires. It is only when God is given His proper place that all other things fall into their proper places.

Our Lord said, "... The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" [Luke 17:20b–21]. The Kingdom of God is where Jesus is worshipped as Lord and God, and it is advanced when the Gospel is preached and people are saved.

We on earth should pray that God would act on behalf of His name, His kingdom and His will. Surely, these petitions will be perfectly fulfilled only on the Last Day when Jesus returns.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 22
1 PETER 2

THOUGHT

A man may say, "Thy will be done" in a tone of defeated resignation because he has accepted the fact that he cannot possibly say anything else. Or a man may say, "Thy will be done" in perfect love and trust. He may say it gladly and willingly because he can be sure of the wisdom and love of God.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:9–13***LESSON****Our daily bread****MATTHEW 6:11***Give us this day our daily bread.*

One would have thought that the meaning of 'daily bread' is clear. Yet there are discrepancies among different commentators. For example, it has been commonly identified as the spiritual food of God's Word. The bread has even been associated with the bread of the Lord's Supper.

However, what this prayer request primarily encompasses is simple. It means, "Give me the things we need to eat for this coming day. Help me to get the things I've got on my shopping list when I go out this morning. Give me the things we need to eat when the children come in from school, and the men folk come in from work. Grant that the table be not bare when we sit down together today." This is a simple prayer for God to supply us with the things we need for the day at hand. When we understand this petition as a request for our physical needs every day, certain tremendous truths surface.

It tells us that God cares for our bodies. We can see what God thinks of our human bodies, when we remember that He Himself in Jesus Christ has taken a human body upon Him. It is not simply soul salvation, it is whole salvation, the salvation of body, mind and spirit, at which Christianity aims.

It also teaches us to live one day at a time, and not to worry and be anxious about the distant and the unknown future. It allays the anxiety that is so characteristic of a life that has not learnt to trust God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 23
1 PETER 3

THOUGHT

By implication, this prayer gives God His proper place. It admits that it is from God that we receive the food necessary to support life. No man has ever created a seed that will grow.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:9–13***LESSON****Forgiveness****MATTHEW 6:12**

*And forgive us our debts, as we
forgive our debtors.*

Before one can honestly pray this petition in the Lord's Prayer, one must be sensitive to sin. Sin is not a popular word nowadays. In fact, it is never a popular word in this world. Men and women resent being called, or treated as, hell-deserving sinners.

The trouble is, most people have a wrong concept of sin. They would readily agree that the burglar, the drunkard, the murderer, the adulterer, the foul-mouthed person is a sinner. But they are guilty of none of these sins; they live decent, ordinary, respectable lives, and have never even been in danger of appearing in court, or going to prison, or getting some notoriety in the newspapers. They therefore feel that sin has nothing to do with them.

When we come to see sin as it really is, we will realise that it is a universal disease in which every man is involved. We sin and have to deal with sin everyday. We struggle with sins in our hearts. And often, our pains have to do with forgiving others who have sinned against us.

Jesus says in the plainest possible language that if we forgive others, God will forgive us; but if we refuse to forgive others, God will refuse to forgive us. This does not mean our being forgiven by God is based on our forgiveness of others, for that would be salvation by works. Instead what Jesus says is, we should forgive others since we have been forgiven much. Christians are the most forgiven people. Thus they should be the most forgiving as well.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 24
I PETER 4

THOUGHT

If we say, "I will never forgive so-and-so for what he or she has done to me," if we say, "I will never forget what so-and-so did to me," we cannot take this petition fit for Jesus' disciples on our lips.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:9–13***LESSON****Temptation****MATTHEW 6:13**

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Temptation is not designed to make us fall. Instead, God allows temptations to come our way, so that we can be made better men and women. Temptation is not designed to make us sinners. God often uses temptations to make us stronger.

We may fail in the test, but we are not meant to. Rather, we are meant to overcome temptations. To a large extent, temptation is not so much the penalty of being a person; it is the glory of being one. If metal is to be used in a great engineering project, it is tested at stresses and strains far beyond those which it is ever likely to have to bear. Similarly, a man has to be tested before God can use him greatly for His service.

All that is true; but it is also true that there is a power of evil in this world. Quite certainly this petition of the Lord's Prayer should be translated not, "Deliver us from evil", but "Deliver us from the Evil One." The Bible does not think of evil as an abstract principle or force, but as an active, personal power. In other words, evil is real.

Yet this power cannot do anything to us if God has not allowed it. When tempted, always remember 1 Corinthians 10:13. The challenges we go through are never peculiar to us. Many men have gone through them and have overcome. Jesus Himself has conquered the greatest temptations of the Evil One. Jesus understands. Commit everything to Him and ask Him for His strength and grace.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 25
1 PETER 5

THOUGHT

In every man there is the weak spot, which, if he is not on the watch, can ruin him.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:14–15***LESSON****Forgiving others****MATTHEW 6:14**

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

This is surely not a new lesson for all of us. Yet our sinful nature is such that we need to be reminded again and again. Have we really forgiven all who have ‘trespassed against us’?

Oftentimes, it is easy for us to say that we have forgiven offences committed against us by friends. However, it gets progressively harder to be forgiving towards offensive strangers who have slighted us, not to mention forgiving those that we know and do not get along with. We even waste much time considering whether or not a certain offence is done on purpose, and whether we should ‘teach the offender a lesson’.

Christ however, has set the example for us to follow. He told us to forgive men—not just our friends but all men. In fact, it is this ability to love others that differentiate us from non-believers. When we are feeling particularly vengeful or offended, let us remember that even as Christ was on the cross dying, He prayed for the forgiveness of those who had crucified Him. Surely, the offences we have perceived to be against us are not as serious as that, and if our Master could find it in His heart to love and forgive His enemies then, we ought to follow in His perfect example.

Next, when we have offended another brother, do we take steps to resolve the situation quickly? Or are we willing, in our pride, to let it stew, thinking that time will heal all wounds? It is also our responsibility, as the offender, to make amends. Let us consider Matthew 5:24–25.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 26
2 PETER 1

THOUGHT

Are there any grudges we still hold against others?

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:16–18***LESSON****Be not as the hypocrites****MATTHEW 6:17***But thou, when thou fastest,
anoint thine head, and wash
thy face;*

Most of us do not really practise fasting and are hence prone to think that this passage does not apply to us. However, the principle in this passage still holds true today.

The issue with the Pharisees in those days, branded as hypocrites, was that they put on airs of piety and were trying to impress men with their external show of devoutness. Here, Jesus explicitly commands His followers not to be focused on external displays of piety and not to seek man's praise. The reason behind this is simple. The Pharisees were focused on showing to other men how holy they were, and as a result, they had lost their focus on God.

Let us examine ourselves and our service for God. When we serve Him in areas big or small, do we expect to be thanked? Do we expect others to be grateful towards us? Even worse, do we find ourselves aiming to perform our services in plain view of many? Do we find our conversation revolving around telling others about our service for God, than about God's goodness in our lives? Let us take heed lest we fall!

When we serve God, let us aim to be humble. Let us perform our service with a heart sensitive of God's blessings. Then, we will see that even while we seem to be the one doing God a service, it is actually His goodness towards us and His plenteous blessings that enable us to serve Him in the area where He has called us to.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 27
2 PETER 2

THOUGHT**I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:19–21***LESSON****Your treasure and your heart****MATTHEW 6:21***For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.*

What prized possessions do we own or want to own? The society we live in today is a very materialistic one. People work for the sake of obtaining wealth and status, and under the illusion that these will allow them to live a 'better' life and that they will feel happier.

