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**January to
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**“The Blessed
Promises
of God”
(Part 3)**

by
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About the Author



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FRIDAY, JANUARY 1

GENESIS 15:12-16

GENESIS 46:2-4

“Fear not to go down into Egypt.”

STRANGERS IN A FOREIGN LAND

“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs ...” (Gen 15:13)

God promised Abram, whose covenantal name became Abraham, that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land (Gen 15:13a). This was fulfilled in Genesis 46:2-4.

After Joseph revealed himself and tested his brothers, he requested his father Jacob, whose covenantal name was Israel, and his family to move to Egypt where they were kept alive during the drought. In Genesis 46:2-4, God spoke to Jacob (Israel) in a vision at night that he should move to Egypt to escape the famine. He also told him that his descendants would one day return to the Promised Land.

In Genesis 46:8-26 is listed the 66 members of Jacob’s family who went with him to Egypt. Joseph, who was the son of Jacob (Israel) and was sold into slavery by his own brothers, was already in Egypt. Consequently, Joseph and his wife and two sons are included in the 70 Israelites who lived in Egypt then (Gen 46:27). This was some 430 years before the Exodus (cf. Gen 15:13; Ex 12:40).

Abraham had previously encountered a bad experience in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20), and Isaac was forbidden to go into Egypt (Gen 26:2). So Jacob believed he had cause to be concerned, but God reassured him (cf. Gen 15:13, Ps 105:17, 23), and promised to care for him in Egypt, removing all doubts and fears (Gen 46:1-7). By faith, Jacob left Hebron and started for Egypt, and God honored his faith by revealing Himself again and renewing His promises.

THOUGHT: Instead of being a place of defeat, Egypt would be a place of blessing. The nation would increase in spite of the sufferings.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the comfort that Jacob (Israel) was promised Thy protection and that the people were victorious in spite of their suffering.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

GENESIS 15:12-16

EXODUS 1:7-14

“Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour.”

SERVANTS IN A FOREIGN LAND

“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them ...” (Gen 15:13)

Joseph’s brothers hated him and dealt treacherously with him. His brother Judah did not believe he should be killed as did his other brothers, as he was their own flesh and blood. Reuben convinced them to throw him into a pit alive (Gen 37:18-27). The brothers decided to sell Joseph as a slave to a group of slave traders who were passing by for twenty pieces of silver (Gen 37:28-30). *“And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer and captain of Pharaoh’s guard”* (Gen 37:36). Harpers Bible Dictionary says, “The first significant reference to the Midianites is a record of their involvement in the sale of Joseph into slavery, an account in which Midianites are closely associated or equated with Ishmaelites (Gen 37:25-28, 36; 39:1; cf. Judg 8:24).” The Ishmaelite’s were descendants of Ishmael who were perpetual enemies of Israel who settled in northern Arabia (Judges 8:24; Ps 83:6).

After the 70 Israelites moved into Egypt they multiplied prolifically, causing the Pharaoh to be greatly concerned, fearing they would form alliances and attack Egypt. *“And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour”* (Ex 1:13-14).

The Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill all Israelite male babies at birth (Ex 1:15-21), then he commanded the Egyptians to throw all Israelite male babies into the Nile River (Ex 1:22). When both evil schemes failed, he increased their servitude, forcing them to build two storage cities, Pithom and Rameses.

THOUGHT: God’s plan will not be thwarted.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Thy protection upon those who believe in Thee, even during times of persecution.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 3

GENESIS 15:12-16

EXODUS 12:40-42

“at the end of the four hundred and thirty years.”

SERVANTS FOR CENTURIES

“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.”

(Gen 15:13)

The Hyksos Pharaoh set taskmasters over the children of Israel and afflicted them greatly as they built the treasure cities (Ex 1:11). In Genesis 15:13 and 16, the stated period of servitude of the children of Israel in Egypt was 400 years. Acts 13:17-20 recorded it as 450 years. These are not discrepancies but rounded figures as the period of servitude was 430 years: *“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years”* (Ex 12:40).

After 430 years in Egypt, the original Israelites who numbered 66 who went there to escape famine, along with Joseph, his wife and two sons Ephraim and Manasseh totalling 70, had grown to 600,000 men. When the Exodus occurred, the total number of men, women and children was some 2 million. They were also accompanied in the Exodus by *“many people who were not Israelites”* but who believed in the God of Israel (Ex 12:38). This was a mixed multitude including some who caused trouble to Israel along the way (Num 11:4).

God ordained the Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) on the eve of the death of every first born male Egyptian and firstborn male animal. Each family who believed in the God of Israel was required to slay a lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar (in spring) and sprinkle its blood on the door frame of the home (Ex 12:1-11, 14-28). Also the dedication of the firstborn (Ex 13:1-16) was required. Both were reminders of the deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery by God's *“mighty power”* (Ex 13:3, 9, 14, 16).

THOUGHT: God makes history.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the growth of Israel into a nation from adversity.

MONDAY, JANUARY 4

GENESIS 15:12-16

EXODUS 11:4-10

“And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.”

THE JUDGING OF EGYPT

“And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge ...” (Gen 15:14)

God would judge Egypt for enslaving the children of Israel (Ex 7-12). As Pharaoh refused to allow the children of Israel to venture three days to worship, the Lord began the 10 plagues on Egypt. He gave Pharaoh an opportunity to change his mind after each plague, but he continued to refuse. The first plague was when Moses struck the Nile River with his staff and the waters changed into blood and the water in Egypt became polluted (Ex 7:14-25). When the plague of frogs covered the land, Pharaoh begged Moses to remove them, promising to deliver Israel. But he refused after the frogs disappeared (Ex 8:1-15).

The third plague occurred when Aaron struck the dust, and lice (blood sucking insects) infested the nation. The Pharaoh's magicians advised him to release Israel, but he refused again (Ex 8:16-19). Egypt was then filled with great swarms of flies, but not in Goshen where the Israelites lived. Pharaoh again promised to set Israel free but refused when the flies had gone (Ex 8:20-32).

When the plague struck all the Egyptian livestock, not one Israelite animal was affected (Ex 9:1-7). Then came the festering boils outbreak on the Egyptian people and their animals (Ex 9:8-12), followed by hail and lightning. Again the Pharaoh told Moses that he would let his people go, but changed his mind after the plague stopped (Ex 9:13-35). Pharaoh agreed to let the men of Israel go to worship the Lord, but Moses rejected his offer. The Lord then sent the worst locust plague (Ex 10:1-20). After the Lord removed the locusts, Pharaoh changed his mind again. This was followed by a terrifying darkness over all of Egypt for three days (Ex 10:21-29). Pharaoh agreed to let the people go but the flocks were to stay, which Moses refused.

THOUGHT: Nothing is impossible for God.

PRAYER: Lord, I marvel at Thy power. Thou art indeed the All-powerful God.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

GENESIS 15:12-16

EXODUS 12:34-36

“borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and...gold.”

LEAVING WITH SUBSTANCE

“And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.” (Gen 15:14)

The children of Israel served in bondage as slaves in Egypt for 430 years (Ex 12:40-41), and it was prophesied that when they would come out of Egypt, they would leave with great wealth (Ex 12:35-36).

Following the death of all the firstborn sons and firstborn male animals in Egypt, the Pharaoh summoned Moses and commanded him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt (Ex 12:29-33). Moses was respected by the Egyptians: *“And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people”* (Ex 11:3). After the Pharaoh gave Moses permission to leave, he asked Moses for a blessing: *“Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also”* (Ex 12:32).

God asked the children of Israel to ask the Egyptians for clothing and items of silver and gold and the Egyptians were frightened and gave the departing Israelites clothing and costly items of silver and gold. *“And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians”* (Ex 12:36). This was a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham of his descendants’ captivity (Gen 15:13-14), and the substance they received from the Egyptians as they left, was some of the “wages” for their 430 years of servitude. The Israelites were anxious to leave, but the Egyptians were even more glad when they departed (Ps 105:37-38; Ex 11:1, 8; 12:31, 33).

THOUGHT: Do I trust God to take care of me?

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for providing for Thy people.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

GENESIS 15:12-16

EXODUS 11:4-10

“And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.”

ABRAHAM SPARED

“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.” (Gen 15:15)

Abraham himself would be spared all of the trauma of servitude. *“And these are the days of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people”* (Gen 25:7-8). Abraham passed on his wealth to his sons, giving the greatest part to Isaac, his heir to the promise (Gen 25:5-6), who begat Jacob (Israel). Isaac then became Abraham’s sole inheritor (Gen 25:1-12), for God’s blessing rested on Isaac (the son of Promise). Abraham was the father of the faithful and died at 175 years of age. Isaac and Ishmael buried him with Sarah at the cave of Machpelah in the Promised Land (Gen 25:7-11).

Abraham lived until Jacob and Esau were fifteen years of age, one hundred years after going to Canaan. The peaceful death of Abraham fulfilled God’s promise (Gen 15:15). Abraham passed from earth into heaven (Luke 16:22) and although dead he yet liveth. Jesus said, *“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”* (Matt 22:32).

Abraham being gathered to his people meant that Abraham’s body did not just rest peacefully with his relatives in the family grave at the cave of Machpelah in the Promised Land but that his soul was reunited with theirs in the afterlife.

THOUGHT: No leader of the covenant was indispensable. God’s program to bless the world will continue from generation to generation.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the promise and fulfilment of Thy promise to Abraham.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7

GENESIS 15:12-16

EXODUS 12:40-41

*“at the end of the
four hundred and thirty years.”*

THE FOURTH GENERATION

“But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” (Gen 15:16)

God promised that after four generations in Egypt, Israel would return to Canaan, the Promised Land (Ex 6:14-26). Moses was the fourth generation, as from Levi to Moses there were four “major” generations (cf. Gen 15:16). In 1 Chronicles 6:1-3, the genealogy is an abbreviated form, understood to be in harmony with a 430-year stay in Egypt (cf. Ex 12:40-41).

The promise of Genesis 15:16 was fulfilled as follows: *“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt”* (Ex 12:40-41). The KJV Bible Commentary says, “That four hundred and thirty years was the number of years from the time Jacob entered Egypt until Israel escaped at the Exodus can be seen from: (1) The clear statement of the Hebrew text in this passage; (2) God’s prediction to Abraham that his descendants (seed) would be a stranger in a foreign land, serve the foreigners, and be afflicted by them “four hundred years” (Gen 15:13); (3) The list of eleven generations between Jacob and Joshua in I Chronicles 7:22–27; and (4) The multiplication from seventy to over two million is easiest to reconcile within this time structure.”

This is the first time Israel is recorded as armies, as Israel developed from slaves to a nation of troops. *“These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies”* (Ex 6:26).

THOUGHT: God’s promised four generations of slavery was fulfilled.
PRAYER: Lord, thank You for being a God who keeps His promises. Increase my trust in Thee.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

LEVITICUS 10:3

EZEKIEL 28:22

*“I will be glorified
in the midst of thee.”*

I WILL BE GLORIFIED

“Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.” (Lev 10:3)

God created and preserves the world that He might be glorified. His people were redeemed by the blood of His Only Begotten Son, and He will likewise glorify His saints. His sovereignty will be glorified, as will His supremacy, His wisdom, and His grace in saving innumerable lost and wretched souls. In His goodness, He supplies all the needs of His creatures, even in their rebellion against Him. But in His justice, He punishes the rebellious. The Lord said He would sanctify those who come nigh unto Him and they were well aware of the manner in which they were to reverently conduct themselves in His divine presence (Ex 19:22; 29:44; Lev 8:35).

Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, suffered the righteous judgment of God (Rom 2:5) because of their presumption and disorder (disobedience) in God's service. God answered their *“strange fire”* with a real holy fire. Uzzah died through touching the Ark of the Covenant as it was falling. Uzzah was a son of Abinadab who was not sanctioned to touch the Ark. Only the Kohathites were given the duty to prepare and carry it.

When God prophesied against Sidon, He said that He would be glorified (Ezek 28:22) and that His people would be restored (Ezek 28:25-26). God is sovereign and must always be worshipped, glorified and praised with holiness and reverence, as He has commanded. To do otherwise is perilous and will bring about God's vengeance (Ex 29:43-44; 34:14; 8:35).

THOUGHT: God is to be worshipped in His way, not in man's way.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the wisdom and reverence to approach Thee according to the commands of Thy Word that Thou be glorified.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9

LEVITICUS 26:3-13

JOSHUA 23:10

*“One man of you shall
chase a thousand...”*

GREATLY ENCOURAGED

“And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.” (Lev 26:8)

Obedience to God assured Israel of the blessings and the provision of plentiful crops, victory over their enemies and God’s presence among them, permitting them to dwell safely in the Promised Land (Lev 26:3-13). This is in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen 17:7, 8). To the contrary, disobedience would bring punishment upon the nation (Josh 23:12-16; cf. Lev 23:14-32; Deut 28:15-68). However, the prophet Amos foretold of a restoration of these promises if Israel would repent (cf. Lev 26:5; Amos 9:13).

The Word of God encouraged them that His power was with them regardless of the number of enemies against them and declared that five of them would chase 100 of their enemies, and 100 would defeat 10,000, as God fought for them. The secret of Joshua’s success and Israel’s victories was his devotion to the Word of God (Josh 23:6, 14; cf. 1:7-9, 13-18; 8:30-35; 11:12, 15; 24:26-27). God’s power was exercised through weakness and limitations when David slew Goliath and Gideon’s army of three hundred defeated the armies of Midian.

Joshua called Israel’s leaders to faith and reminded them of what they had seen God do for them. He admonished them to obey the law and separate themselves from the pagan nations around them as involvement with them would be a snare (Josh 23:1-16). Joshua warned that God had faithfully blessed them (Josh 23:14), but if they disobeyed Him, He would faithfully punish them (Josh 23:15-16).

THOUGHT: God has given believers great encouragement to be patient and persistent, keeping their minds set on the great and blessed hope that awaits.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Thy Word of promised blessing and Thy Word of promised chastening never fails.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 10

NUMBER 14:24, 30

JOSHUA 3:7, 17; 14:6-12

*"the children of Judah came
unto Joshua ...and Caleb."*

ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND

"Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." (Num 14:30)

The children of Israel, wandering in the desert, had failed to trust God although they had seen His mighty miracles. Moses interceded and appealed to God for His mercy and grace that they be not destroyed. God assured Moses that the present generation (who had witnessed His power) would die before Israel reached the Promised Land because they failed to trust Him. God specified that all those who were 20 years and above would die (Num 14:29) and of this specified group, only Caleb and Joshua (Num 14:29-30) would enter the Promised Land.