As Christians, we know this is not true. Possessions and material wealth do not necessarily bring happiness to those who own them. Instead, only God can give us the peace that passeth all understanding. Only He can grant us the joy unspeakable. With our sins forgiven, what better life can we have? We know all this, yet sometimes we still fall into the snares of our worldly desires and wants, thinking that to own a nice looking car or a beautiful watch will enable us to be happy. This is dangerous as the pursuit of our worldly desires will inadvertently result in generating even more earthly desires and soon, our hearts will lose focus on God as we strive to pursue earthly delights.

As such, this passage gives us all a timely reminder to lay up our treasures in heaven instead. As it rightly points out, things of this world are corruptible. Nothing on this earth can stand the erosion of time. Even the hardest of materials will decay given enough time.

Let us remember that we have an eternal God who is not constrained by time. Let us labour in love for Him, not just to gain treasures in heaven, but to also ensure that heaven is where our heart is always.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 28
2 PETER 3

THOUGHT**I guess it all comes down to where your heart is.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:22–23***LESSON****Your sight and your life****MATTHEW 6:22**

*The light of the body is the eye:
if therefore thine eye be single,
thy whole body shall be full of
light.*

The verses here speak on a simple principle. When our eyes are fixed firmly upon a single goal, our direction and purpose are clear. We are able to know and take the correct steps in order to achieve the goal that we have in mind.

Let us keep our eyes fixed on heaven. When we aim to do so, our conduct and our actions, the things we say in our conversation, will shine forth as edifying to one another and our bodies can be said to be full of light. We will find ourselves walking in the straight and narrow way if we are able to constantly keep our focus on Christ. When our eyes are fixed on heaven, our affections will be there too.

Conversely, the next verse gives us a grave warning. If our eyes are fixed on evil, that is, if we are tolerant of sin in our lives and do not actively repent and take steps to correct it, our whole body will be full of darkness and indeed, how great is that darkness! We will find that every action we take, every thought we consider, is all steeped in sin. Even the good that we do are for selfish reasons. What a dangerous position for anyone to be in!

Finally, notice that the verses speak only of two possibilities, namely, the eye that focuses on light and the eye fixed on darkness. There is no in-between. Let us therefore ensure that our eyes are fixed firmly on our Lord and Saviour as we journey through this life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 29
I JOHN I

THOUGHT

Darkness is the absence of light. If our eyes are not fixed on light, it is invariably fixed on darkness.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:24***LESSON****The 21st century idol****MATTHEW 6:24**

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

In the previous few days, we have been learning about looking towards heaven and laying up treasures there. Yesterday, we learnt to keep our focus on God and towards things of God. Today, verse 24 tells us the reason why we are constantly exhorted to do so.

No man can serve two masters. We are taught to constantly examine ourselves and to make sure that our motives for our daily choices and decisions are all oriented towards one goal—to serve the only Master that deserves to be served.

Notice that the passage here specifically highlights mammon in contrast to God. The love of money has through the ages been one of the main contesters for God's place in the human heart. Much of today's society functions for the sake of money. Many think that possessing great wealth can allow them to be happier in their lives. However, we often fail to see that, if we were to make money, or mammon, our god, we will be plagued with an insatiable hunger for more money and more wealth. There is no satisfaction in the life of a money-lover simply because money is something that can never give contentment.

Furthermore, the verse here states clearly that if we do not serve God, we do not love Him. If we do not hold on to Him, we are actually despising Him. Let us therefore continue to serve Him out of our love for Him, and resolve never to let any other thing take His place in our lives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 30
1 JOHN 2

THOUGHT

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. – 1 Timothy 6:10

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:25–29***LESSON****Be not anxious****MATTHEW 6:27***Which of you by taking
thought can add one cubit
unto his stature?*

This is one of the most comforting verses in the Bible. In this text, the true futility of humankind is highlighted. Which of us indeed, by our own strength or willpower can fundamentally alter our appearance or make ourselves taller even by one centimetre?

Thankfully, despite the helplessness of humans, we are reminded of an all-powerful God Who is able to not just take care of the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, but is also able to simultaneously take care of each and every individual's unique needs at every single point in time. What a wonderful, blessed assurance we have then, to be under the care of our God Almighty!

Let us consider the beauty of the world around us, for God has created it. Let us consider how each animal and plant has a unique design and adaptation allowing them to live and thrive in their respective environments. Let us therefore be humbled by our awesome God, and learn to put our trust and cares in Him.

Even as Christ is able to stop the winds and the waves and even as He has enabled His disciples to perform all manners of miracles for His name's sake, so will He uphold and keep you. His provision for the lilies in the field is better than what even King Solomon, who ruled Israel in its heyday, can clothe himself with. Let us therefore live each day trusting in Him and casting our cares upon Him, for He careth for us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 31
1 JOHN 3

THOUGHT

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness... – 2 Corinthians 12:9

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:30–32***LESSON****What would God not do for you?****MATTHEW 6:30**

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

The Lord's rebuke for those who are excessively preoccupied with the material things of life is clear—your faith is weak. You are worrying and overly anxious, therefore you are displeasing and disappointing God. God knows your need of these things. He loves you. Certainly He will provide for you. The Gentiles (the heathen and the lost) seek after these things only. Do not be like them. The genuine believer has to be different.

The lost are caught up in the world and the things of the world. They know nothing else. All they know is seeking and securing all that they can, of what the world has to offer. To go further, they seek the good life that comes from possessions and even luxuries.

Believers have a heavenly Father. We have the Word of God, and should be familiar with its teachings about godliness and contentment. We should set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth [Colossians 3:2]. We should be “anxious for nothing” and simply cast our cares on Christ who cares for us [1 Peter 5:7].

But sadly, the people of today, including many Christians, are no different from those whom the Lord labelled as “ye of little faith”. In fact, we are worse because most of us are living in societies where there is little cause for concern from where our next meal will come. We may be excessively absorbed with dining and fashion. Could it be that we are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God [2 Timothy 3: 4]?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 32
1 JOHN 4

THOUGHT

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.
– Helen H. Lemmel

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 6:33–34***LESSON****What you must do for
God****MATTHEW 6:33***But seek ye first the kingdom
of God, and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be
added unto you.*

Verse 33 is the key verse of the entire sermon. It summarises what Jesus wanted to teach the multitudes that came to him that day. It encapsulates the very reason of His first coming, which is to lead the lost into the Kingdom of God. This same message is highly relevant for our time.

The Jews were greatly mistaken in respect to the nature of that kingdom. They were expecting a kingdom like the kingdoms of this world, invested with earthly splendour. Christ sought to tell them the truth. He told them that His kingdom was spiritual, and not temporal; demanding the homage of the heart, and not the pomp and pageant so commonly rendered to royalty. Christ will reign in the hearts of His people.

We are required, not only to seek the kingdom of God, but also ‘His righteousness’ which is simply this—being right with God, coming into a state of acceptance with Him. This includes both the pardon of our sins and the transforming changes in our lives to conform to Christ.

Furthermore, we are to seek the things of God as a priority over the things of the world. The Lord is in fact saying, “If you will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you shall have all these earthly things of which I have been speaking of. You shall be fed as surely as I feed the ravens, and clothed as well as I clothe the lilies. You need not be anxious for these things. I will provide for you.”

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 33
I JOHN 5**

REMINDER

But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. – Matthew 4:4

BIBLE LESSON
Matthew 7:1–5

LESSON
Beam in your eye

MATTHEW 7:1
*Judge not, that ye be not
judged.*

People often use Matthew 7:1 to stop any discussion about the rightness or wrongness of a person's behaviour. They would claim, "But Jesus says we are not to judge anyone!" But the context of this verse makes it clear that Jesus is not saying that we can never judge. In fact, in John 7:24, Jesus told us to judge, only to do so righteously.