The children of Israel rejected God's Promised Land as they doubted God's ability to give it to them. Of the twelve spies, only Caleb and Joshua believed He could. The spies surveyed the Promised Land for 40 days and as a consequence of the unbelief of ten spies (who convinced the people), God caused the people to spend one year wandering in the wilderness for every day the spies were in the Land of Promise. God caused the death of the ten unbelieving spies immediately and prevented Israel's entry until the present generation of disbelieving adults above the age of twenty had died in the desert.

God's mercy was upon Caleb and Joshua (Josh 3:7, 17; 14:6-12) who gave the unpopular report, and Moses swear the Land to them. After 40 years, Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. His inheritance was at Mount Ephraim (Josh 24:30), whilst Caleb at 85 years of age was given Hebron.

THOUGHT: Unbelief led to 40 years of wilderness wandering.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the faith of Caleb and Joshua to see that Thou art a God with the power to deliver what Thou hast promised.

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

JOSHUA 1:1-9

ISAIAH 41:10-16

*“Fear thou not; for I am
with thee: be not dismayed.”*

COURAGE IN ADVERSITY

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Josh 1:9)

After the death of Moses (God’s chosen leader) who led the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage to the very brink of the Promised Land, God renewed the promise with Joshua who had been in training for 40 years (God’s chosen successor). The promise given to Moses was that all the Promised Land would be given to them (Josh 1:3; Deut 11:24).

Success in conquering the Promised Land would result from meditation on the law and obedience to it. Obedience, not any advantage of their military strength, brings victory. Meditation involves mature reflection on the Word of God, and it is the basis for spiritual growth (sanctification) (cf. Ps 1:1-3; 63:6; 119:15, 97; 143:5). Memorizing or quoting the Word of God is not enough for spiritual growth. Only by meditation (daily reading and quiet reflection) and obedience to the law (applying it correctly) could Joshua and God’s people be *“strong and of a good courage”* (Josh 1:6, 7, 9, 18) to face coming challenges.

Israel was exiled because of sin and unbelief but was not rejected by God as He made an unconditional covenant with Abraham (Gen 15). Consequently his descendants need not fear when they trusted in the Lord. In Isaiah 41:10-16, God promised Divine protection and that He would uphold and strengthen them, scatter their enemies and help His people triumph over obstacles and give inexhaustible provision (Isa 41:10-20). Anyone who opposed Israel would be cut off by the Lord. Israel did not have to fear the enemy but must focus on God’s presence.

THOUGHT: Joshua’s courage and strength came from meditating on God’s Word, believing His promises, and obeying His precepts.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me discipline to study Thy Word daily and apply it correctly to my life that I may be strong and courageous to face any coming challenges.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

1 SAMUEL 2:34

1 SAMUEL 4:11

“...and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.”

DISOBEDIENT WORSHIP

“And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.” (1 Sam 2:34)

Eli was an Old Testament priest to whom Samuel (who became a prophet) was given (1 Sam 1-4; 1 Kings 2:27). Eli did not discipline his own sons (1 Sam 2:22-24; 3:13) but allowed them to commit abominations in the Tabernacle. Eli was more concerned about the thoughts of his sons than what God thought (1 Sam 2:29), enjoying the fruit of his sons' rebellion (1 Sam 2:15, 16, 29; 4:18). Eli was not spiritually careful allowing the lamp to go out in the Tabernacle (1 Sam 3:3; cf. Ex 27:20).

The prophet Samuel told Eli that his household would be severely punished. God pronounced a judgment upon his house (1 Sam 2:12-17, 27-36) because he had allowed wickedness without chastising it. They were guilty of irreverence (1 Sam 2:12, 17), intimidation (1 Sam 2:13-16), and immorality (1 Sam 2:22). As a consequence, Hophni and Phinehas would die on the same day and the priesthood would eventually be taken from them altogether (1 Sam 2:30-36; cf. 1 Kings 2:27).

The prophecy (promise) of the death of Eli's two sons was fulfilled (1 Sam 4:11). This occurred when the Ark of the Covenant arrived in the battlefield from Shiloh. The Philistines were terror-stricken as they heard the Israelites shout so loudly for joy that even the ground shook. This was a wakeup call for the Philistines as they remembered the plagues in Egypt and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. They fought courageously and defeated Israel and captured the Ark. And when the news came to Eli that his two sons were killed (1 Sam 2:34; cf. 1 Sam 4:11), Eli fell back, broke his neck and died a dishonourable death with a heavy heart (1 Sam 4:18).

THOUGHT: Do I discipline my children so that God may be pleased with them?

PRAYER: Lord, may I worship Thee in obedience to Thy precepts.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

1 SAMUEL 2:30-36

1 KINGS 2:26, 27, 35

“So Solomon thrust out Abiathar...”

THE PRIESTHOOD REMOVED

“And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever...” (1 Sam 2:35-36)

Eli’s ungodly example of indulging and prospering himself in the wickedness of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, is a warning for all who fail to chastise their children. Not only did Eli suffer an ignoble death after hearing of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines, but the priesthood was to be removed from his family.

The second prophecy (promise) of 1 Samuel 2:35 and 36 indicated that God would remove the high priesthood from Eli.

The millennial passages in Ezekiel 44:15 and 48:11 indicate that Zadok (the line of Eleazar) was God’s choice for high priest. Due to the unfaithfulness of the Levites, they will not be millennial priests and may not touch any holy things or holy offerings (Ezek 44:10-14). The sons of Zadok, who remained faithful during Israel’s times of rebellion, will serve as priests (Ezek 44:15-31; cf. 1 Kings 2:28-35). They will not receive any land in the millennial kingdom but will rely on offerings for their support (Ezek 44:28-31).

THOUGHT: Removal from ministry, although shameful, is necessary for the protection of the holiness of God and His established means of worship.

PRAYER: Lord, may Thou grant my church leaders continued faithfulness to honour Thy Holy Name.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

1 SAMUEL 9:15-16

1 SAMUEL 11:12-15

*“Let us go to Gilgal,
and renew the kingdom there.”*

APPOINTING A KING

The Lord told Samuel, “... *To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.*” (1 Sam 9:15-16)

Israel asked Samuel for a king so as to be like the other nations (1 Sam 8:1-5). When Samuel lamented, the Lord assured him that the people were rejecting Him, not Samuel (1 Sam 8:6-9). Some 300 years prior, Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 17:14 that Israel would demand a king, so he gave principles to guide them in their selection. The primary stipulation of Moses was that the king must be an Israelite (Deut 17:15). Samuel warned of the problems a king would bring, including forced military service, hard labor upon their sons and daughters and heavy taxes. Even though Samuel warned that a king would become oppressive and a financial drain on the nation, the people insisted on having one (1 Sam 8:10-22).

Then God revealed to Samuel that Saul was to be the king (1 Sam 9:17). Saul was surprised that the prophet had been instructed to anoint him (1 Sam 9:21). Saul, the first king of Israel, was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe.

Saul was publicly confirmed as king at Gilgal (1 Sam 11:14-15).

THOUGHT: Samuel reminded them that their king was not going to save them, but their own faithfulness and obedience to the Lord would bring God’s blessings.

PRAYER: Lord, may my trust be completely in Thee.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15

1 SAMUEL 13:14; 15:28

2 SAMUEL 5:1-5

*“...and they anointed
David king over Israel.”*

THE END OF SAUL'S KINGDOM

“But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.” (1 Sam 13:14)

King Saul had a foolish heart. Although he was keen for God's blessing against the Philistines, he was impatient and made a sacrifice to God that was only lawful for a priest to make. His impatience was exhibited when Samuel had not arrived to offer a sacrifice. Contrary to God's Word, Saul took it upon himself to act as priest. Samuel rebuked him and declared that Saul's kingship was doomed to fail.

In 1 Samuel 15:8-9, Saul clearly violated God's command when he spared the king and the best livestock. Saul blamed the people for sparing the best livestock for sacrifice to God (1 Sam 15:21). Samuel told him, *“...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king”* (1 Sam 15:22-23). Again Samuel said that the Lord had taken the kingdom from Saul (1 Sam 15:28; 28:17).

In 2 Samuel 3:1, the household of Saul grew weaker and weaker, but David waxed stronger and stronger. With the rebellion of Ishbosheth over, the 12 tribes gathered at Hebron and proclaimed David as their king (2 Sam 5:1-5). God replaced King Saul with a man who is after His own heart. Some years prior, in a private ceremony, Samuel had already anointed David (1 Sam 16:6-13) at the age of 30.

THOUGHT: Godly success can only come when true believers follow God's will.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the wisdom and understanding to do all that Thou want me to do.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16

PSALM 27:1-3

PSALM 55:16-19

*“He hath delivered my soul
in peace from the battle.”*

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.” (Ps 27:1-3)

Conflict and evil is inevitable in this sin-cursed world. But as with King David, believers can have confidence amid the conflict. When David was surrounded by his enemies and in the greatest danger, he looked unto the Lord, and had no need to fear (Ps 27:1-6) and his confidence in the Lord was further affirmed. The reference to the enemy coming up to eat his flesh (Ps 27:2; cf. Job 19:22; Ps 14:4) is an allusion to wild beasts in their meanness and greediness.

In this song of trust, David recognized the Lord as his “*Light*,” which is often used in Scripture to refer to God (Ps 27:1; cf. John 8:12; 9:5; 1 John 1:5). Light dispels darkness and light is important to life. The focus of the believer should not be on the forces of darkness that attack, but on the Lord who defends them as the Word of God says, “*If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Rom 8:31).

David expressed his faith in God’s deliverance (Ps 55:16-19, 22) even when he was betrayed by one of his most trusted companions who revealed his corruptness by openly speaking kindly to David but secretly plotting against him (Ps 55:20-21). Although he was not yet delivered, by faith David foresaw his deliverance from persecution and conflict as a present fact. He was convinced that God would hear him and afflict his enemies.

THOUGHT: The Lord is my stronghold, affording security against all violence and conflict.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for being my Light, Salvation and Strength, and protecting me from my enemies.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 17

PSALM 27:10

MATTHEW 25:31-46

*"I was a stranger,
and ye took me in."*

ABANDONED BY PARENTS

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." (Ps 27:10)

King David expressed his confidence and thanksgiving for God's continual protection, strengthening and sustaining power even when he was surrounded by his enemies. His desire was to be in the Temple where he could worship the Lord in safety (Ps 27:4-6).

King David knew that even if his parents were to forsake him, he would not be abandoned by the Lord as He would not forsake him. He asked the Lord for mercy and expressed his complete confidence that His mercy would always be there, even if his own parents should abandon him (Ps 27:7-10). The relationship that God establishes with us in His Only Begotten Son the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is far stronger than the bond between parents and children, no matter how strong it may be. Even when the strongest human love reaches its limit, the Lord's love goes beyond and always remains.

When parents forsake, there is an abandonment of parental responsibilities. It will be accompanied by loss of family, home, health, job, possessions, influence and provision of wealth. Regardless of the extremity of earthly destitution (Ps 31:11; 38:11), God still protects and provides (cf. Matt 25:35). Only God remains constant in honesty and truth, with love, grace and mercy, as He will not deceive nor flatter you to get what He wants from you. King David wanted to be with God and to do His will. He asked for guidance and deliverance that he will not fall into the hands of his enemies. He encouraged himself to be patient and courageous, knowing that God would always be his help (Ps 27:11-14).

THOUGHT: Although a father or mother may forsake a child, the Lord will never abandon those who put their trust in Him.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me a clear understanding of Thy Love and Infinite Mercy.

MONDAY, JANUARY 18

1 SAMUEL 28:19

1 SAMUEL 31:1-6

*“Saul died...his three sons...
armourbearer, and all his men.”*

THE DEMISE OF SAUL

“Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Sam 28:19)

When King Saul (the first king of Israel) saw the Philistine army threatening to attack, he was terrified. And when he asked the Lord for answers, he was not given any response. In desperation, he decided to seek a spirit medium (the witch of Endor) to summon Samuel’s departed spirit from the dead. He disguised himself and visited the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28:1-8). He had to disguise himself as he had banned all mediums from Israel as they were prohibited by God’s law (1 Sam 28:3; cf. Ex 22:18; Lev 19:31; Deut 18:9-13). He knew he was walking in disobedience.

King Saul was condemned by the visit as his terrible past was reviewed (1 Sam 28:15-18). He was told that his kingdom was lost to David due to his failure to destroy the Amalekites completely (1 Sam 15:2-3, 10-19). It was also revealed that Saul and his army would be defeated by the Philistines and that he and his sons (successors to the throne) and his army would be killed (1 Sam 28:19).

The tragic prediction of Saul’s death along with his three sons, his armour bearer and the death of Saul’s army came to pass (1 Sam 31:1-6). The decapitated body of Saul and his sons were taken to Beth-shan, at the junction of the Jezreel and Jordan valleys, and were hung on the wall by the city square as a humiliation and also as giving victory to their gods.

THOUGHT: In his spiritual desperation, king Saul sought that which God had forbidden and as a result suffered the consequences because of his continual lack of obedience.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me faithfulness so that Thy name may be glorified.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19

1 CHRONICLES 17:7-15

1 KINGS 7:51

*“... the work that king Solomon made
for the house of the LORD.”*

THE PROMISE TO SOLOMON

*“...I will raise up thy seed after thee,
which shall be of thy sons; and I
will establish his kingdom. He shall
build me an house, and I will
stablish his throne for ever.”* (1
Chron 17:11-12)

After King David was comfortable in his completed palace, he thought of the temporary Tent of the Ark of the Covenant and expressed his desire to build a Temple. Initially, Nathan the prophet was encouraging (1 Chron 17:2), but the Lord told Nathan to tell David: *“Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in”* (1 Chron 17:4) because David has shed much blood (1 Chron 22:8). Instead God would build him a *“house”* (1 Chron 17:10, 25, 27). This *“house”* was the Davidic Covenant which involved the permanent establishment of David’s throne (cf. 2 Sam 7:8-17).

God chose David to lead Israel and He protected him in battle as a past blessing (1 Chron 17:7-8), placed David and his people in a secure land (1 Chron 17:9) as a present blessing, and promised to establish the throne of David’s son Solomon as a future blessing. God promised that David’s *“house”* will be forever (1 Chron 17:10-15), being the royal line of Israel’s kings, fulfilled by Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 1:30-33) who links God’s divine nature with David’s human ancestry forever.

King Solomon built the Temple in seven years (1 Kings 6:38) and included in the Temple all the things that his father, king David, had dedicated (1 Kings 7:51). Even though David wanted to build the Temple himself (2 Sam 7:1-17) and set aside items for that purpose (2 Sam 8:11), God forbade him but used his son Solomon, who included the items in the Temple. This was to remind the people of the legitimacy of Solomon’s claim to David’s throne.

THOUGHT: Although king David was forbidden to build the Temple, he devoted his last years to gathering building materials and wealth for the Temple.

PRAYER: Lord, whatever areas of service Thou want me to be in, may I serve Thee faithfully.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20

1 KINGS 13:1-3

2 KINGS 23:4-6, 16-18

“...bones...and burned them upon the altar.”

THE BURNING OF BONES

“...there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense...Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day...” (1 Kings 13:1-3)

Rehoboam succeeded his father Solomon as king over all Israel. He rejected the advice of the more experienced, older and wiser men (1 Kings 12:6-7), listening instead to the young and inexperienced advisors to rule harshly (1 Kings 12:8-11). As a result of the harshness, the people rebelled against Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king. So, Jeroboam ruled the 10 northern tribes. Although Rehoboam gathered an army of 180,000, war between the two kingdoms was avoided when the prophet Shemaiah warned him not to fight against the northern kingdom.

Jeroboam instituted idol worship at Dan and Bethel. He built two golden calves, appointed non-Levites to serve as priests and instituted his own religious festival. This was to keep his people from going south to Jerusalem to sacrifice in the Temple. At Bethel, Jeroboam offered a sacrifice on his pagan altar. A prophet of God foretold that a future king would defile the altar by burning on it the bones of the very priests who are sacrificing upon it.

After predicting the burning of bones, the prophet of God claimed that the altar would split apart (1 Kings 13:3, 5) and the ashes would be poured out. This occurred as predicted. When Jeroboam reached out to seize the prophet, his hand *“dried up.”* Jeroboam asked the prophet to pray for the healing of his hand. When his hand was restored and he offered him a reward, the prophet rejected it as God forbid him to accept anything at Bethel.

THOUGHT: (Read 1 Kings 23:16-18.)

PRAYER: Lord, grant me humility to worship Thee in the manner Thou ordained.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

1 KINGS 13:20-24

1 KINGS 13:26-32

*“And he laid his carcass
in his own grave...”*

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET

*“...Thus saith the LORD,
Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed
the mouth of the LORD, and hast
not kept the commandment which
the LORD thy God commanded
thee, But camest back, and hast
eaten bread and drunk water in the
place, of the which the LORD did
say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink
no water; thy carcass shall not
come unto the sepulchre of thy
fathers.” (1 Kings 13:21-22)*

Obedience was required of the young prophet and he was warned not to eat or drink as he was not to have fellowship with workers of iniquity (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1). But an old prophet lied to him and he was deceived (1 Kings 13:18). In disobedience, the young prophet did eat bread and drink water even though he was forbidden to do so.

Although the old prophet caused the young prophet to sin, he conveyed what God said to him (1 Kings 13:20-21). The Lord rebuked the young prophet for his disobedience and told him that his body would not be buried in the grave of his ancestors. After eating and drinking, the young prophet of God left on a donkey. Along the way, he was killed by a lion (1 Kings 13:23-25).

God’s supernatural judgment was a fulfillment of the promise as it was not natural for an ass to remain in the company of a lion, neither was it natural for a lion not to devour the human carcass. Although the old prophet contributed to the death of the young prophet, he buried the young prophet in a grave of his own (not with his fathers) and asked that he be buried with him, that his bones not be desecrated with those of the evil priests (cf. 1 Kings 13:2; 2 Kings 23:17-18).

THOUGHT: There are severe consequences for disobedience to divine revelation.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me courage to be obedient to Thy Word.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

1 KINGS 14:10-11

1 KINGS 15:25-29

“...he smote all the house of Jeroboam.”

A DYNASTY DESTROYED

“Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken it.” (1 Kings 14:10-11)

Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, was the first king of the northern tribes of Israel (1 Kings 12-14; 2 Chron 10-11). Due to his disobedience, God promised to cut off every male from his household (1 Kings 14:1-18) as God expected all 12 tribes to act in obedience to Him. When his son Abijah was sick, he asked his wife to disguise herself and sent her to the prophet Ahijah who predicted his rise to power (1 Kings 11:29-31). The Lord had informed the aging and almost blind prophet as to who would be coming to visit (1 Kings 14:1-5). The prophet Ahijah predicted the death of Jeroboam's son and all his male heirs. They would all die unnatural deaths and the kingship would be removed from his family. This was fulfilled in 1 Kings 15:29. The child died which was a judgment for Jeroboam's disobedience and religious apostasy and the people mourned (1 Kings 14:6-18).

Jeroboam incurred God's wrath because he built shrines with infamous golden calves in Dan (North) and Bethel (South) in a deliberate effort to prevent inhabitants travelling south to Temple Jerusalem as required. The apostate shrines were staffed with a non-levitical priesthood and the date of the Feast of Tabernacles was also changed (1 Kings 12:31, 32). David was a model king (1 Kings 14:8; cf. 15:3) who secured blessing for Judah. But Jeroboam's disobedience secured destruction for the Northern Kingdom.

THOUGHT: My disobedience will incur the wrath of God.

PRAYER: Lord, may I walk in obedience to Thee.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23

1 KINGS 18:20-30

2 KINGS 17:41

*“These nations feared the LORD,
and served their graven images.”*

BEING DOUBLEMINDED

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:21)

On the first occasion Elijah met Ahab, the king greeted Elijah as the troublemaker of Israel, but Elijah considered Ahab who turned from the God of Israel to following after Baal the god of weather and fertility as the problematic troublemaker (1 Kings 18:17-19). Elijah challenged Ahab to summon the 450 false prophets of Baal and 400 false prophets of Jezebel’s goddess Asherah and all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel. Jezebel was the primary influence in Ahab’s religious apostasy (1 Kings 13:1-9).

Elijah rebuked Israel for being double-minded, wavering between worshiping the God of Israel and Baal. Elijah proposed a contest between himself and the pagan prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-24). Each side prepared a young bull as a sacrifice and placed it on an altar. Elijah challenged the false prophets to call upon their god to send fire down to consume the sacrifice. They shouted all morning calling to Baal with no response and in desperation cut themselves with knives and swords (1 Kings 18:25-29).

When Elijah prayed, fire fell from heaven, consuming the sacrifice and the people cried out, *“The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God”* (1 Kings 18:39). All the false prophets were then killed (1 Kings 18:40). Then Elijah announced the end of the three-year drought as a flood came from heaven (1 Kings 18:41-46) over the land mocking Baal, the god of the weather.

THOUGHT: Paganism is double-minded, combining worship of the Lord with the worship of false gods (2 Kings 17:29-41).

PRAYER: Lord, may I serve Thee, the Living and True God, the God of Israel, single-mindedly.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 24

1 KINGS 20:28

1 KINGS 20:29-30

*“and the children of Israel
slew of the Syrians.”*

AHAB'S VICTORY

“And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” (1 Kings 20:28)

Ben-hadad had stationed his army around Ahab's city, Samaria (1 Kings 20:1-21), as they thought that the hilly terrain favoured Israel's God. The prophet prophesied and reassured Ahab that the Lord would defeat Ben-hadad's armies as they had defamed His name. The sovereign God and Creator of the universe was fighting for Israel, and as Israel was completely outnumbered by the Syrians, victory could only come from Jehovah. He would demonstrate in a mighty way that He was not restricted to the hills nor the valleys as the Syrians had presumed with their limited concept of God's power.

On the first day, the Israelites claimed 100,000 enemy soldiers as casualties. The remainder of their troops took refuge within the city walls of Aphek but God caused the city wall to collapse on them killing an additional 27,000 soldiers, a fulfilment of the prophecy (1 Kings 20:29-30).

Ben-hadad was barricaded in the city. His officers, dressed in sackcloth, begged Ahab for mercy. Ahab disobeyed God's command, and made a treaty with the Arameans and spared the life of Ben-hadad (1 Kings 20:31-43) for political and economic gain. A prophet disguised himself as a soldier conveyed a message to Ahab, challenging him for foolishly making an agreement with his enemy declaring that he would die. King Ahab condemned the prophet. But the prophet explained that the same condemnation was true of the king himself as he disobeyed God's command and allowed Ben-hadad to live.

THOUGHT: Do I give all glory to God?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me humility to understand that spiritual victories are Thine.

MONDAY, JANUARY 25

1 KINGS 21:17-26; 22:17

1 KINGS 22:37-40

*“... and the dogs
licked up his blood.”*

AHAB'S DEMISE

“And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” (1 Kings 21:19)

The prophet Elijah confronted Ahab on his way to Naboth's vineyard, and prophesied that he and Jezebel would die dishonorable deaths and will be attended by scavenger dogs of Samaria (cf. 1 Kings 22:37-40; 2 Kings 9:30-37). Previously in 1 Kings 18:17-19, Ahab greeted Elijah as the troublemaker of Israel, but Elijah considered Ahab turning away from God as the problem.

Naboth owned a vineyard adjacent to a royal estate in Jezreel (1 Kings 21). King Ahab wanted to buy the vineyard but Naboth refused to sell it. His wife, wicked Queen Jezebel, saw that he was despondent and wrote to the elders of Naboth's village. Jezebel demanded that Naboth be charged with cursing “*God and the king,*” sending two sons of Belial as witnesses. As a result, the villagers stoned Naboth to death.

When Ahab heard of the news, he rushed to Jezreel to confiscate the property of Naboth and there he encountered the prophet Elijah who pronounced God's judgment on him. Elijah prophesied that every male in Ahab's house would perish and that his dynasty would come to an end as divine punishment for the crimes committed against Naboth. In 1 Kings 22:37-40, the dogs licked Ahab's blood as prophesied. Some ten years later, Jezebel's skull, feet, and the palms of her hands were all that were left by the dogs (2 Kings 9:30-37).

THOUGHT: How will my life end?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to understand Thy punitive will.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

1 KINGS 22:22

2 THESSALONIANS 2:10-12

*“God shall send
them strong delusion.”*

I WILL GO FORTH

“And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.” (1 Kings 22:22)

Jehoshaphat urged Ahab to seek the counsel of his prophets (about 400 in all) as to whether they should go forth to war against Ben-hadad and the Aramaeans to liberate Ramoth-gilead. As Ahab desired to go to war, his false prophets approved of the expedition and assured them of victory.

Jehoshaphat was not fully convinced and asked if there was any prophet other than the 400 (1 Kings 22:7-9). As a result, Micaiah, the prophet of the Lord who was considered a faithful prophet of Israel, was then summoned from prison to stand before King Ahab who asked Micaiah if Israel would be victorious. When Micaiah did not prophesy what Ahab wanted to hear but prophesied only evil against him, Ahab hated Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8; 2 Chron. 18:7). Ahab despised the truth.

Initially Micaiah agreed with the other prophets but Ahab demanded he told the truth (1 Kings 22:13-28). Micaiah then reproved King Ahab and condemned the expedition, prophesying that it would end in disaster. *“And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace”* (1 Kings 22:17). He predicted the death of King Ahab in the battle against the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead (1 Kings 22:8-28; 2 Chron. 18:7-27).

Ahab ordered that Micaiah be put in prison until his victorious return, but Micaiah said, *“If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me”* (1 Kings 22:28; 2 Chron. 18:27). As predicted by Micaiah, Ahab died (1 Kings 22:34-38) at Ramoth-gilead.

THOUGHT: (Read 2 Thessalonians 2:11 and 12.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I understand Thy Will by Thy Word.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

2 CHRONICLES 20:6-12

2 CHRONICLES 16:7-10

*“the eyes of the LORD
run to and fro.”* THURSDAY,

JANUARY 28

PSALM 50:8-15, 23

ROMANS 5:3-4

TRUSTING DURING CRISIS

“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” (Ps 50:15)

Asaph is the author of Psalm 50 and is described in 2 Chronicles 29:30 as a prophet. He was one of King David's chief musicians (1 Chron 6:32, 39; 16:4-7) who wrote twelve Psalms (Ps 50, 73-83). Asaph sternly warned that the Great Judge of the universe will appear in glory to assess the deeds of His people (Ps 50:1-6). The Great Judge will judge their formalism and hypocrisy in worship as He is concerned with heartfelt obedience (Ps 50:7-23). The Word of God declares similar condemnations of empty ritual in worship in Psalm 50:8-9, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8, Isaiah 1:11-15.

The Psalmist called upon Israel to offer their sacrifices of thanksgiving with a genuine trust in the Lord (Ps 50:14-15, 23) as the solution to formalism is to worship in genuine faith. God wants a genuine commitment to Himself and wants His people to be a thankful people, to trust in Him and to fulfill their vows in obedience. A thanksgiving offering could not be given unless the giver had truly experienced God's goodness or help when he was in a time of crisis or distress and had called on God. This would invoke praise from the giver to the Lord in a spontaneous expression of enjoyment of the benefits of God.

God despises empty religiosity (Ps 50:16-17) and participation in sin (Ps 50:18). They were involved in wicked speech by lying and slandering (Ps 50:19-21). God called them to repentance or He would deal severely with them (Ps 50:22).

THOUGHT: With genuine faith comes genuine worship which is devoid of empty ritualism, allowing the justified to rejoice in spite of tribulations.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for strengthening my character in times of crisis to Thy glory.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28

PSALM 50:8-15, 23

ROMANS 5:3-4

“... but we glory in tribulations also.”

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PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for strengthening my character in times of crisis to Thy glory.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29

2 KINGS 2:9-10

2 KINGS 2:11-12

“Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

And Elisha saw it.”