To judge righteously means to use the Truth of the Word to discern truth from error, instead of judging by appearances only. We are to be able to differentiate right from wrong, so that we can either separate ourselves from evil, or even help others whom we have judged to be sinning.

Yet, in this verse, Jesus also gives us a caution to make sure that we are willing to be judged by the same standard of judgement we use to judge others [v. 2]. It is a warning against pride and hypocrisy.

Often, it is pride that causes us to judge others. We puff up and may even derive pleasure from pointing out someone else's failure and tearing him down. Also, when we judge and criticise, we often reveal a very serious problem: we are blind to the truth of our own nature. We are guilty of hypocrisy. Before we even start to tell someone else what is wrong with his life, make sure we take a good look at our own. After we have taken care of our own problem, then go and help our brother.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 34
2 JOHN

REMINDER

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. – Lamentations 3:40

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 7:6***LESSON****Pearls are not for pigs****MATTHEW 7:6**

*Give not that which is holy
unto the dogs, neither cast ye
your pearls before swine, lest
they trample them under their
feet, and turn again and rend
you.*

Of course, these words of Jesus are figurative. What He meant is, simply stated; “Do not persist in offering what is sacred or of value to those who have no appreciation for it, because your gift will not only become contaminated and be despised, your generous efforts could also be rebuffed and perhaps even openly attacked.”

The word ‘pearl’ is a metaphor for godly wisdom, even unto salvation. God’s wisdom, which all believers should strive to possess, is likened to something of a very great price [Matthew 13:45–46]. The ‘dogs’ and ‘swine’ here stand for the unappreciative and worldly men and women who belittle the value of what is offered to them.

“That which is holy’ would be the meat once offered in sacrifice to God. A dog could care less whether it came from the altar or the garbage. The swine have no appreciation for either the beauty or the value of the pearls under their feet. Sadly, as God’s Word also warns, we can see many such people in these perilous last days. Peter calls them “scorners, walking after their own lusts” [2 Peter 3:3] and likened them to “brute beasts” [2 Peter 2:12].

Can such people be saved? Of course. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” [Romans 10:13]. But there are some who have reached such a high level of evil that they are unlikely to turn from their wickedness. We can only pray for them; and we must.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 35
3 JOHN

THOUGHT

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. – Matthew 13:45–46

BIBLE LESSON
Matthew 7:7–11

LESSON
Ask! Seek! Knock!

MATTHEW 7:7

*Ask, and it shall be given you;
 seek, and ye shall find; knock,
 and it shall be opened unto
 you:*

The Lord next teaches us about persevering prayer. Persevering prayer is asking and seeking until an answer is received and found; it is knocking on the door till it opens. It is being so occupied asking something that a person never gives up until God responds.

‘Ask’, ‘seek’ and ‘knock’ are not only conditionals, they convey a necessary sense of imperative. We must keep on asking, seeking, and knocking. We must persist in prayer; by faith, the believer knows that God has heard his prayer [1 John 5:14–15].

Yes, the answers to our prayers are assured [v. 9–10], though the answer may not always be in the affirmative. God is never reluctant to give. He is interested and concerned about our welfare. He is as a loving father to His children. But what is asked must be according to God’s will [1 John 5:14]. It must not be asked for selfish desires and motives. God gives only what is good and wholesome to us [James 4:2–3].

There is more to prayer than asking. A person not only asks, he also seeks and knocks at the door of heaven until God grants the request. ‘Seeking’ suggests no room for sluggishness or complacency on our part. ‘Knocking’ may even carry the idea that we approach every door that we can until the right door opens—by that we mean looking out for opportunities that God may put in our way as answers to our prayer. As much as the outcome of every request is dependent on God, man also need to be diligent in praying and be sensitive to God’s guidance.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 36
JUDE

THOUGHT

**Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. –
 Luke 18:1b**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 7:12***LESSON****The golden rule****MATTHEW 7:12**

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 7:12 is one of our Lord's most well-known sayings; even among non-Christians. If everyone followed this 'golden rule', most, if not all, of the world's problems would go away. There will be no more road rage incidents, crimes, divorces and even wars. But alas this is not the case. In fact reality is far from it. Many people praise this rule for its profound simplicity, yet it is hard, or even impossible for them to practise it in life. Why is that so?

Jesus called this golden rule "the law and the prophets", meaning that it is an encapsulation of the teachings of Moses and the prophets. Jesus preached that God's laws had been misunderstood, and in particular by the Pharisees and scribes. The Law is not simply a set of rules and regulations for us to keep. The whole purpose and spirit behind it all is, to love thy neighbour as thyself—but before you can do that, you must love God.

The reason why people forsake the golden rule is theological in nature. Fallen man is sinful and perverted. He does not like the Law. In fact he hates it. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God" [Romans 8:7]. Man is proud and self-centred. He sees the speck in another's eye but not the beam in his own.

The solution to the problem is therefore also theological in response. We need the Gospel. We need to crucify the 'old man' in us. We need to let the righteousness of the Law be fulfilled in us, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit [Romans 8:4].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY I
REVELATION I

QUESTION

What did the Lord say of people who hear His sayings but do not do them?

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 7:13–14***LESSON****Two kinds of gates****MATTHEW 7:14**

*Because strait is the gate,
and narrow is the way, which
leadeth unto life, and few there
be that find it.*

The Lord has been preaching about the kingdom that He has come to establish, and especially on how different it is from that which the world knows. As He brings His sermon to a close, He tells the people to choose between two different gates. One gate is wide and the way broad. The other gate is narrow and the path confined and difficult.

The Lord wants us to choose the strait gate and narrow way because it leads to everlasting life; but He is also very direct and truthful in telling us at the onset what that incurs. Because the gate is narrow, we need to leave many things behind—worldliness for one. When you become a Christian, you are making a break with the world and the crowd. The Christian way of life is not popular. You may even have to leave behind those closest to you in this world. You will certainly have to leave behind your own wilful self. That may include pride, self-centredness and a vengeful spirit.

Not only is the gate strait, the path is narrow and difficult. It starts narrow, and it continues to be narrow till Christ returns. It is a ‘fight of faith’ all the way. You will face persecution. You have to wrestle against principalities and powers, against the darkness of this world all your life. You will always have to be careful, and to “walk circumspectly”, as Paul puts it.

But do not be discouraged, because your Saviour walks beside you and leads you all the way. And at the end, you will receive a glorious crown.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 2
REVELATION 2

QUESTION

If there were signs over the two gates, what do you think the one over the wide gate would read?

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 7:15–20***LESSON****Two kinds of trees****MATTHEW 7:17**

*Even so every good tree
bringeth forth good fruit;
but a corrupt tree bringeth
forth evil fruit.*

In today's portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we are told to beware of false prophets. As a prophet's job is to speak what God tells him to speak, and we ourselves normally do not hear from God directly, how are we to know whether the prophet is speaking the truth, or whether he is a false prophet? Our Lord knows that there will be false prophets who will come after His sheep, to lead them astray, and away from the strait and narrow path. Therefore, He forewarns us about them, and teaches how we may discern falsehood from the truth.

Firstly, we are told that these false prophets will not be easy to spot. They appear like wolves in sheep's clothing, meaning that their outward appearance will be deceiving. No one knows another man's heart but God does, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" [1 Samuel 16:7b].

The test of a prophet's truthfulness lies in the fruits of his works. Just like a good tree will bring forth fruits that are good to eat, a good prophet will bear good spiritual fruits in due time. Read Galatians 5:22–23. Likewise, like a tree that is damaged or diseased will bear rotten fruits, a false prophet will be found out by the evil spiritual fruits that he produces [Galatians 5:19–21].