A DOUBLE PORTION OF SPIRIT

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” (2 Kings 2:9)

As Elisha was being trained in the school of prophets and desired to be a worthy successor of Elijah in the prophetic ministry, he asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit to be upon him.

After Ahaziah (the king of Israel) suffered a serious fall, he sent his messengers to the temple of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask if he would recover from his injuries (2 Kings 1:1-2). Due to the fact that the king consulted Baal about his injuries, Elijah prophesied that he would die (2 Kings 1:3-4). In his anger at Elijah's prophecy, the king sent a captain and fifty soldiers to arrest him (2 Kings 1:5-9, 11). Elijah called down fire from heaven which consumed the first and second company of soldiers (2 Kings 1:10, 12). The captain of the third company fell to his knees and begged for mercy. The Angel of the Lord told Elijah to go with the captain to the king and not be afraid of him (2 Kings 1:13-15). Elijah repeated the prophecy to King Ahaziah that he would die because he enquired of Baal. The prophecy was fulfilled as the king died (2 Kings 1:16-18).

Elijah and Elisha made their final journey together from Gilgal to Bethel, Jericho and to the Jordan. Elijah gave repeated reminders that he was going to be taken away and Elisha repeated his loyalty to Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-6). Prior to Elisha asking to become Elijah's rightful successor, Elijah performed his final miracle by parting the waters of the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:7-9). Elijah responded to Elisha's request of a double portion of his spirit saying it would be so if he witnessed his departure. Then Elisha witnessed Elijah being taken up to heaven.

THOUGHT: Elisha was a rightful and worthy successor of Elijah.

PRAYER: Lord, may Thou provide humble and worthy successors to our churches that Thy Name be glorified.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30

2 KINGS 5:1-19

2 KINGS 5:14

“dipped himself seven times in Jordan ...and he was clean.”

RECOVERY FROM LEPROSY

“Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” (2 Kings 5:10)

Naaman, a highly successful commander in the Aramean army, contracted leprosy. His wife's young believing Israelite maid (a captive of war) recommended that he consulted Elisha. Naaman was determined to travel to meet Elisha and carried with him a large gift of gold and silver (2 Kings 5:4-5). Ben-hadad, king of Aram, addressed a letter to the king of Israel (possibly thinking Elisha was connected to the king) requesting that Naaman be healed.

The king of Israel responded by tearing his clothes, wrongly concluding that the request was an excuse for Aram to attack Israel if it was not granted. But Elisha asked the king of Israel to send Naaman to him. As a result, Naaman would learn that there was a true prophet in Israel (2 Kings 5:7-8). When Naaman arrived at Elisha's house, Elisha sent a message to him, instructing him to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River. This caused Naaman to be furious as he expected Elisha to heal him personally. The officers of Naaman convinced him to obey the prophet's instructions, so he proceeded to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River. And he was healed (2 Kings 5:9-14).

Being cleansed of leprosy, Naaman said, *“Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel”* (2 Kings 5:15). Naaman presented the gifts to Elisha, but he refused them. Naaman then vowed that he would worship the Lord from that time forth (2 Kings 5:15-19).

THOUGHT: Naaman was healed by grace alone.

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for Thy healing Hand.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 31

2 KINGS 7:1

2 KINGS 7:16-17

*“So a measure of fine flour
was sold for a shekel.”*

FROM STARVATION TO ABUNDANCE

“Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.” (2 Kings 7:1)

Elisha foresaw some of the king of Aram's plans to attack Israel and he warned the king of Israel about each threat. The king of Aram learnt of Elisha forewarning Israel and sent his soldiers to arrest him.

Elisha's servant was afraid when he saw the Aramean army surrounding them, but Elisha reassured him that their army was bigger. Elisha prayed and the Lord opened his servant's eyes to see a massive army of fiery horses and chariots protecting them (2 Kings 6:16-17). In answer to Elisha's prayer, God blinded the Aramean soldiers as they advanced and Elisha led the Aramean army to the city of Samaria. The king of Israel asked Elisha if he should kill the Arameans. He said no and told the king to feed them instead and send them home (2 Kings 6:21-23).

Later, Ben-hadad besieged Samaria and cut off its food supply (2 Kings 6:24-7:20), resulting in cannibalism. The king of Israel blamed Elisha. Elisha prophesied firstly of an abundance of food for the famine-stricken and besieged city within 24 hours, and that the king's officer, who doubted Elisha's first prophecy, would not be able to eat any of the food (2 Kings 7:1-2).

Four starving Israelite lepers decided to put themselves at the mercy of the Arameans. Instead they found the camp abandoned and stocked with food. The Lord had caused the Aramean army to flee, thinking that a great army was approaching. The four returned to tell the starving people. The king's officer who doubted Elisha's prophecy was killed when the people trampled on him in the gate (2 Kings 7:16-17).

THOUGHT: God can do the impossible. Do I believe?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me continual faithfulness to Thee.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1

HOSEA 1:3-9

2 KINGS 15:8-12

“And so it came to pass.”

JEHU’S DYNASTY DESTROYED

“And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.” (Hosea 1:4)

The three children of Hosea and Gomer were given tragic names which were prophetic. The first son was Jezreel, a reminder to Israel that God would punish the dynasty of Jehu for the violent murders he committed at Jezreel (2 Kings 9). Jehu not only destroyed King Ahab and wicked Queen Jezebel’s family as God’s judgment was poured out against them (cf. 2 Kings 10:30-31), but also brutally slaughtered many others in Jezreel. God held Jehu responsible for his brutality as they stemmed from personal pride and not from a desire to serve God.

During the time of Hosea’s ministry, the house of Jehu’s reign in the land of Israel would come to an end. At that time, the direct descendant of Jehu was King Jeroboam II.

Hosea 1:5 says, *“And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”* God pronounced His judgment against the house of the king and also the nation over which the house of Jehu reigned. The reason the nation would also be judged was because they forsook God for idols, committing spiritual adultery. God’s wrath would be poured out in the valley of Jezreel where Jezebel deceitfully plotted Naboth’s death to secure his vineyard (cf. 1 Kings 21:5:16).

God’s prophecy was fulfilled at a time when the dynasty of Jehu seemed secure as the Northern Kingdom was most powerful then. Hosea witnessed the fulfillment of the prophecy some forty years later (cf. 2 Kings 10:14; 15:8-12, 18).

THOUGHT: Am I doing God’s work for Him, or my work for Him?

PRAYER: Lord, may I be faithful to do Thy will, and not mine.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

2 CHRONICLES 25:16

2 CHRONICLES 25:20-27

*“They sent to Lachish after him,
and slew him there.”*

THE CONSEQUENCE OF IDOLATRY

“...Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.” (2 Chron 25:16)

Amaziah was the son of King Joash (2 Kings 14:1-20; 2 Chron 25:1). He was 25 years of age when he began his reign as the ninth king of Judah. He commenced by following in his father's steps, doing *“that which was right in the sight of the LORD”* (2 Kings 14:3). King Amaziah built up an army in Judah, but as he had military deficiencies he employed 100,000 paid troops (mercenaries) from Israel to war against Edom (2 Chron 25:6). Amaziah was warned by a prophet, *“a man of God,”* that he would certainly be defeated if he used the paid troops (2 Chron 25:7). As a result, he sent them home and incurred their annoyance and wrath (2 Chron 25:10). In 2 Chronicles 25:13, the mercenaries from Israel that he sent home attacked several towns in Judah, killing 3,000 and taking much spoil.

Due to his obedience to the prophet's command, Amaziah was given a decisive victory over the Edomites despite his military deficiencies (2 Chron 25:14-16). Following his victory, Amaziah embraced and worshipped some of the idols (gods of Edom) that he had taken from the Edomites (2 Chron 25:14). As a result, God's wrath was kindled against him, *“and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?”* (2 Chron 25:15). Amaziah's disobedience brought disaster upon Judah by his obsession to proclaim war against Israel. Amaziah was slain at Lachish and was buried in the royal sepulchre in Jerusalem (2 Kings 14:19-20; 2 Chron 25:27-28).

THOUGHT: God's Word repeatedly warns of the danger of idolatry (1 Cor 10:7; 2 Cor 10:14; 6:16,17; 1 John 5:21). Do I take heed?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me obedience that Thy name may be glorified.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

ISAIAH 26:1-6

2 PETER 1:3

*“according to his abundant
mercy hath begotten us.”*

EXPERIENCING CONTENTMENT

*“Thou wilt keep him in perfect
peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:
because he trusteth in thee.”* (Isa
26:3)

The Word of God records in Isaiah 26 a great song of praise by redeemed souls set free, sung in the land of Judah, as salvation is God’s total provision for His people’s needs. They are a people of purpose for God and in a tragic world they are able to have a perfect peace. This passage speaks of the end of the age when Israel shall be saved and in her redemption shall come up to the New Jerusalem, a place of honor which is unparalleled in her history.

Contentment begins with eternal destiny being realized in salvation (2 Pet 1:1-2), which is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:3). Contentment is not based upon much wealth or possessions but where one will spend eternity. This is when everything takes on a new meaning, as money and material goods do not bring the satisfaction and contentment that God offers.

The promise of perfect peace is “peace, peace” (*shalôm shalôm*), a double emphasis indicating a peace that goes far beyond human comprehension. Perfect peace indicates a trust totally in the Lord, leaning upon Him entirely and being sustained by Him alone. God’s promise is that there is a complete security for those who put their faith and trust in Him only.

Hope beyond the grave is certainly evidenced in the Old Testament (cf. Job 19:23-29; Ps 17:15; 73:24; Eccles 9:1-8; Dan 12:1-4; Gen 22:5; Heb 11:19). To the contrary, the unredeemed who have rejected the Lord and are not content to walk in the ways of the Lord will not enjoy their afterlife.

THOUGHT: A mind stayed on God is a mind at peace.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for joy in the midst of trials.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

ISAIAH 37:33-35

ISAIAH 37:36-37

*“The angel of the LORD went forth,
and smote in the camp.”*

AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTACK

“Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD....” (Isa 37:33-34)

God condemned wicked King Sennacherib because of his pride and his arrogant ridicule of the Holy One of Israel (Isa 37:21-28). The punishment promised was that he would be led back to Assyria with a hook in his nose and a bit in his mouth (Isa 37:29).

Prior to seizing Jerusalem, Sennacherib’s military commander met with three of Hezekiah’s top officials (Isa 36:1-22; 37:1-7). Sennacherib’s message to Judah was firstly, they cannot depend on Egypt as the Pharaoh was unreliable, secondly they cannot depend on God, therefore Judah must surrender. Hezekiah mourned and sought Isaiah informing him of the terrible danger and begged him to pray for God’s help. Isaiah told the king that Sennacherib will soon experience defeat and death, even though Sennacherib threatened to destroy Jerusalem.

God consoled King Hezekiah (Isa 37:30-38), promising him that the land would produce abundant crops and vineyards in the third year as agricultural pursuits were interrupted by the siege. God also promised King Hezekiah that the Assyrians will not enter Jerusalem as it would be spared (Isa 37:30-35). God will defend the city. That very night Hezekiah was delivered as the Angel of the Lord (the Lord Jesus Christ Himself) destroyed 185,000 Assyrian troops. When Sennacherib fled back to Nineveh, he was killed by his own sons (Isa 37:36-37).

THOUGHT: My God has the power to deliver if He wills.

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to have faith and trust in Thee even during times of persecutions and attacks.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

ISAIAH 38:5

ISAIAH 38:9

*“Hezekiah king of Judah...
was recovered of his sickness.”*

THE HEALING OF A TERMINAL DISEASE

“Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” (Isa 38:5)

The prophet Isaiah went to Hezekiah a godly king of Judah (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron 29-32; Isa 36-39) who was suffering from a terminal disease and told him to set his house in order before he died (Isa 38:1). In setting his house in order, King Hezekiah had to appoint a near relative to take the throne of David as he did not have a son.

Only God has the power over life and death and there is never a situation beyond His intervention. If He wills, He can restore health or extend days (cf. Jas 5:15). In desperation and with serious soul-searching, Hezekiah wept and cried out to the Lord in prayer. Hezekiah was not claiming to be sinless but said, *“I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart”* (Isa 38:3). He desired to continue to serve and complete the spiritual restoration of the nation.

As a result, the Lord told Isaiah to firstly tell Hezekiah that God promised to add fifteen more years to his life and secondly that He would deliver Jerusalem from the hand of Assyria (Isa 38:5; cf. 2 Kings 20:6). The Lord gave the king a sign to assure him that he will be healed. God said the shadow on Hezekiah’s sundial would go backward ten degrees (Isa 38:7-8). This would give hope to the king in his ailing health. Hezekiah’s sundial going backward ten degrees is also recorded in 2 Kings 20:8-11. The Lord fulfilled His promise and Hezekiah recovered from his terminal illness, and Jerusalem was also delivered.

THOUGHT: May I, during times of suffering, have a renewed appreciation for life and a desire to continue to serve God as did Hezekiah.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me a continued desire to serve Thee in sickness and in health.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

ISAIAH 43:1-7

PSALM 66:10-12

“we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out.”

THE LORD WILL BE WITH YOU

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” (Isa 43:2)

Isaiah proclaimed God as the One True God who redeemed them by His “*grace*” which is the basis of their salvation, and not any personal merit. This is also proof of His love for His servant Israel. Isaiah also spoke of God’s superiority over idols. One of the many things that God does for His people is to protect them from fire and water (Isa 43:1-2).

The Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary says, “The ‘servant’ (Isa 42:19) nation (Israel) was rebuked for its lethargic spiritual state (for being ‘blind’ and ‘deaf’). In spite of Israel’s unfaithfulness, God promised to restore the nation from exile (43:1–7). The return from Babylon may serve as a precursor of the Jews’ return to Israel after the Tribulation (Matt 24:31).”

God assured Israel of His continual protection as He is the One who created, redeemed and cared for her. His continual protection for her in difficult times is pictured as floodwaters and fire. Consequently, Israel should not give up nor fear. God preserved Israel through extreme perils of fire and water to purify, not punish (cf. Ps 66:12; also Ps 138:7).

God promised to gather Israel (remnant) from the corners of the earth (Isa 43:6; cf. Isa 10:20-23). As God is with Israel, so is He with all true believers.

THOUGHT: Being tried as silver is a reference to the prolonged process of refining such a precious metal (cf. Ps 12:6; Prov 17:3; 25:4; Isa 1:22, 25; 48:10; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:3; 1 Cor 3:12-15).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for being with me as I am being refined.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 7

ISAIAH 44:22-26

PSALM 32:1-2, 5

*"Blessed is he whose
transgression is forgiven."*

TRANSGRESSIONS BLOTTED OUT

*"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud,
thy transgressions, and, as a cloud,
thy sins: return unto me; for I have
redeemed thee."* (Isa 44:22)

Despite all their sin, God forgave Israel (the people) of their sin. He protected them from fire and water, He chose them above all other nations, and will gather them and bring them back to Israel (Isa 43:1-9). God appointed them as a special witness and prepares all things for their homecoming during the Millennium (Isa 43:18-21).

Isaiah ridiculed the worthlessness of false idols, and those who make them are fools. One day, God's wrath will be upon all false idols and paganism. He pointed out the intense labour of making such idols and condemned the wickedness of those who carve out idols as they are willfully blind themselves to the truth (Isa 44:9-20). Isaiah called on Israel to return to the One True God who had redeemed them from sin and had blotted out their sin (Isa 44:21-28).

Matthew Henry said, "He has pardoned their sins, which were the cause of their calamity and the only obstruction to their deliverance, v.22. *Therefore* he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he has *blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions*. Note, [1.] Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between the upper and lower world (*sin separates between us and God*, Isa 59:2); they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners. Ps 11:6."

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 32:1.)

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee that my sin has been blotted out. May I live in obedience to Thy will.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

ISAIAH 45:2

2 CHRONICLES 36:21-23

“to fulfil threescore and ten years.”

MAKING CROOKED PLACES STRAIGHT

“I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.” (Isa 45:2)

This particular promise was given by God through Isaiah to Cyrus with regards to the fall of Babylon. Wiersbe said, “God called him by name over a century before he was born.” It declares God’s sovereignty, the deliverance of His people and their return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4). God commissioned Cyrus to fulfill a purpose, making him the founder of the powerful Persian Empire and a great king (Isa 45:1-3, 14-21). Cyrus who became the king was empowered by God as a human instrument for His purpose to defeat the Babylonian, Egyptian and Ethiopian armies and others.

King Cyrus would be made great for the sake of Jacob and Israel (Isa 45:4) and for His own glory (Isa 45:5-8). Although God used Cyrus to restore Jerusalem and deliver His people from their Babylonian bondage (Isa 45:9-13), God is the One who gave the victories. The twofold mission of Cyrus was to free the people and to bring God’s judgment on unbelievers. The Lord declared that *“there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me”* (Isa 45:21), and said, *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else”* (Isa 45:22). God used this verse for the salvation of Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his youth.

As a fulfillment of God’s promise to Cyrus, after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, King Cyrus made a decree that the Lord’s people return and rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:21-23).

THOUGHT: Isaiah spoke of Cyrus being the agent of Israel’s deliverance whilst Jeremiah spoke of the time of deliverance (2 Chron 36:21).

PRAYER: Lord, I praise Thee for Thou art the Great Controller of all events.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

ISAIAH 46:1-4

PSALM 92:12-15

*“They shall still bring
forth fruit in old age.”*

BEING USEFUL IN OLD AGE

*“And even to your old age I am he;
and even to hoar hairs will I carry
you: I have made, and I will bear;
even I will carry, and will deliver
you.”* (Isa 46:4)

The prophecy of Isaiah predicting the deliverance of the people of Israel commenced by recognizing the supremacy of the Lord over the false gods of the nations. The prophecy was that Babylon and its religion will fall, as Babylon was crushed, never to rise again (Isa 47:5). Babylon would be used by God to judge Judah. In turn, Babylon would be destroyed by God, as her gods could not save her from being conquered. Whilst the heathen carry their gods, Jehovah is the One who carries His people. The Jews must remember God even when there is an enormous pressure upon them to forsake the worship of Jehovah and to follow after the gods of their conquerors.

God admonished His people to listen and to obey Him in Isaiah’s prophecies (Isa 44:1; 46:3, 12; 47:8; 48:1, 12, 14, 16; 51:4; 52:8; 55:2). God would care for His people and carry them, sustaining them through their lives and never fail them, as the gods of Babylon failed their worshippers. Even though the “*house of Israel*” was but a remnant and brought low from the time of conception (Isa 46:3) to their old age (Isa 46:4), the Lord promised to watch over His own, to protect them and rescue them from trouble, to comfort and support them in their old age.

Although the wicked may appear to flourish and prosper, their prosperity like grass is short-lived. The righteous, on the other hand, will flourish like palm trees and cedars of Lebanon (Ps 92:7, 12-13). The growth of the righteous is vigorous. They have a prolonged existence, a fragrance and beauty of those dignified and gracious trees. They are fruitful and will have vitality in their old age (Ps 92:12-15).

THOUGHT: From conception until old age, God protects His own by His mercy and grace, as He has promised.

PRAYER: Lord, may I not be fearful but be fruitful in Thee.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

ISAIAH 49:15-16

MATTHEW 7:9-11

*“..how much more shall your Father
which is in heaven give good
things to them that ask him?”*

THE LORD WILL NOT FORGET

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” (Isa 49:15)

The people in Jerusalem felt that God had forsaken them (Isa 49:14) but God pointed out that Israel had forgotten and rejected Him (Isa 49:4) and that in spite of her sins God still loves His people. God reassured His people that His love was stronger than that of a mother nursing her infant (Isa 49:15).

Matthew Henry said, “See how deplorable the case of God’s people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such a time their temptations may be alarmingly violent. Infidels, in their presumption, say *God has forsaken the earth* (Ezek 8:12), and has *forgotten their sins*, Ps 10:11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, ‘God has forsaken his church and forgotten the sorrows of his people.’ But we have no more reason to question His promise and grace than we have to question His providence and justice. He is as sure a rewarder as He is a revenger.”

The Old Covenant with Israel is not negated by the New Covenant with the Gentiles but so permanent is the relationship between God and His people that He promised He has engraved them on the palms of His hands.

True believers are commanded to diligently seek God’s will as they have the confidence that He promises to reveal His will if they ask. Jesus Christ gave the comparison that if a sinful father can give good things to his children, how much more would a Sinless Father in heaven impart to His children (Matt 7:7-11).

THOUGHT: Israel will be restored in the Millennium and overflow her boundaries.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, that Thou forget not those whom Thou hast called.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

ISAIAH 49:22-26

ISAIAH 30:18-21

*“Blessed are all they
that wait for him.”*

THEY SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED

“And kings shall be thy nursing fathers (nourishers), and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” (Isa 49:23)

God promised to comfort, love and protect His chosen people and promised that their enemies would be destroyed. Those that waited for Him would not be ashamed but would be honoured and cared for (Isa 49:22-26).

In His sovereignty, God has secured the true believer and the “marriage” between God and His people is permanent. In His omnipotence, God will reverse the history of the past and cause devastation upon those who depopulated Israel.

The KJV Bible Commentary said, “Thus, the kings and queens who have oppressed the Jews in the past shall now become their servants. The people of Israel who have been taken captive shall certainly be released, for the Lord Himself shall contend with him that contendeth with them. God Himself shall defend Israel and save her children. The awful reference to the enemy being fed with their own flesh and drunken with their own blood draws its imagery from crazed, starving people who in their rage are given to cannibalism. In the context of the passage, the meaning seems to be that the enemies of Israel shall simply destroy themselves...” (Isa 49:22-26).

Consequently those who wait in dependence upon His promise and abide in God’s Will, will not be made ashamed of their blessed hope. God was patiently waiting to bless the faithful remnant who were and are waiting for Him (Isa 30:18). And He will bless them during the Millennium to come (Isa 30:19-26; cf. 29:17-24).

THOUGHT: The destruction of God’s foes will occur prior to the Millennium (Isa 30:27-33).

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the courage to stand and not be ashamed of Thee.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

ISAIAH 66:10-14

ISAIAH 40:1-2

*“Comfort ye, comfort ye
my people, saith your God.”*

THE LORD’S COMFORT

*“As one whom his mother
comforteth, so will I comfort you;
and ye shall be comforted in
Jerusalem.”* (Isa 66:13)

God’s comfort is upon all who truly believe in Him (Isa 66:1, 2) but not with those who choose to continue in their abominations (Isa 66:3). God will vindicate those who have been persecuted for their faith in Him (Isa 66:5-9).

In Isaiah 66:11-12, Jerusalem is compared to a mother and in Isaiah 66:13, God is compared to a mother who comforts her child. The Messianic Kingdom and its comfort, blessings and prosperity (Isa 66:10-14) are contrasted with the judgment at the Lord’s Second Coming (Isa 66:15-17; cf. 2 Thess 1:7-9).

The KJV Bible Commentary says, “The imagery of a mother nursing her baby with fresh milk is illustrative of the nations of the world that shall look once again to Jerusalem for spiritual nourishment...during the millennial kingdom when Jerusalem shall again be God’s ‘capital’ on earth. It is during that time that she shall experience peace...like a river and glory...like a flowing stream. Then shall the Gentiles be as a baby who shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. This touching picture is that of a loving mother who carefully carries her child upon her hip and bounces him gently upon her knees.”

God’s Word focused on Israel’s judgment and the judgment of other nations in Isaiah 1-39, but the focus shifted to God’s desire to bring peace and comfort to His people (Isa 40-66). God especially wants His people to be comforted (Isa 40:1) as He forgave Jerusalem who had been punished in full for her sins (Isa 40:2). The resurrection of Jesus Christ would bring great joy and comfort to the disciples after their sorrow, even as a woman rejoices after giving birth (John 16:20-22).

THOUGHT: As God comforted Jerusalem, so He comforts all true believers.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Thy comfort during trials which bring forth joy.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

JEREMIAH 21:7

JEREMIAH 52:8-11

*“... and overtook Zedekiah
in the plains of Jericho.”*

A PROPHESIED CAPTURE

“And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies...” (Jer 21:7)

Jeremiah declared that the people in Jerusalem would die of famine, pestilence, or the sword and that many survivors would be taken captive to Babylon. Zedekiah, Judah’s final king (twentieth), begged Jeremiah to plead for God’s mercy to deliver him from King Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 21:1-14). God used the Babylonians as His agents for the punishment of Judah’s rebellion. Jeremiah refused the king’s request and warned him that God will help their enemies, making Judah’s weapons useless (Jer 21:3-5, 11-14).

In the past, God’s “*mighty hand*” and “*outstretched arm*” had worked for His chosen people (Deut 4:34; 5:15; 26:8), but on this occasion He would work against them because they rejected Him. Judah’s military strength would be ineffective against the Chaldean army and Jeremiah also prophesied that after Judah’s military defeat, an engulfing pestilence (plague) would come upon Jerusalem, killing both people and animals (Jer 21:6-7).

Zedekiah instigated a revolt against the Babylonian king which resulted in King Nebuchadnezzar laying siege of Jerusalem for two years, with an ensuing severe famine within the city. Zedekiah was captured at Jericho, bound in chains, and sent away to exile in Babylon and made blind (cf. Jer 39:4-7; 52:8-11).

THOUGHT: My disobedience would arouse God’s anger.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to understand the consequences of turning away from Thee.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 14

JEREMIAH 28:15-16

JEREMIAH 28:17

"So Hananiah the prophet died."

THE PROGNOSIS OF A FALSE PROPHET

"Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD." (Jer 28:15-16)

Hananiah was a false prophet prophesying against Jeremiah (Jer 28:1-17). He declared in the Temple that in two years the plunder taken from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadrezzar would be restored, captives returned and the power of Babylon broken. This was in opposition to Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years (Jer 25:12). Jeremiah suffered for preaching the truth. He declared that God would deliver them only if they repented of their evil (Jer 26:1-3), and that God would destroy them and the Temple if they refused to repent (Jer 26:4-6).

Jeremiah had the support of certain political officials and others (Jer 26:16) and some elders who also pointed to two events of history that supported the ministry of Jeremiah. When Micah prophesied, the people turned from their sins and worshiped the Lord, and the Lord held back a terrible disaster pronounced against them (Jer 26:17-19). Uriah predicted the same destruction as Jeremiah (Jer 26:20-23). Ahikam persuaded the court not to give Jeremiah to the mob.

The Lord told Jeremiah to make bonds and yokes and to put them on his neck symbolizing the hopelessness of trying to throw off the Babylonian bondage (Jer 27:2-4). He was also to send some to other nations. Hananiah took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it (Jer 28:10-11). Jeremiah told him that he would die for his sins that year and two months later Hananiah died (Jer 28:12-17).

THOUGHT: Predicting peace comes with a burden of proof until proven.
PRAYER: Lord, may my church leaders faithfully preach Thy truth.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15

EZEKIEL 33:1-9

ISAIAH 56:9-12

*“His watchmen are blind:
they are all ignorant.”*

THE IMPORTANCE OF WARNING

“But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.” (Ezek 33:6)

Ezekiel was reminded of his ministry as a watchman in spiritual matters, observing the danger of any coming enemy and subsequent warning of his people (Ezek 33:1-7). Although each is responsible for his sin, Ezekiel’s duty was firstly to point out their sin and call them to repent and turn to the Lord, and secondly to announce Israel’s restoration.

On this occasion, the Word of God declares a distinction between the faithful watchman (messenger) (Ezek 33:1-5, 7, 9) and the unfaithful watchman (Ezek 33:6, 8). The enemy seeks to destroy the people and if a prophet of God in his self-induced blindness failed to warn the people of such wickedness, he was deemed unfaithful and held accountable of spiritual manslaughter and guilty of the blood of the people (Ezek 33:2-9; cf. Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; Hosea 9:8). If he failed to fulfill his commission, due to his disobedience, he would be subject to physical death himself (cf. Ezek 33:6; Matt 28:14; Acts 12:19). Isaiah compared Israel’s leaders to blind watchmen who lacked the ability to see the dangers to Israel, much less lead the people to repentance (Isa 56:10; Micah 7:4).