Therefore, let us be discerning, and not be deceived in these perilous times. Time will reveal the fruits of a man, including our own works.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 3
REVELATION 3

MEDITATION

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. – Galatians 5:22–23

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 7:21–23***LESSON****The worst reality****MATTHEW 7:23**

*And then will I profess unto
them, I never knew you:
depart from me, ye that
work iniquity.*

Deception has always been the tool that the devil uses to lure man away from the reality of this world. Even in the Garden, the serpent used deception to trick man into committing the first sin. Indeed, the devil is the father of lies, and there is no truth in him [John 8:44].

Therefore, this begs the question: how could a person believe a lie? Surely, if a sane person knows that he is being told a lie, he will reject it immediately. A person will not drink from a cup if he knows that within it is poison. The only way a person can be made to believe a lie is to dress it up with deception. Change his perception of reality and make him think that the lie is truth.

In today's passage, our Lord warns us not to be deceived by false religion. And the worst deception is when this happens within the church. Our Lord warns us that not everyone that invokes His name is doing it according to the will of His Father in heaven. Prophesying, casting out devils and doing other wonderful works in Jesus' name are not prescriptions for securing one's place in heaven.

The truth is that no one can work his way to heaven. Our sins can only be cleansed through the forgiveness offered by Christ when He shed His blood on the cross. Only by believing that Christ had borne all our sins on the cross, and obeying Him as our Lord, can one be saved. Dear reader, do you believe this truth?

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

PRAYER**Lord, teach us to know Your will and to do it.**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 7:24–28

LESSON

Two kinds of builders

MATTHEW 7:24

*Therefore whosoever
heareth these sayings of
mine, and doeth them, I
will liken him unto a wise
man, which built his house
upon a rock.*

Everyone in this world is a builder. We spend our waking moments working towards a goal. We could be building our career, our family, our knowledge, our wealth, our social network ... the list goes on. Whatever our goals are, we want to build things that last. We feel a sense of joy and pride when we complete a building task.

What if the thing that we built is destroyed? Imagine the anguish we will feel if such a thing were to happen. Therefore, we will take every care to make sure that whatever we build will last. Nobody wants to build a house of cards that is easily destroyed when a strong wind blows. Likewise, we want to build our house on a solid foundation. Without a strong foundation, the building may collapse onto the ground it stands on.

When we consider our Christian growth, we also need to build our spiritual lives upon a solid and strong foundation. What is that strong and solid foundation? There is only one sure foundation, and that is Christ.

How are we to make Christ our foundation? We should hear and obey His Word. The Bible is the Word of God, and by reading and obeying what God has written for us in His Book, we can be sure that our lives will have a strong spiritual foundation. Therefore, as Matthew 7:24 says, whosoever hears Jesus' sayings and does (or obeys) them, He likens that person to a wise man who builds his house upon a rock, so that whatsoever the world throws at him, he will remain strong.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 5
REVELATION 5

PRAYER

**Lord, help me and teach me through Your Word,
that I may stand against the tempest of this
world.**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 7:29

LESSON

Teach with authority

MATTHEW 7:29

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus' sermon to His followers, up on a mountain, is a long discourse on the practical aspects of living as a believer and follower of Him. To the hearers then, His message changed their worldview. He taught that it was a blessing to be meek and lowly, just like Himself, and that while the world may persecute them, they should rejoice, for great is their reward in heaven.

Jesus definitely spoke as one with authority, and who else can have authority to speak of heavenly things, except One who came from heaven? In all His teachings, He had proven to us His divine nature, and those who follow Him can identify with His teachings and commandments.

In contrast, there are those who also deal with heavenly things, but handle them like the scribes in verse 29. Scribes have an important role to play in the keeping of the Scriptures, and ensuring the proper preservation of God's Word. However, being physically close to God's Word is not enough; if a scribe does not have a spiritual relationship with God, he is as blind as any man on the street.

Do you read your Bible and do you meditate on His Word daily? Do you have a close communion with God through prayers in your quiet time with Him? Most importantly, do you listen to, and obey God's commandments and put God above yourself? If you do, then you can also teach the Word of God to those around you with authority.

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

MEDITATION

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. – James 1:22

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 8:5–13***LESSON****Healing of the centurion's servant****MATTHEW 8:13**

And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

In today's passage, we see a centurion, a captain of the Roman army, coming to Jesus to seek healing for his servant. He was no ordinary Roman officer, in that he had compassion on his servant, and even took the trouble to seek healing for him. He was also an extraordinary Roman officer in that he believed in the authority and power of Jesus to heal, and to command legions of angels to do His bidding, including healing. As such, Jesus said unto him: Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.

Jesus proved to us again in this passage another aspect of His divine nature. God is not limited by physical distance. After all, He is the Creator of the universe, and He is omnipresent. God also commands His blessings upon all His creations. He owns everything in this world and He is sovereign over all [Psalm 135:6].

Likewise, God's salvation is freely given to all. Christ died on the cross and took on Himself the sins of this world. His death is effective to save all who put their trust in His saving grace. Therefore, many will come to sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But not all will be saved, and some will be cast out into outer darkness, even those who seem to be children of the kingdom. While we rejoice in the Gospel of Christ, let us heed the call to bring many into the kingdom of light.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 7
REVELATION 7

MEDITATION

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. – Matthew 28:19–20.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 8:10–13***LESSON****Great faith****MATTHEW 8:10**

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

It is not clear from the passage in yesterday and today's reading whether the centurion was a true follower of Jesus, although we would like to think so. The centurion had heard how Jesus had healed many people, and had need of His healing, not for himself but for his servant.

Note that he also came to Jesus personally, even though he was an officer with authority and could have asked his soldier to bring Jesus to him. He was humble enough to make the trip to see Jesus, and would not trouble Jesus to go physically to his home, but rather, trusted Jesus to say the word to heal his servant there and then.

When Jesus heard the centurion's request, He marvelled at it and commended him to His followers. This act of faith was greater than any that Jesus could find in Israel. It is a great commendation of the centurion's faith, but it also reflects the state of the Jewish faith at that time. As a people who had been blessed by God and had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt through many miraculous acts of God, it is truly sad for Jesus to have to say that even this centurion's faith is greater than anyone's in Israel.

Great faith in Christ is simply putting our trust in His power. Are you facing great difficulties in life? Do they seem insurmountable? Put your trust in God, because He is greater than all these, and He knows and cares for us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 8
REVELATION 8

PRAYER

Father in heaven, forgive us for our little faith. Help us to be like this centurion and increase our faith in Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:11–17***LESSON****Healing of the widow's son****LUKE 7:15**

And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

The raising of Lazarus is only mentioned in the Gospel of John. Likewise, Luke is the solitary reporter of the healing miracle of the widow's son. This wondrous work of Christ occurred in the small city of Nain, not far from Capernaum. According to Augustine, our Lord's miraculous works of physical mercy have a spiritual reference to the soul. To quote him, these are "illustrations of Christ's divine power and love in raising the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, from every kind of spiritual death".

The Evangelist Luke delights in telling us of unmasked miracles performed by Christ. From this miracle, we observe the compassionate heart of our Lord Jesus. He reacted lovingly to the widow's loss. Fully understanding the aching loss of the widow, Christ delivered the son to his mother. This shows His personal, human touch in His ministry.

Human sorrow is seen in its fullest sense here. A widow has lost her only son, her only support. The words 'Weep not' in verse 13 show the humanity and sympathy of Christ. 'Arise' in verse 14 reveals the power of His word. Awesome fear fell on all the people who witnessed this touching scene.

From Acts 10:38 we know that Jesus went about doing good. Not a single day was wasted. May this inspire us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. We must remember that loving deeds must be put into practice willingly. When was your last deed of love done for Christ's sake?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 9
REVELATION 9

PRAYER

**I want, dear Lord, a love that feels for all;
A deep strong love that answers every call.
A love like Thine, a love divine, A love for high
and low;
On me dear Lord, a love like this bestow.**

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:18–23***LESSON****No offence in the cross****LUKE 7:23***And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

John the Baptist was in prison, held captive by King Herod. The two disciples sent by John to Jesus sought to clear up any misunderstanding. Was Jesus really the Christ? Or must they wait for another? All their queries about Christ's Messiahship were answered at the sight of His performing several miracles.