Those exiled recognized their sin and iniquity and God’s command for them was to repent as it is today (Ezek 33:11; cf. Deut 30:15-20). The importance of the watchman in his loneliness was to continue to warn the people of their sin even if they refused to take heed. This was stressed once again by Ezekiel who had faithfully fulfilled his duty. He warned them of their coming judgment (cf. Ezek 3:16-21).

THOUGHT: An unfaithful watchman is to be held accountable for spiritual manslaughter.

PRAYER: Lord, grant Thy watchmen faithfulness and courage to issue all warnings.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

DANIEL 2:32-39

REVELATION 19:10-21

*“The remnant were
slain with the sword.”*

THE WORLD EMPIRES

“This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.” (Dan 2:32-34)

God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a dream (Dan 2:31-35) which he had forgotten, and He gave Daniel the dream and the knowledge to interpret it as the coming world empires. Daniel informed the king that Babylon would be replaced by an inferior kingdom (Dan 2:39). God used Babylon to chastise His people Israel, but He is in control of history (Dan 2:20-22) and He protects Israel.

History has proven the head of gold of Daniel’s day to be King Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon (606-539 BC, dates from Willmington). The breast and arms of silver were the dual empires of the Medes and Persians (Medo-Persia, 539-331 BC). The belly and thighs of brass were the Greek Empire (331-323 BC) of Alexander the Great. The two legs of iron represented the Roman Empire, said to be divided into East and West by Diocletian in AD 300. The Roman Empire is of the least value as the metals of the statue decreased in value from gold, silver, brass to iron mixed with clay, and they also diminished in splendour and glory. The feet were of iron and clay.

During the dreadful final half of the Great Tribulation (Rev 13:5), it will finally be crushed by the Rock (Dan 2:34-44), that is Jesus Christ, at the battle of Armageddon. This will be the destruction of the Gentile armies gathered together against Israel (Rev 16:16; 19:19-21). Then comes the greatest Kingdom on earth, the Messianic Kingdom (Millennial Kingdom) which will be established at the return of Jesus Christ (Dan 2:44-45) and spreads throughout the earth.

THOUGHT: Our God is the great Controller of world events.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray for Thy people Israel.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

DANIEL 3:13-23

DANIEL 3:24-30

*“... delivered his servants
that trusted in him.”*

GOD’S DELIVERANCE

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” (Dan 3:17)

King Nebuchadnezzar made a huge golden statue of himself, on the plain of Dura, some 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. At the dedication of the statue, he commanded all political leaders from all the areas under his administration (from near and far) to bow and worship the gold statue. Those who did not prostrate themselves would be cast into a fiery furnace (Dan 3:1-6).

Three young Hebrew friends of Daniel (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were reported by the astrologers as refusing to participate (Dan 3:7-12) as it was a violation of the second of God’s Ten Commandments (Ex 20:4-5). Not to bow down was considered an act of treason punishable by death, but they defied the decree of death knowing of a higher commandment (God’s Law). Several months after the dedication, the king gave them another chance to bow down to his golden statue. In his arrogant pride, thinking he was omnipotent, he said, *“... who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”* (Dan 3:15).

In his anger, the king ordered the three young men to be thrown into the blazing furnace, seven times hotter than normal, that would take their lives so much quicker if God had not intervened (Dan 3:19-23). The flames slew the king’s mightiest men who placed the three in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:22). Not only were the three bound men still alive (Dan 3:24-25a) but another man had joined them in the furnace. The fourth man was the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ (Dan 3:25b). King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the three young faithful servants of God to come out of the fire. Their hair was not even singed, neither did they smell of smoke, nor were their clothes burnt (Dan 3:26-28).

THOUGHT: Will Jesus be with me in my “fire”?

PRAYER: Lord, may I have the courage to trust Thee in all things.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

DANIEL 4:4-27

DANIEL 4:28-37

“Nebuchadnezzar...was driven from men, and did eat grass.”

THE WEAKNESS OF STRENGTH

“Hew down the tree...leave the stump of his... with a band of iron and brass... and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.” (Dan 4:14-15)

King Nebuchadnezzar's second dream again could not be interpreted by the magicians, even though he revealed it to them. So he called again for Daniel (Dan 4:4-9). On this occasion, he addressed Daniel by his Babylonian name (Dan 1:7). The king's dream was about two men and a towering tree (towering strength), so large it dominated the entire earth (Dan 4:1-37). The tall tree is often a symbol of towering strength. It provides abundant food for all, shade for humans, animals and birds, is a source of fuel, is aesthetically pleasing, and provides raw materials for some buildings.

In his dream, the king saw a messenger come down from heaven, commanding the tree to be cut down, leaving only a stump (Dan 4:10-14). A band of iron and brass was to be placed around the stump to preserve the life of the cut-off portion of the tree in the ground. This would allow for recovery and growth again if the king repented. If he did not repent, the king would be cut off from human society, exposed to the elements, lose his mind and become like a wild animal for seven years (Dan 4:15, 16). God's statement of intent would come to pass that he may then acknowledge God's sovereignty (Dan 4:17).

Belteshazzar (Daniel) interpreted the dream (Dan 4:19-24) and pleaded with the king to repent of his pride but he persisted (Dan 4:25-27) and his punishment came to pass (Dan 4:28-30).

THOUGHT: (Read Romans 12:3.)

PRAYER: Lord, keep me humble in Thy sight.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

MALACHI 3:16-18

EXODUS 19:1-8

*“then ye shall be a peculiar treasure
unto me above all people.”*

THE LORD’S SPIRITUAL TREASURE

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.” (Mal 3:17-18)

Malachi 3:1-15 deals with Israel’s privileged position and God’s devotion to the descendants of Jacob. Malachi also deals with Israel’s transgressions and God’s future promises. The destruction of Esau’s descendants is recorded in Malachi 1:3-4. The priests rebelled as they despised God’s holy name (Mal 1:6, 11, 14b), offered polluted sacrifices (Mal 1:7-10; 12-14a) and perverted God’s Word causing many to sin (Mal 2:7-9). God rebuked them and warned the priests and their descendants that if they did not repent, they would be punished (Mal 2:1-3).

God also called the people to repent (Mal 3:6-7) as they were unfaithful to each other (Mal 2:10), divorced their wives (Mal 2:13-16), and married pagan wives (Mal 2:11-12). They claimed that evil was good (Mal 2:17) and were sorcerers, adulterers, liars, cheaters, oppressors, and unjust people (Mal 3:5). They also slandered God (Mal 3:13-15) and robbed God of His tithes (Mal 3:8-12).

Malachi referred to two Prophets: John the Baptizer who introduced Jesus Christ’s First Coming (Mal 3:1a), and Elijah who will introduce Jesus Christ’s Second Coming (Mal 4:5-6). God always has a remnant people. Amidst Israel’s spiritual decline, it was a remnant drawn together by obedience unto Him. Jesus will bring with Him a “*scroll of remembrance,*” and record the names of those who love and fear Him. God listened to their worship and will bring them safely through the Tribulation when the wicked are judged and the remnant is made His special treasure (Mal 3:16-18).

THOUGHT: Fear the Lord and become His treasured possession.

PRAYER: Lord, may I fear Thee.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

LUKE 1:20

LUKE 1:57-64

*“... and his tongue loosed,
and he spake, and praised God.”*

A STILLED TONGUE

*“And, behold, thou shalt be dumb,
and not able to speak, until the day
that these things shall be performed,
because thou believest not my
words, which shall be fulfilled in
their season.”* (Luke 1:20)

The Archangel Gabriel gave Zachariah, the husband of Elizabeth, an amazing proclamation regarding the birth of their son John. Elizabeth was from the lineage of Aaron and in her old age was barren (Luke 1:7). Zachariah was a godly priest and prepared the burnt incense on the altar of incense in the Temple as the people prayed outside (Luke 1:8-10). Zachariah was shocked when he saw the Archangel Gabriel standing at the right side of the altar (Luke 1:11-12). The Archangel Gabriel then announced to Zachariah that Elizabeth would bear his son (Luke 1:13-17).

Gabriel declared that their son would be called John (Luke 1:13-14), and that he would be a Nazarite priest (Luke 1:15), and would be a forerunner to the Messiah (Luke 1:16-17). Zachariah found all that was revealed hard to believe (Luke 1:18) and was rebuked (Luke 1:19-20). Gabriel declared that Zachariah would be unable to speak until their child was born. As Zachariah left the Temple he was unable to pronounce the priestly blessing for the waiting crowd (Luke 1:21-22). As promised, Elizabeth, who was barren, became pregnant, causing great rejoicing in the household (Luke 1:23-25).

Elizabeth gave birth (Luke 1:57) and there was much rejoicing. On the eighth day, the circumcision was performed (Luke 1:59) when the child was named. Those gathered called the child Zachariah after the father, but Elizabeth said it was John. Zachariah wrote, *“His name is John”* (Luke 1:63), then his tongue was loosed and he praised God (Luke 1:64).

THOUGHT: Zachariah’s tongue was stilled because of his unbelief.
PRAYER: Lord, forgive me for my unbelief.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 21

PSALM 16:8-11

ACTS 2:23-28

*“for he is on my right hand,
that I should not be moved.”*

RELIANCE ON THE FATHER

“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” (Ps 16:8)

Psalm 16 is a Messianic Psalm and Willmington spoke of Psalm 16:8 as Jesus' reliance upon His Father. Spurgeon identified the subject of Psalm 16: “To our astonishment we find that the Spirit speaketh here by prophecy in the name and person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is he who by the Spirit here saith, ‘*The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage!*’ He was the ‘*man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,*’ he was ‘*despised and rejected of men,*’ he had not where to lay his head, he was often subject to hunger and thirst; he had few friends, and those proved faithless in the time of his extremity: how could he speak thus? All this is so much the more encouraging for us, because if this most sorrowful of men was nevertheless able to feel an inward calm, a sweet content, then it must be possible for us to do so whose lot is not so bitter. We are not sent to make atonement for sin, and hence our sorrows are few compared with our Lord's.”

Matthew Henry said, “These verses must certainly be applied to Christ...That he should suffer and die. This is implied here when he says (v. 8), *I shall not be moved*; he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him.”

Jesus Christ set the Father before Him continually, knowing that during His sufferings the Father strengthened, guided, and upheld Him. Through Jesus Christ's reliance on His Father, true believers are redeemed through His blood (Col 1:14; Heb 9:12; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

THOUGHT: “The worldling forgets God, the sinner dishonors him, the atheist denies him, but the Christian lives in him.” (Spurgeon)

PRAYER: Lord, may I be reliant on Thee.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

PSALM 16:8-11

ACTS 2:25-28

*“Therefore did my heart
rejoice, and my tongue was glad.”*

A GLAD HEART

*“Therefore my heart is glad, and my
glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall
rest in hope.”* (Ps 16:9)

The Psalmist continually realized the presence of God and rejoiced in God during his trials in the face of death, having a matchless sense of security and joy, as did the Saviour. Even though Jesus Christ had a destined appointment with death, nothing could persuade Him against it, as the Father’s continual divine support was with Him. God’s divine power was also with Him during His suffering as well as during His dying for the sins of His people.

The Messiah was filled with the Holy Spirit (Isa 42:1). Consequently, He dwelt confidently in His suffering, *“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law”* (Isa 42:4). In Matthew 12:18-20, Matthew identified the *“servant”* in Isaiah 42:1-9 as Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Jesus Christ established a just order, brought justice to the Gentiles and perfectly carried out the Father’s will (John 10:18, 14:31), that people everywhere may believe in the Holy One of Israel. As the Servant, Jesus Christ was the instrument by which the new *“covenant”* (extending salvation to the Gentiles) was effected (cf. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:25-28; Heb 8:6-13).

The Psalmist and the Messiah could rejoice in their sufferings because God, who justifieth, was near to them, as the Word of God says, *“He is near that justifieth me”* (Isa 50:8).

As the Psalmist David and the Messiah had the hope of the resurrection, so is the resurrection the Christians’ hope in which they can rejoice (Rom 8:23-24).

THOUGHT: Faith and obedience in the Living and True God brings gladness to the inner man.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Jesus who persisted although He knew of the suffering that He was to go through.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

PSALM 16:8-11

ACTS 2:27-28

*“neither wilt thou suffer thine
Holy One to see corruption.”*

A RESURRECTION PROMISE

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (Ps 16:10)

Both the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul saw Psalm 16:10 as a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ by God the Father (cf. Acts 2:27-28; 13:35). Tyndale’s Concise Bible Commentary said, “Using the language of hyperbole to express his resurrection hope for faithful believers, David predicted what would literally be fulfilled in the life of Christ (Ps 16:10); for Jesus, God’s ‘Holy One,’ underwent no bodily decay in the grave (cf. Acts 13:35).”

The Lord Jesus Christ declared His confidence that God would not forsake or abandon Him by allowing His soul to remain in the grave. He did not expect to be delivered from the suffering of death and the grave, but He did expect to be delivered from the dominion of both death and the grave. After death, the grave in which He was placed could not hold Him. The power that raised the Messiah from the grave is the same power that will raise true believers from the grave. This is a great encouragement of the promised resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-24).

The glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ illustrates the power of God (Eph 1:19-20) and as it promises the resurrection of true believers, so it encourages them to live steadfast lives as Christians (1 Cor 15:58). The Apostle Peter preached that Jesus Christ is a historic person (Acts 2:22), that He was crucified and rose from the dead (Acts 2:23-24), that all of this was prophesied (Acts 2:25-35), and all who turn to Him and believe in Him, confessing and repenting of their sins will be forgiven of their sins and given the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38).

THOUGHT: The emphasis of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that He experienced no corruption of flesh (His body did not decay), despite His sufferings and death.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for the “Glorious Resurrection” of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and for my future glorious resurrection.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

PSALM 16:11

REVELATION 11:15

*“and he shall reign
for ever and ever.”*

REIGNING WITH THE FATHER

*“Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
in thy presence is fulness of joy; at
thy right hand there are pleasures
for evermore.”* (Ps 16:11)

The Word of God says, *“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him”* (Rom 6:9). As the Saviour is alive and death has no more dominion over Him, so should all believers live in that resurrection power unto eternal life which is everlasting in duration. As true believers have a new life from the time of salvation, they should desire to live in the reality of that new life (Rom 6:4, 8-10) by serving God instead of serving sin (Rom 6:11-14; cf. Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10).