Note that there were two classes of people included here by Dr Luke. Those who took no offence at the cross were disciples of John, accepting his message of repentance and were even baptised by him. This group and the tax-gatherers truly justified God. The other class was the leaders of the nation who rejected the counsel of God against them and had refused to be baptised by John.

Indeed, "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" [1 Corinthians 1:23]. The Jews themselves took offence at the parentage of our Lord Jesus—"Is not this the carpenter's son?" [Matthew 13:55a] The Gentiles could not accept His ignominious passion and death.

Yet "honest doubt never stays away from Christ, but comes to Him for solution". John the Baptist was honest enough to seek answers to his doubts. The sight of Christ performing miracles publicly was the assurance of His divine authority. Those who took offence at the cross do so at their own peril. The Jewish understanding of a mighty and powerful Christ coming in glory blinded them to the truth of the message of the cross. How about you, dear readers? Are you offended at the humility of Christ's lowly birth and sacrificial death on the cross?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 10
REVELATION 10

THOUGHT

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. – Luke 9:26

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:24–30***LESSON****More than a prophet****LUKE 7:26**

But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

According to the Pulpit Commentary, Christ's noble testimony of John the Baptist "has been termed the funeral oration of John; for not long after it had been spoken he was put to death by Herod Antipas". Indeed, his noble character had been highly validated by our Lord Jesus. This commendation of John was also lovingly well-timed. As the forerunner of Christ, John was greater than all the other prophets. "To be separate from Him is to be small, though the hosannas of the world may misname us great."

The imagery portrayed in this passage depicted the setting of John the Baptist's preaching in the wilderness. He accepted a life of privation cheerfully in that simple lifestyle because his main goal was to point others to Christ. As the proclaimed herald of Christ, John focused on his ministry completely.

John the Baptist's declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease" in John 3:30, was evidenced by his willingness to elevate Christ and His coming. There was no resentment at all but positive rejoicing in giving way to another, none other than Christ. This showed John's commitment to the charge given to him.

The question is, "How many of us are willing to play second fiddle to someone else?" If we are honest enough, we would feel threatened by that person. However, let's learn from the life of John the Baptist and emulate his good example. His fearless courage and spiritual excellence proved him to be more than a prophet.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY II
REVELATION II

THOUGHT

Being least in the kingdom is better than being the best anywhere else.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:31–35***LESSON****Wise unto salvation****LUKE 7:35***But wisdom is justified of all
her children.*

It is interesting to note that the word ‘all’ is not found in the corresponding Matthew 11:19. Luke focuses on the universal practice of all true believers of Christ, that is, sons of wisdom. In this short passage, the lifestyle of John the Baptist and Christ were criticised by the Pharisees and lawyers. The enemies of the cross of Christ found fault in both their ministries.

Both John’s austere living and Christ’s acceptance of sinners were in obedience to God’s will. As a herald, the Baptist’s sole purpose was to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. Christ was doing the will of His Father in leading sinful men to repentance and salvation. The reason behind the enemies’ criticism lies in the message of the preachers.

Sober, righteous and godly living of believers will justify their claim as God’s children. As children of wisdom, we must heed God’s Word and live out its truth. Obedience to God’s commandment in John 14:15 is the evidence of our love for Him. This will endear us to Him as friends of Jesus [John 15:14]. Abraham the patriarch was given such an honour and blessing. “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” [James 2:23].

The multitudes that liked neither piping nor mourning were heedless of the concern of their souls. The same reaction is true of the generation of today. It is common practice of the world to ‘tear down’ Christianity at the slightest provocation. Be watchful and vigilant.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 12
REVELATION 12

THOUGHT

Jesus! What a Friend for sinners! Jesus! Lover of my soul.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 11:20–24***LESSON****Divine judgement****MATTHEW 11:20**

*Then began he to upbraid
the cities wherein most of
his mighty works were done,
because they repented not.*

Our Lord Jesus had wrought many miraculous works in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Just to list a few, He healed the centurion's servant, the nobleman's son, the diseased woman and the two blind men. He also raised the daughter of Jairus. Yet the Jews in those three cities of Galilee were still obstinate and had resisted against the message of the Gospel. As a result, our Lord Jesus pronounced severe judgement on them. This speaks of the definite judgement after death.

Many have often said that it is easier to believe in the saving grace of the Gospel message during the time of Christ. The reason given is, 'seeing is believing'. However, the public ministry of Christ attested to the truth that man's heart is sinful and desperately wicked. Christ mentioned that the judgement against these people would be worse than those against Tyre, Sidon and Sodom.

We have allowed the cares of this world to hinder our pursuit of holiness. Some even dare to claim that they have no time for God. Let's examine ourselves before it is too late. What is keeping you from following the Lord Jesus?

Many of us have the privilege of being saturated with the hearing of the Gospel. We have heard the Good News many times. However, the onus is now on us to repent and be saved; and having been saved, to spread the Gospel to others. Have you prayed the prayer of salvation? To whom the light of the Gospel is given, the greater is the responsibility.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 13–14
REVELATION 13

WARNING

If the light that is 'round' thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! – MacLaren

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 11:25–27***LESSON****The Son's prayer****MATTHEW 11:26***Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

What a beautiful picture is portrayed in this very short passage. We read of God the Son praying in thanksgiving to God the Father for the covenant grace of redemption. What's even more amazing is the fact that its privileges and benefits are offered to all mankind. No human being can ever experience God's saving grace without His allowing it.

The proud Pharisees and scribes, with their puffed-up knowledge, could never comprehend the message of repentance by their own accord. However, our Lord's disciples, mostly fishermen, were given the privilege of experiencing God's saving grace. This was in spite of their inadequacies and dependence ("unto babes" in verse 25) as compared to the knowledgeable Jewish leaders.

Such revelation of the Gospel to the simple only is of the Lord's doing. Men may pride themselves and boast of their human wisdom. Nevertheless, they can never come to God on their own merit. This spiritual warfare is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Which group do you belong to—the 'wise and prudent' or 'babes'? These things hidden from the learned but revealed to the simple are in God's good will and pleasure only. Praise God if you are already a child of His. If not, ask our Lord Jesus to cleanse your heart of sin and trust in Him as your Lord and Saviour.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 15
REVELATION 14

THOUGHT

Even the most guileless heart has no power to see spiritual truths unless God draws back the veil. – Pulpit Commentary

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 11:28–30***LESSON****Come unto Me****MATTHEW 11:28**

*Come unto me, all ye that
labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.*

In today's world, many of us face much pressure on a day-to-day basis. We are expected to find a satisfactory balance in making time for friends and family, ministry and study/career. It is easy to become frustrated and exhausted. How can we then learn to experience the rest to which Christ lovingly invites us?

Christ's first invitation is, "Come unto Me." He will give rest to the struggling and despairing soul, and to the empty and lonely spirit. No matter how intense the temptation and hopelessness, Jesus has promised to provide rest for anyone who comes to Him. Rest is free for all and open to all, but we have to follow the Spirit and come to Christ to receive it.

Christ's second invitation is, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Some owners of oxen are mean and harsh to their herd, but this does not apply to Christ to His flock. He is meek and lowly, loving and understanding, mild and gentle, long-suffering and encouraging to every person who comes to Him. Christ also assures us that the yoke He has for us is easy. That means Jesus' yoke fits us well. The life that He gives us to live is not a bitter and heavy burden. Rather, it is the way of life that is made to measure, to fit us both as His creation and individually as how God has made us.

When we take Christ's yoke and begin to learn of Him, it simply means that we are to learn how to live and labour under guidance and care, according to the measure of gifts and talents He has given to each of us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 16
REVELATION 15

THOUGHT

This is a command. If we want 'rest,' we must take His yoke upon us.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:36–50***LESSON****Simon the Pharisee****LUKE 7:39**

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

Simon, a Pharisee, invited Jesus to his house. Good manners in that day required the host to have his servant wash the guest's feet. He was expected to greet his visitor with a kiss on the cheek and anoint the guest's head with oil. Yet Simon did none of these things [v. 44–46].

Next we read of the sinful, repentant woman in contrast to the self-righteous Simon. She fell at Jesus' feet weeping. She unwound her hair, wiped and kissed Jesus's feet, and anointed them with perfume, which was her most costly possession. She surrendered to the Lord in utter humility. She gave Him her best. Simon, on the other hand, sensed no need for forgiveness and repentance. Being a Pharisee, he thought of himself as good in religion. He felt good in his behavior, perhaps having fulfilled legalistically all that was required of him according to the rituals, decent and moral, just and equitable, respectable and highly esteemed. In fact, he would keep his distance from the sinful woman.

Jesus used the parable to illustrate the grace of God in freely forgiving sin [v. 41–42]. He who has been forgiven little, loves little. Simon was a man who had never felt the need for much forgiveness, and thus he felt little love for those who did. In his self-righteousness, he also had little love for God.

If we who are Christians do not sense how much God has forgiven us of, we will not love Him and our neighbours as we should.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 17
REVELATION 16

THOUGHT

The person who comes to Christ must come with a broken and contrite heart.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:47–50***LESSON****Forgiving and loving****LUKE 7:47**

*Wherefore I say unto thee,
Her sins, which are many, are
forgiven; for she loved much:
but to whom little is forgiven,
the same loveth little.*

Jesus is the Son of God. He has the power to forgive sins. He did not overlook the woman's multitude of sins, nor did He dismiss the gravity of them. After all it was her sins and the sins of many others that brought about His humiliation. He had to come to this world to be born in a lowly manger and to die for the sins of man.

We see the love showered on Jesus by the lowly woman, which is in great contrast to the indifference shown by the self-righteous Pharisee as a host. Simon gave no water for Jesus' feet, whereas the woman washed His feet with her tears. The host gave no towel; she wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. The host gave no kiss; she repeatedly kissed His feet. The host did not anoint Jesus' head with oil but she anointed His feet with expensive perfume. Jesus forgave the woman's many sins for she had loved much.

The worst kind of sin is the sin of self-righteousness. A self-righteous person does not see himself as a sinner and hence sees no need for redemption. He ignores the call of the Holy Spirit. He thinks God is pleased with him the way he is. He assumes that his moral merit can somehow earn him a place in the Kingdom of God. Such a person loves himself more than others or God.

The woman's lavish love on Jesus was tied to His lavish forgiveness. Her action was a display of the joy and gratitude, love and affection under the transforming power of salvation in Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 18
REVELATION 17

THOUGHT

When you humble yourself before Christ and acknowledge your sin and emptiness, Jesus will remove the sinfulness and emptiness from your life.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 7:50***LESSON****Saving faith****LUKE 7:50**

*And he said to the woman,
Thy faith hath saved thee; go
in peace.*

This expression “Thy faith hath saved thee” can be found in two places in the Gospel of Luke. One is the forgiving of the sinful woman in Luke 7:50; the other is the healing of the blind man in Luke 18:42.

What was it that saved the two persons? In the instance of the penitent woman, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary love. She wept tears of repentance, showed great humility in serving Jesus and showered Him with reverent love. Yet Jesus did not say it was her repentance nor humility, nor love that had saved her. Jesus put the crown of faith upon her and said expressly, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

In the case of the blind man, he was notable for his earnestness. He cried and cried aloud, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” While the crowd called out Jesus of Nazareth, he proclaimed Him “Son of David”, the heir of the royal line of Judah, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews. Jesus attributed the entirety of his salvation upon his faith and to his avowal of his Messiahship. Faith is the great instrument of salvation. It is God’s appointed way—follow it and it leads to heaven; refuse it, and you will perish. Yet it is also God’s sovereign rule, for it is the call and leading of the Holy Spirit.

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” It is essential that your faith must rest alone on Jesus.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 19
REVELATION 18

THOUGHT

True faith before the Most High gives you real joy and strength.

BIBLE LESSON*Luke 8:1–3***LESSON****The women who ministered****LUKE 8:3**

And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Jesus went about His primary task of preaching and proclaiming the Gospel in every city and village. His 12 disciples and a large crowd accompanied Him.

Included among this large group of followers were many women. Three women were specifically named: Mary Magdalene (from whom the seven demons had been cast out), Joanna the wife of Herod's steward and Susanna. These women were helping to support the ministry of Jesus out of their own means. Each of them had been ministered and healed by Jesus. These women supported Jesus out of devotion and gratefulness for what Jesus had done for them.

These were the women who continued to follow Jesus, not only in Galilee, but also to Jerusalem. They were the women who stood by the Lord at the cross. One of them was the first to come to the empty tomb. These were faithful women, faithful in meeting the needs of the Lord and of His disciples, faithful in staying with Him even in danger, faithful even after His death. The women did not support only Jesus—they supported His entire ministry.

Our Lord Jesus had proven His power and sufficiency in the lives of each of every one who has followed Him. However, Jesus did not miraculously provide for all the needs of His followers, although it is definitely in His power to do so. Why? It is so that men and women can have the opportunity and privilege of having a part to play in His ministry. Are you part of God's ministry?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 20
REVELATION 19

THOUGHT

One who is faithful in little will be faithful in much.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:22–30***LESSON****Jesus heals a demon-possessed man****MATTHEW 12:22**

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

Jesus had compassion on a devil-possessed man. He healed and delivered him immediately. This was yet another miracle of the Lord which authenticated His authority and His identity as the Messiah and the Christ.

Reacting to Jesus' miracles, some had believed on Him wholeheartedly. Yet there were some who would always wonder. They wanted to believe that Jesus was indeed the promised Saviour but they were not sure. The Pharisees, on seeing the people turning to Jesus, were afraid of losing their own position and hold on the people. They scorned, blasphemed and charged Jesus with being of the devil and possessing the power of the evil one.

Jesus refuted the blasphemy of the Pharisees [v. 25–29]. Our Lord proved His power over all things, including the devil that was behind the wicked plans of the Pharisees. That was why Jesus told them, "He that is not with me is against me" [v. 30a].

This is a solemn warning from the Lord to all who hear the Gospel and reject Him. To reject Christ is to set yourself against Him. There is no neutral ground. You are either for Him or against Him. One may label Him as less than Who He is, or even call Him evil, but one will not be able to change the reality that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God [Matthew 16:16; John 6:68–69]. His kingdom will press on, and the works of the devil will be destroyed. Are you faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ or to Satan? On which side are you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 21
REVELATION 20

THOUGHT

A man without Christ is blind and dumb to the things of God.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:30***LESSON****Either or, no third option****MATTHEW 12:30**

*He that is not with me is
against me; and he that
gathereth not with me
scattereth abroad.*

Christ has clearly stated in this verse that it is impossible for men to remain neutral about Him. Some people may choose this position, thinking that they do not believe in Christ and neither do they want to be against Him. It is however practically impossible as those who choose to be separated from God will be captured by Satan. Those who are not on the side of Christ will face eternal death eventually.

One cannot sit on the fence regarding following Christ or not. Here we are told that a person is either with Christ or against Christ. If one chooses not to trust and believe in Christ, he will be scattered away. He will be separated from God. He will naturally fall into Satan's team.