Jesus Christ, the first born from the dead, said to His disciples on the night that He was betrayed, *“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also”* (John 14:19). He said that the world that hated Him would no more see Him but the disciples would because they were spiritually alive, and the Holy Spirit would glorify Christ to them (John 16:14).

The Only Begotten Son of God was recompensed abundantly for His sufferings with the fullness of the joy set before Him. When He gave up the Spirit, He was received into the presence of God to sit at His right hand, to occupy a place of the most excellent blessings (Ps 16:11). This is the place where the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in glory and intercedes for the redeemed (Rom 8:34).

Although Jesus Christ intercedes from heaven His Kingdom is at hand (Rev 11:15). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 19:16), and He will rule with the Father for ever and ever (Rev 19:11).

THOUGHT: The death of believers does not disrupt fellowship with God.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the eternal reign of Jesus Christ with Thee and for my inheritance of reigning with Jesus Christ a thousand years.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

MARK 4:10-12

MARK 4:14-20

*“Such as hear the word,
and receive it, and bring forth fruit.”*

THE HEART THAT YIELDS

“...Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.” (Mark 4:11)

Jesus Christ spoke in parables that many would not understand (Isa 6:9, 10; 43:8; Jer 5:21; Matt 13:14; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Rom 11:8). This parable (Matt 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15) is the most well known parable of Jesus Christ and it speaks about the heart condition of man and his reception of God's Word. The parable of the “Mystery of the Kingdom of God” is both given and also interpreted by Jesus Christ Himself for His disciples.

Some seeds fell by the roadside (which left the seeds exposed and easily trampled and the birds came and devoured them, Mark 4:4). This ground represents a hardened heart that had some type of emotional experience (Mark 4:15). The second soil was a shallow rock-based soil which had no depth or moisture and as there was little hope of growth, the seed withered (Mark 4:5-6). This represents a shallow heart (Mark 4:16) which flees when there is persecution. The third soil was thorn-infested and the thorns choked out the good seed and yielded no fruit (Mark 4:7). This represents a person whose faith is choked out by the cares (busyness) and pleasures of the world (materialism) which is too luring (Mark 4:18-19).

The final soil was fertile and the seed germinated and bore much fruit (Mark 4:8). This fertile soil is the person who receives the Word with honesty, sincerity and understanding of heart and who will bear much fruit.

THOUGHT: Is my heart “good ground” for the “seed” of God's Word?

PRAYER: Lord, may my heart yield unto Thee in obedience as I read Thy Word.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

MATTHEW 13:47-50

EPHESIANS 1:9-10

*“...gather together in
one all things in Christ.”*

THE GATHERING OF THE SAINTS (1)

“So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.” (Matt 13:49)

The parable of the good and bad fish or parable of the dragnet (Matt 13:47-50) is a Kingdom parable. Jesus Christ spoke the parable to His disciples (Matt 13:36) who were knowledgeable about fishing. When the net was full, the catch was sorted. The good fish were kept, but the bad fish were cast away. Likewise, the unrighteous will be cast into hell.

God’s Word teaches that Satan and the unsaved will suffer eternal conscious torment (Matt 25:46; Rev 14:9-11; 20:10, 15). The righteous truly born-again Bible-believing Christian living a testimony pleasing unto God will be with the Lord. On the contrary, the unrighteous who have rejected Jesus Christ will suffer the torment of hell. All fish came in the dragnet, but the bad were cast away.

The “Day of the Lord” arose because of disobedience to God. It is a day when the world will be brought back under His rule (Amos 5:18-20; Joel 2:31). Jesus Christ was elevated to God’s right hand for the final preparation of that rule (Ps 110:1; Acts 2:34-35). Victory over evil was promised through conflict between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent (Gen 3:15). This curse was the pattern set for all future conflicts between humankind and God (1 John 3:10, 11; Gal 4:28-29; Phil 2:5-8).

As the catch of the sea (good and bad fish) are sorted from the fishing net, so will many be associated with the Kingdom who are not true believers. At the coming judgment, their true identity will become known (cf. Matt 13:49-50; Eph 1:9-10).

THOUGHT: At the end of this world, angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be sure of my salvation.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

MATTHEW 25:31-46

EPHESIANS 1:9-10

*“...gather together in
one all things in Christ.”*

THE GATHERING OF THE SAINTS (2)

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” (Matt 25:32)

The judgment of the nations brings to a conclusion our Lord's prophetic discourse. At the end of the Great Tribulation, before ushering in the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus Christ will return (His Second Coming) and separate the sheep from the goats as would a shepherd (Matt 25:31). The separating will be a gathering of *“all the nations”* (Matt 25:32-33), placing the goats (unsaved people) on His left side and the sheep (saved people) on His right hand side.

The sheep will be rewarded with the Father's Kingdom, prepared before the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34), because of their care for the poor and needy (Matt 25:35-40). Showing love toward others proves a love for God (cf. 1 John 4:7-8), but that did not negate the need for salvation (Eph 2:8-9). On the contrary, the goats will be punished in the eternal flames of hell (Matt 25:41), because they did not minister to Jesus Christ (Matt 25:42-43). Their confusion (Matt 25:44) was clarified when Jesus Christ said, because they did not minister to others, they did not minister to Him (Matt 25:45-46). The principle applies to the treatment of Jewish and Gentile believers throughout the ages.

Those alive at the end of the Great Tribulation, having rejected the Messiah, will be destroyed by the Lord, whilst those who are alive at His return and have genuinely confessed Him will enter the Millennial Kingdom. This judgment is distinguished from the Great White Throne of judgment (promised in Rev 20:11-15) at the end of the Millennial Kingdom which is called the second death (Rev 20:14). Those who are judged will be thrown into the lake of fire for eternity if their names are not written in the Book of Life.

THOUGHT: I am saved, but am I serving?

PRAYER: Lord, I pray for those who are not sure of their salvation.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 28

MATTHEW 28:16-20

JOHN 14:16-18

“another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

GOD'S EVER PRESENCE

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth....I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt 28:18, 20)

In the Great Commission, Jesus Christ promised His power and presence to always be with His disciples (Matt 28:16-20; cf. Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8). Although the closing promise was given to the Apostles, it is transmitted to every generation of believers (cf. John 17:20). Jesus Christ promising His presence, guarantees the success of the mission of the Church. Consequently, the empowerment of Jesus Christ to the Church to evangelize the world is available throughout every age, until the Lord returns.

The global task of evangelism is empowered by the precious Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Jesus said, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever”* (John 14:16). The power and presence of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the power and presence of the Spirit are God's absolute certainties of His power and presence continually with believers until the risen Lord both appears and returns.

When Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked Jesus why He was only revealing Himself to them and not the world at large, He answered that He would only reveal Himself to those who in truth would love and obey Him (John 14:23-24). He promised that the Holy Spirit who would abide with them, whom God would send after His departure, would cause them to remember the things He had told them (John 14:25-26). Again, He reminded them of His departure and return (John 14:27-31).

THOUGHT: God dwelt with His people in the Old Testament, and Jesus Christ dwelt with His people until the Holy Spirit was sent to comfort and be ever present with His people.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Thy ever-abiding and constant presence.

MONDAY, MARCH 1

JOHN 12:23-26

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-38

“... that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.”

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24)

The issue dealt with in John 12:24 was how life comes from death, as when a seed is sown in the ground it must first be dead before it can germinate (cf. 1 Cor 15:36). Jesus Christ explained His impending death, and that the long-awaited time has come (John 2:4; 7:6, 30; 13:1; 17:1). His death produces a rich spiritual harvest.

Jesus Christ predicted His death and its results of bringing salvation to the world (John 12:24). Followers of Jesus Christ must die to their own lives to produce the fruit of God's Kingdom. In doing so, they will be richly rewarded in time (John 12:25-26). The principle of death producing life is not only applicable to the Master, but is applicable to His disciples as well (Matt 10:37-39; Mark 8:34-38).

A believer undergoes a spiritual death to self (Rom 6:1-14; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Gal 6:14), having a hatred for the things which are idols in the life, including goals, possessions, and interests (cf. Luke 12:16-21; 18:18-30). The reward for a believer following Jesus Christ (God the Son) in obedience is to have honour with the Father (God the Father). Many of the original servants of Jesus Christ followed Him in death. Tradition declares that many died as martyrs, hence His Word was a prophecy and a promise that was fulfilled. His true disciples who serve and follow Him in humiliation will later follow Him in honour and glory (Rom 8:17, 36-39; 2 Tim 2:11-13).

THOUGHT: (Read Romans 6:11 to 12.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I be dead to sin.

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

PSALM 110:1

MARK 16:19-20

*“he was received
up into heaven.”*

THE ASCENSION TO HEAVEN

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Ps 110:1)

The ascension of Jesus was foretold in the Messianic Psalm (Ps 110:1). After three days, Jesus was resurrected in bodily form from the grave which could not contain Him. He ascended into heaven after forty days. He was to take up His position at the right hand of God, being the place of permanent honor (cf. 1 Kings 2:19; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:13).

The KJV Bible Commentary speaking of *“Until I make thine enemies thy footstool,”* says, “To place the foot upon the neck of a defeated foe was a common practice of Oriental conquerors. The meaning of this language is explained historically in Joshua 10:24. Having completed His atoning work, Jesus Christ ‘...*must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet*’ (1 Cor 15:25). This clause, indeed this whole verse, is fully expounded in 1 Cor 15:24-28 (cf. Matt 19:28; 2 Ti 2:12; Rev 3:21).”

The Apostle Paul referred to 1 Corinthians 15:24 as the termination of the Messianic Kingdom when Jesus Christ will convey His earthly rule to God the Father who will rule for all eternity (cf. Ps 110:1). When Christ ascended to God’s right hand, a period of time began in which God would put *“all his enemies under His feet,”* (1 Cor 15:25, 27, cf. Ps 8:6). This reign lasts until the enemies of Jesus are humbled and subdued, giving Him victory over all His enemies.

In Luke 20:41, the Messiah is claimed to be David’s son (cf. Ps 110:1), affirming His humanity and the Messiah is David’s Lord (Luke 20:42-44) affirming His Deity, through His incarnation (Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-40).

THOUGHT: Jesus gave the Great Commission and ascended bodily to heaven.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Thy bodily ascension into heaven.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3

PSALM 2:7-9

ACTS 13:26-33

*“Thou art my Son, this day
have I begotten thee.”*

THE FIRST BEGOTTEN

“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” (Ps 2:7)

Luke referred to *“this day have I begotten thee”* as the resurrection (Acts 13:29-37; cf. Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; 2 Sam 7:14) as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead that His eternal purpose will continue (cf. Acts 13:14-43).

Throughout history many have rebelled against God and promoted ungodliness (Ps 2:1-4), but God has planned to give all kingdoms on the earth to His Son Jesus Christ (Ps 2:5-9; cf. Heb 1:5-9). Those who honour the Son will be blessed, but those who reject Him will perish (Ps 2:10-12; cf. Joel 3:9-11; Zech 14:2; Rev 6:15-17; 17:14). As God created the heaven and the earth (Gen 1:1), so He can do as He pleases with them (Ps 24:1). God promised that Abraham was the man to become the father of the nation Israel and the ancestor of the promised Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Gen 12-50; Matt 1:1).

God promised through a covenant with Abraham that the Promised Land would belong to him and his descendants through Isaac (Gen 15:7-8), and gave the land to Abram and his descendents in that same day (Gen 15:17-21). God promised him that his seed would come out of Egypt with great substance (Gen 15:12-14). God gave the Promised Land unto His people as an everlasting inheritance (Gen 12:6-7; 10-20; Gen 24:7; 26:3-4; Gen 28:4; Ex 33:1; Deut 34:4; Josh 1:1-6; Ps 105:6-11; cf. Ex 23:20). Even Rahab knew that God had given the children of Israel the Promised Land (Josh 2:8-10).

God’s holiness is the reason for His judgment upon the idolatrous practices, sexual impurity, religious prostitution, polytheism, and pagan sacrificial practices (eg: child sacrifice) of the wicked Canaanites and future evil generations.

THOUGHT: God honours the Messiah who will inherit the whole earth

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks that Jesus Christ is Thy first begotten.

THURSDAY, MARCH 4

ACTS 23:11

ACTS 28:16

*“And when we came
to Rome...Paul...”*

A DESIRE FOR ROME

“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” (Acts 23:11)

Paul’s first missionary journey was with Barnabas (Acts 13:1-14:28). They unfortunately parted company (Acts 15:36-39). The second missionary journey (Acts 15:40-18:22) commenced from Jerusalem with Silas, a prominent member of the Church at Jerusalem and a Roman citizen. Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:17) resulted in him staying at Ephesus for two years teaching at the Bible college (Acts 19:9-10; cf. 2 Tim 2:2). Paul shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God unto them (Acts 20:27). He was warned about returning to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 12) but he did so and the brethren received him gladly.

But the Jews stirred up the people and arrested Paul (Acts 21:27-30). With permission, Paul addressed the crowd. He spoke of his pre-conversion experience (Acts 22:1-5, 20), his conversion experience (Acts 22:6-16), his post-conversion experience (Acts 22:17-19, 21), how God saved him from the Jews although he was *“a Hebrew of the Hebrews”* (Phil 3:5), and how God sent him to the Gentiles. The Roman commander gave the order for Paul to be whipped but withdrew the order when he learnt that Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28).

Paul had intended a missionary journey to Rome (Rom 1:10-15). In the end, he travelled to Rome as a prisoner to receive a fair trial as a Roman citizen (Acts 22: 27-29). During his travels and voyage, he ministered *“unto the furtherance of the gospel”* (Phil 1:12). Imprisoned in Rome, he wrote the epistles of Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

THOUGHT: Paul desired to minister in Rome to the scattered Christians.

PRAYER: Lord, I marvel at Thy work of granting desires which further the Gospel.

FRIDAY, MARCH 5

1 JOHN 5:1-5

GALATIANS 5:22-23

*“the fruit of the Spirit is...
against such there is no law.”*

OVERCOMING BAD HABITS

(1)

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5)

Those who are truly *“born again”* (John 3:3, 5, 7, 1 Pet 1:23) will believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Only Begotten Son (1 John 5:1, 5; cf. John 3:16). Consequently by saving faith, they will love and obey God and overcome, experiencing victory over evil in this world (1 John 5:4-5). The Word of God indicates an assured victory but also implies a continuous battle.