Christ also reminds us that we need to work together with Him. If we do not gather, we scatter. This is taken from the practice of people during the harvest. We need to work with Christ to harvest lost souls; or else we may end up scattering others. Christ is the Good Shepherd, gathering His sheep and tending for them. We need to gather the sheep with Him.

Satan is always out there to catch the lost sheep. If we do not take the stand to be with Christ, we definitely will backslide into the trap of Satan. Whoever is not on the side of Christ will for sure struggle and be defeated by sin. They will live in darkness. Whoever does not believe in Christ does not choose life. Let us all stand with Christ and be vigilant against the evil one.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 22
REVELATION 21

MEDITATION

**Be clear with your stand, be on the side of Christ
to enjoy His blessings!**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:31–32***LESSON****The sin that shall not be forgiven****MATTHEW 12:31**

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Jesus gave a solemn warning that blasphemous words against the Holy Spirit are unforgivable. The Pharisees saw how Jesus had delivered the demon-possessed man with the help of the Spirit of God. Yet instead of praising the work of the Holy Spirit, they blasphemed against the Spirit by attributing the work to the power of evil. They deliberately refused to acknowledge the work of the Holy Ghost, which is an unpardonable sin.

In Mark 3:28–30, when the teachers of the law said Jesus drove out demons through the power of the prince of demons instead of crediting it to the Holy Spirit, Jesus rebuked them as they had committed the unforgiven sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It was a deliberate act of ongoing rejection of the work of the Holy Ghost, revealing the evil heart of men.

The Holy Spirit is the Person who works in the hearts of men. He convicts a man's heart to believe, to do what is righteous and good. If the man repeatedly rejects the Holy Spirit and even chooses to openly discredit the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, he has blasphemed against God's Spirit. The heart of such a man has become so hardened and cold that he is stiff-necked and has totally rejected salvation. All sins can be forgiven by the grace of God, except for the blaspheming against the Spirit.

Let us be watchful of our heart and tongue. Always show our reverence and repentance towards God. We should surrender our life to God and be sensitive to the guidance and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 23
REVELATION 22

THOUGHT

Do not reject the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our heart and mind. "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" [Mark 3:29].

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:33–34***LESSON****The words reflect the heart****MATTHEW 12:34***O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

Christ demands us to make a clear choice, to either confess our sins and believe in Him or deny God and be on Satan's side. One cannot be half-hearted. The tree is known by its fruit. When one follows Christ, the tree is made good and will bear good fruit. The converse is true. Wicked man cannot pretend to do good work. Unless we remain in Christ, we will not be able to bear good fruit [John 15:4].

As stated in Amos 5:15a, "Hate the evil, and love the good." Nothing good can be produced from an evil spirit. One will need to cast away all past transgressions, fully surrender to Christ and ask for a renewed life fully within the control of the Spirit. It is only through the influence of the Spirit of God that one can produce good fruit.

What we say reflects what is in our hearts. Our words expose our thought, our true character and reveal who our master is. No servant can serve two masters, for he will hate the one and love the other [Luke 16:13]. Like vipers, the degenerate will behave in a deceitful and ungodly manner.

Let us watch over ourselves. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us to think, do and speak godly things. Do not depart from the Word. Meditate on it day and night. Apply God's teaching in our daily life. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers [Ephesians 4:29].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 24
MATTHEW 1

PRAYER

O Lord God, help me to guard my heart and my tongue, to bridle the smallest but wildest member of my body and to strive to be more holy like You.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:35–37***LESSON****Account for the words****MATTHEW 12:36**

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement.

This passage reminds us that we need to be mindful of what we say. We must bridle our tongues and put away all malicious speech. Let our speech at all times be gracious, pleasant and winsome, seasoned as it were with salt, so that our words can edify others.

On the Day of Judgement, we need to account for every word that we have spoken, and this includes every one of our idle and unprofitable utterances. Our tongue, despite its tiny size, is most difficult to be tamed. We must think before we speak. Do not let anger and hatred control our tongues. Do not pass slanderous and malicious gossip. Do not let lies pass our lips. Always fill our minds with Scripture and share the Word of God to encourage others. We must have charity; be kind, gracious and loving when we speak to others.

By thy words thou shalt be justified ... for words are the index of our hearts. If a man has spoken against Christ and uttered words that grieved the Holy Spirit without showing repentance and seeking for forgiveness, he will be condemned. James 1:26 warns that a man's religion is in vain, false and empty if he does not guard the tongue and restrain his speech. If one does not control his words, all his other acts are worthless and hypocritical.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us with the right attitudes, to change our hearts so that whatever we say to others is pleasing to God and edifying to them. Be a good testimony for the Lord and let your words testify for yourself.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 25
MATTHEW 2

THOUGHT

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

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:38–42***LESSON****The sign of Jonah****MATTHEW 12:41**

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees and teachers of the law to show a miraculous sign proving that He was the Messiah. Our Lord knew that these people would not change their hearts regardless of any signs. There was already much evidence to show that Jesus is the Son of God; those who had chosen not to believe in Christ were just stubborn. Also, the Jews then did not truly understand the Scriptures.

In this passage, we read that no new signs except for the sign of Jonah shall be given to the generations to come. God told Jonah to preach to the people in Nineveh (Gentiles) and they repented. The foretold sign of Jonah refers to the resurrection of Christ (Jesus crucified and raised after three days). This would prove that Jesus is the Messiah. God's own Son came to earth and preached to all to repent and be saved by believing in Him.

The Queen of the South (Sheba) praised the God of Israel when she heard Solomon's wisdom. By contrast, the Son of God came to His people but was rejected. How could Gentiles like the Ninevites and Queen Sheba recognise the true God, yet the Jewish religious leaders remained ignorant and reluctant to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah?

There are indeed many people today like the Jews then. Despite all the evidence and signs, despite hearing the Word of God many times, they are still unwilling to accept Christ as Saviour. Pray that all of us will know Jesus intimately and be faithful, as Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 26
MATTHEW 3

THOUGHT

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. – Hebrews 11:6

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:43–45***LESSON****The last is worse than the first****VERSE 45**

Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Jesus warns us in this passage that it is not sufficient for a man to just temporarily renounce the evil spirits within him and appear to be holy externally. Without transformation of the heart, without filling the sinner's life with Christ, all is for naught.

When the evil spirit returned and found the heart of the man empty and unoccupied (since the man had not invited the Lord Jesus Christ to stay with him), it came back, bringing more evil with it, to swarm and flood his heart.

The only solution to permanently cast away unclean spirits is to invite Jesus Christ to be the Master of our lives and to have the Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts. We need to fill our lives with the love of Christ and the power of His Word. We need to be sanctified. We must put into action what we have learnt from the Bible and what we have heard from the preachers. It is dangerous to leave our hearts unoccupied, as we are ever so vulnerable to the attacks of Satan.

We cannot be truly converted if we still live in the mindset of the secular world, without surrendering our life fully to Christ and letting Him work in us. As faithful followers of Christ, we need to be devoted to the study of His Word, committed to serving Christ, evangelising to lost souls. Have our hearts filled with Jesus, and our hands with the actions of Christian love and care. Our souls need to be sanctified by the dedication of the whole life to God and His will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 27
MATTHEW 4

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, protect me from evil and fill me with Your love. O Holy Spirit, fill my heart and strengthen me in my weakness, guide me to do what is right and just, pour Your light into my heart, mind and soul.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:46–50***LESSON****Who is my family?****MATTHEW 12:50**

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Jesus revealed a new, privileged and promised family relationship. Someone told Jesus that His mother and brothers desired to speak with Him. He responded by asking the question, “Who is my mother?” and “Who are my brethren?” By a few words of divine wisdom, Jesus lifted the idea of kingship from the carnal to the spiritual. Then, stretching His hands towards His disciples, He said, “Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

What is the will of God? The Scriptures are full of statements declaring God’s will for sinners. Read John 6:40, 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4. John the Baptist proclaimed it in Matthew 3:2. Jesus affirmed it in Matthew 4:17. The Twelve were told to do the same in Matthew 10:7 and they did it in Acts 2:38. The Father’s will is that by His grace, sinners would repent, believe and by faith receive His pardon in Christ Jesus.

Jesus’ one aim in life was to do His Father’s will involving our salvation. He consecrated Himself and came into the world in obedience to this high resolve. He died on the cross for our sin and in the power of that act was raised to the right hand of the Father.

The will of God is also for our sanctification, to share the Good News with the lost and to glorify Christ. This takes a willing and obedient heart. We should pray for God’s strength so that we can also do His will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 28
MATTHEW 5

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, may the greatest desire of my life be to do Your will from day to day. Help me to accept as brothers and sisters all who seek to obey You.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 13:1–23***LESSON****Parable of the sower****MATTHEW 13:3**

*And he spake many things
unto them in parables, saying,
Behold, a sower went forth to
sow;*

The parable of the sower, the first of all the parables, discloses our Lord's thoughts with regard to all His teachings. It is a reminder for His hearers to pay attention to how they receive the Word of God. It is also an encouragement to His disciples who are doing the very work of sowing God's Word. Four types of hearers are described here in this parable. Our Lord tells us that the hearts of some hearers are like 'the wayside.' They hear the Word of God but have either no understanding or are tempted away by the Evil One.

Another type of heart is like 'stony places.' They hear the same Word preached, and are at first quite excited. They could have even received the Word with gladness. However, many endure only for a while. When there is tribulation or persecution because of the Word of God, the hearers take offence and are stumbled.

The third class of hearers which disappoints Jesus is the 'thorny ground.' These are men who might have listened to the Word with joy and have no objection to the doctrine and requirement of the Gospel. Yet the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and pleasures of this life, choke the Word in their hearts.

Lastly, there is a class of hearers that pleases Jesus. These are people who have heard the Word and understood it. Being "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine," they grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 29
MATTHEW 6

THOUGHT

**From hardened heart, from shallow soul,
Where faith may fade for lack of root,
From choking cares, Lord, keep me whole
To bear, with patience, perfect fruit.
– E. Cornish**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 13:10–13***LESSON****Why parables?****MATTHEW 13:11**

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

In the earlier part of His ministry, Jesus had spoken to the multitudes in discourses. He had preached in such a plain and powerful way that men had marvelled at His words of grace. Yet from Matthew 13 onwards, Jesus made a significant change in His method of teaching. He began to speak in parables.

In the parables told by Christ, He revealed truths concerning God's Kingdom. God's grace was given to the disciples so that they could "know the mysteries". They could thus perceive the kingdom of God. But to people outside the kingdom, this privilege "to know the mysteries" was not given. In other words, by speaking in parables, one group understood because they were enabled to, whereas the same parables kept the wonders away from those not meant to read them.

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" [v. 12]. All that we have as believers comes from the grace of God. Those under God's grace will be given more grace. Those who do not know the grace of God will end up with nothing. Use what God has given you and He will give you more. Neglect what you have and you will lose even what you already have.

If Jesus had spoken directly He would have offended the Jewish leaders. By speaking in parables He could continue to instruct His disciples. His opponents had no desire to understand "because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" [v. 13].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 30
MATTHEW 7

THOUGHT

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. – Matthew 5:6

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 13:14–15***LESSON****Heart waxed, ears dulled****MATTHEW 13:15**

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 31
MATTHEW 8**

THOUGHT

Our key verse for today is actually a paraphrase of Isaiah 6:9–10. This Old Testament passage is reiterated not less than five times in the New Testament [Matthew 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26] and not by coincidence. It is given as a reason for the Jews' unbelief in our Lord Jesus.

The prophet Isaiah during his time pronounced the judgement of God on the nation of Israel for her unbelief. They had the sanctuary, the priesthood, the prophets, the Scriptures for centuries, yet in their constant sinful, obstinate unbelief and rebellion, they had moved away from God. They had shut their eyes and hardened their hearts. They rejected God. Therefore, God gave them up, meaning He ceased to work in their hearts by His Spirit to reveal His truth to them.

The case of rejection of God and the resulting judgement that followed was repeated in Jesus' generation on a new level, thus fulfilling the words of that prophecy. The people had been listening to Jesus' preaching and had seen His miracles. Yet they had resisted the work of the Holy Spirit by rejecting Christ. As a result, their hearts were hardened and they were unable to understand His teachings though they heard every word.

Those who consistently and persistently harden their hearts will find their hearts hardened. This seems like common sense. Yet it is true that those who are wilful will be granted their way. The day of God's grace will one day come to an end. When judgement comes, there is no more opportunity for repentance. Is your heart waxed and your ears dulled?

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. – Colossians 1:26–27

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 13:16–17***LESSON**

**You are blessed if you can
hear**

MATTHEW 13:16

*But blessed are your eyes, for
they see: and your ears, for
they hear.*

Two things are conspicuous in this passage. First, the disciples were blessed by God and privileged above the great multitude because they saw and heard [v. 16]. Next, there was the compassion with which Jesus looked back on many prophets and righteous men who had longed for such happiness and been denied it.

It is clear from the context that, both in Matthew and Luke, the disciples lived in an age in which Jesus had made His appearance in the world. What their eyes saw, they saw in Him; what their ears heard, they heard from His lips. They enjoyed close association with Him. They witnessed His miracles and experienced His compassion and love. They saw the glory of God in Christ's person and they heard the mind of God in His doctrine.

Let us turn now to the second aspect of the text—the revelation in it regarding the compassion of Jesus. The Old Testament prophets and righteous men longed to see and know the coming Redeemer, but none of them then on earth saw the incarnate Christ, witnessed His miracles or heard His Word. Jesus embraced in His compassion not only the multitude around Him, but also those who in distant ages had seen the promise of God, had “embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” [Hebrews 11:13b].

The hearing ear and the seeing eye are God's work in those who are sanctified; they are the work of His grace [Proverbs 20:12]. Through His messengers, in the Bible and above all in Jesus Christ, God speaks His words to us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 32
MATTHEW 9

PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for the work that You are doing in the lives of believers all over the world. Help us to rejoice in Your work, to trust You and to let You work in us to the glory of Your name.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 13:24–30***LESSON****Parable of the wheat and the tares****MATTHEW 13:30**

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The One who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The good seed represents the children of the kingdom. The good seed grows into wheat, which represents the true believers. We, too, are to be seeds and not stones, growing upon the great harvest field. We are to die to self and sin, and to live for the kingdom of God.

Yet the enemy has also maliciously sowed seeds of tares (the children of the wicked one) among the good seeds. The tares referred here are probably darnel, a poisonous plant that could hardly be distinguished from wheat until the ears of the plant form. When wheat and tares grow together, their roots intermingle. It is impossible to uproot the tares without destroying the wheat. The farmer ends up taking care of both the wheat and the tares until harvest. The enemy is the Devil, the archenemy of the Lord and His believers. The Evil One, unable to stop the Kingdom of God from being established on earth will sow tares, or the ‘unrighteous,’ among God’s righteous ones.

During harvest, the Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather all things that offend and commit iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. The righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father [Matthew 13:41–43].

Let us pray as David did, “Gather not my soul with sinners” [Psalm 26:9a], but let it be “bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God” [1 Samuel 25:29b].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 33–34
MATTHEW 10

THOUGHT

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. – 1 Peter 5:8