Saved people have prayers answered (1 John 5:14-15) and do not live in continuous sin (1 John 5:18-21) but will *“overcome.”* John used the word *“overcome”* in 1 John 2:13-14 with reference to overcoming the Adversary. In Revelation, he used the word *“overcome”* seven times to describe believers who will receive His blessing (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). He used *“overcome”* to describe the true Christian who are born of God. True believers are overcomers.

Saving faith in Christ makes believers true children of God who can be assured of victory over the world, wicked works of the flesh and lawlessness (Gal 5:16-21). It is not possible to overcome lawlessness by following the law, as the flesh is at war with the Spirit, leaving a person helpless (1 John 5:17) as the law arouses sinful desires (cf. Rom 7:1-25). True believers have *“crucified”* the desires of the sinful nature (1 John 5:24; cf. 1 John 2:20; Rom 6:6). The ungodly fruit of the flesh can only be avoided by *“walking in the Spirit.”* Paul listed the *“fruit of the Spirit”* in Galatians 5:22-23.

THOUGHT: True Christians are overcomers.

PRAYER: Lord, may I truly know Thy love, power and wisdom which can overcome my bad habits and addictions.

SATURDAY, MARCH 6

ROMANS 8:1-8

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

“And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.”

OVERCOMING BAD HABITS (2)

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit...they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Rom 8:4-6)

The Apostle Paul declared that those who are dominated by the sinful nature think of sinful things, while those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. To be controlled by the sinful mind is death, but to be controlled by the Holy Spirit brings life and peace.

Romans 8 is the climax of “Sanctification” (cf. Rom 6-8) with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit being the focus as the Spirit overcomes the flesh, allowing a fruitful Christian life. The believer is under no condemnation as good works cannot be done in the old nature (Rom 8:1-4). As a result, Christians are to stand fast in Christian liberty as Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Law of Moses and has set them free and they are not to be entangled by the yoke of bondage (Gal 5:1). Paul did not say that true believers are sinless or perfect.

When a person is adopted by God, he is controlled by the Holy Spirit which led him to eternal life (Rom 8:5-13). The Holy Spirit also assures us of salvation and, as God’s adopted children, we have the right to call Him “*Abba, Father*” (Rom 8:14-16).

The Apostle Paul considered life as a “Spiritual Olympics,” seeking to win the prize of God’s approval (1 Cor 9:24-27). He cautioned the Corinthian Christians to guard themselves against any sin that might disqualify them.

THOUGHT: An interest constantly in carnal things (bad habits/addictions) is a symptom of spiritual death, but a Christ-centered mind brings spiritual life.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Thy Spirit living in me.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 7

ROMANS 6:1-14

1 TIMOTHY 4:7-12

*"but godliness is profitable
unto all things."*

OVERCOMING BAD HABITS

(3)

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom 6:12-14)

One of the Adversary's greatest lies is to deceive Christians into believing that they do not have power over sin. God is more powerful than anything that seeks to control us. This is contrary to the world's teachings which provide excuses from responsibility, eg: sin is hereditary or environmental, sin is caused by circumstances, etc. In Romans 6:1, the Apostle Paul refutes in the strongest possible terms the false teaching that we can sin more so that grace may abound (Rom 3:5-8; 6:2-23).

As believers have died with Christ, they also have the assurance of new and eternal life through His resurrection (Rom 6:4, 8-10). Consequently they should desire the reality of that new life and serve God instead of serving sin (Rom 6:11-14; cf. Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10).

Cultivating good habits involves refusing profane and old wives fables (1 Tim 4:7-8). As with physical exercise, godly exercise requires determination and discipline. As a result, the Apostle Paul cautioned us not to be detoured by profitless trivia. God's people would be much healthier and stronger spiritually if they cultivate godly habits such as reading God's Word, praying and giving of their time, tithes, talents to Him and keeping their eyes on the spiritual prize.

THOUGHT: Godliness comes at a price as does physical exercise, but overcoming bad habits by godly spiritual exercise is paramount as it is eternal.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to cultivate good habits and become more Christ-like, repenting daily, not blaming the environment or other people for my sin.

MONDAY, MARCH 8

ROMANS 11:11-25

ROMANS 11:26-36

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written.”

TEMPORARILY SET ASIDE

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” (Rom 11:25)

Israel was created and chosen by God to safeguard His preserved truth and to prepare the way for Jesus Christ’s Coming. God delivered the Scriptures to the world through Israel (Rom 3:1-2), and He gave to the world the Saviour through Israel (Rom 9:4-5). To God’s chosen people He gave a Land to fulfil His purposes. The Apostle Paul in Romans 11 speaks about the future restoration of Israel (Rom 11:1-10, 11b-24).

Moses called the leaders and the entire nation Israel to ratify the Covenant with God. Regardless of the marvellous miracles of God as He delivered them from Egypt, there was a judicial blinding, bringing about curses that include destruction and suffering (Deut 29:22-28). God required obedience to Himself, commanding the children of Israel not to bow down to nor serve the gods of their enemies (Ex 20:1-6), but to destroy them (Ex 23:24). Obedience will bring a future restoration that is assured (Rom 11:11a, 26-36). Isaiah predicted that the Deliverer would accomplish Israel’s restoration (Isa 59:20), and that Israel would be restored through the promised covenant (Rom 11:27) because God would keep His covenant with Israel (Isa 59:21).

The Apostle Paul explained God’s plan for the Jews and Gentiles as two olive trees (Rom 11-12). The Gentiles (wild branches) are like branches from a *“wild olive tree”* (Rom 11:17) that have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree. When all of the Gentiles predestined for salvation (Rom 11:25) have been ingrafted into the tree of Israel, *“all Israel will be saved”* (Rom 11:26). This is as God has promised (cf. Isa 29:17-24; 59:20-21; Jer 31:31-34).

THOUGHT: God promised that obedience would be rewarded (Ex 23:25).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Israel will be restored.

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

ROMANS 16:25-27

ROMANS 1:16-17

*“to the Jew first,
and also to the Greek.”*

A MYSTERY HIDDEN FOR AGES

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” (Rom 16:25)

The key verse of the Book of Romans is: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Rom 1:16). The Apostle Paul was clothed in the authority of the One that sent him to teach and to bear a good testimony of life. The Messiah was prophesied through the prophets in the Old Testament and proclaimed in the New Testament.

Although the mystery had been hidden for ages, it was being made manifest, and was declared unto the Gentile nations. This meant that the Gentiles would come to the Lord in large numbers and be on equal terms with believing Jews in God’s plan. This was fulfilling the prophecies of Genesis 12:3: *“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,”* and Genesis 22:18: *“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”* And it was surely evidenced at Pentecost (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-47).

Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His reputation (veiled His glory), and came to be a sacrifice for the sin of humanity (Phil 2:6-8). Salvation saves from wrath to come: *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him”* (Rom 5:9). Salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Gentile) results in children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom 8:16-17a). Believers are *“free from the law of sin and death”* (Rom 8:1-2).

THOUGHT: The uniting of the Jew and Gentile unto salvation into one body is the mystery hidden for ages.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for revealing Thy marvellous plan of salvation.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-9

JAMES 1:5-8

*“ If any of you lack wisdom,
let him ask of God.”*

HIDDEN WISDOM

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” (1 Cor 2:7)

God’s Word draws a clear distinction between intelligence and wisdom. Having great intellectual capabilities without obeying His Word and applying them to make decisions in life and so making wrong moral choices in life is foolish. There is therefore a criteria for godly wisdom as distinguished from worldly wisdom.

Speaking of worldly wisdom, the Word of God says: *“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness”* (1 Cor 3:19). And 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*

Solomon asked for wisdom, and according to God’s purpose He graciously gave him both wisdom and wealth (2 Sam 3:1-15). Both the king and his kingdom were amazingly peaceful and productive when wisdom was exercised (cf. Prov 3:13). To the contrary, things became stressful and unsettled when wisdom was ignored (cf. 2 Sam 3:12; 4:24-25; 11:1-25).

The first problem that flawed the Church at Corinth was human philosophy (1 Cor 1-2). They had become captivated by pagan philosophies of their day. This is also common today with those who harmonize Genesis 1 and 2 with evolutionary theories. Another Corinthian pagan problem is human wisdom (“Modern Psychology”) which has made enormous inroads into the Church. It has redefined spiritual problems into non-biblical issues and has convinced many that the Bible is inadequate to deal with such problems.

THOUGHT: True wisdom comes from God and is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Thy Word can make me wise.

THURSDAY, MARCH 11

1 CORINTHIANS 2:12-16

PROVERBS 3:13-18

*“Happy is the man
that findeth wisdom.”*

BLESSED DISCERNMENT

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Cor 2:12)

Discernment is the ability to discern or interpret with accuracy events or the true nature of people that others are not able to perceive. Discernment is an aspect of wisdom that enables a person to see behind the facades that mask the truth. It allows a person to understand and see a clear way through the many options that he faces. Discernment cuts through the confusion and distractions of life.

The devil is the “father of lies.” God is the “Father of all Truth” and He gives discernment to those who know Him personally and who seek after wisdom. In a person’s natural state (1 Cor 2:14), without the Holy Spirit’s help, such wisdom and discernment are not attainable. It is not possible for the natural person to understand God’s truth (Acts 8:31). To such a person the truth is “foolishness” (1 Cor 2:14; cf. Acts 17:18, 32; 26:24), but to the spirit-filled person (1 Cor 2:15) these things are understood (1 Cor 2:15; cf. 2 Tim 2:15), as they are controlled by the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:16, 25).

The only way the Corinthian Christians could have discernment and wisdom was by the Holy Spirit who knows and reveals the deep things of God. Nothing can compare with godly wisdom, it is a possession more precious than silver and gold. Wisdom and discernment bring happiness (Prov 3:13-15) and give security in sleep at night (Prov 3:21-24). Wisdom and discernment prevent a person from being tripped over by lies and deceptions of the Adversary (Prov 4:12) and from the dangers that threaten lives (Prov 9:11).

THOUGHT: (Read Proverbs 3:13.)

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the discernment that I need.

FRIDAY, MARCH 12

1 PETER 1:13-23

HEBREWS 9:11-15

*“The blood of Christ...
purge your conscience.”*

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

“...ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1 Pet 1:18-19)

Peter reminded his readers of their salvation experience, the transforming of lives that were empty and meaningless and that the source of salvation is God the Father (1 Pet 1:1-2). Also that their guarantee of salvation, its permanence and power and assurance that believers will safely arrive in heaven is the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:3-5). The true believer is promised the joy of salvation even in the midst of trials, as trials increase the believer's faith in God and love for Him (1 Pet 1:6-9). The Old Testament prophets knew that all the prophecies of the Messiah would be fulfilled (1 Pet 1:10-12).

The response to salvation ought to be that believers be self-controlled in their conduct (manner of life), having a “reverent fear,” living holy lives before God, and being respectful toward Him (1 Pet 1:13-17). Such should be the Christian's testimony while awaiting the return of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:13-17; cf. Lev 11:44; 19:2; Heb 10:1-18).

Our salvation was not by silver or gold, but was purchased by the precious blood of Jesus on the “Cruel Cross of Calvary.” Jesus is the lifeblood of believers and is the sinless, spotless Lamb (1 Pet 1:19). The term “redeemed” is generally used for the monetary purchase of slaves, but such corruptible resources as “silver and gold” cannot purchase salvation. The cost of human ransom from the slavery of sin (Titus 3:3) was the precious blood of Jesus (cf. Heb 9:14). The blood of Jesus is the precious price of the true believer's redemption.

THOUGHT: The Lord's Supper reminds me of Jesus' suffering and shed blood for me.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for setting me free from being a slave to sin.

SATURDAY, MARCH 13

1 PETER 5:8-11

HEBREWS 5:9

“...made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation.”

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

(1)

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (1 Pet. 5:10)

Peter gave the above benediction which pronounced God’s blessing upon the congregation during their suffering. It is prudent for believers when suffering to contemplate their position in relation to the suffering of Jesus Christ and His learning of obedience. Hebrews 5:8-9 says: *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”*

A Jewish High Priest was required to be chosen by God and was to have compassion (Heb 5:1-4). Jesus Christ fulfilled these requirements as He is the High Priest between God and men (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14), showed great compassion (cf. Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32), and understood our suffering, as He suffered Himself (Heb 5:7-10). In His suffering, He was made perfect and became the eternal source of salvation (Heb 5:8). David predicted Jesus Christ to be an eternal priest like Melchizedek, and God selected Him for the position (Heb 5:5-6, 10; cf. 7; Ps 110:4). The Old Testament priests were symbolic of Jesus Christ (Heb 5-10).

God uses sufferings (Heb 13:20-21) and His Word (2 Tim 3:16-17) to equip and perfect His people for life and service.

THOUGHT: To become our High Priest, Jesus Christ had to experience human weakness and suffering to perfect Him for the role.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be willing to allow sufferings to mould me and prepare me for greater service for Thee.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 14

1 PETER 5:10

HEBREWS 13:8-10

“... the heart be established with grace.”

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

(2)

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (1 Pet 5:10)

Christians should be mindful of being established in the “Altar of Calvary” and not to waver or be carried about with every wind of false doctrine during their suffering. *“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle”* (Heb 13:9-10).

The hearts of Christians are to be fixed firmly and not unsteady (unstable) in their stand for Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul, upon arriving in Athens, heard of the suffering of the brethren at Thessalonica. So he dispatched Timothy to encourage them to greater love and holiness, to establish their hearts for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 3:13). Likewise did James, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (Jas 5:8).

Being established in the Lord can only be accomplished by the truth of God's Word (2 Pet 1:12). Consequently the believer who is firmly established (steadfast) in the truth of God's Word will not be moved by persecution or suffering, or be led away by false doctrine (2 Pet 3:17).

In the Apostle's benediction, his desire was for the suffering brethren to be moved to stability.

THOUGHT: Let our hearts be strengthened with the grace of God and not by religious or humanistic rituals, nor ceremonial foods which have little value.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray that I may be firmly established in Thy grace, focusing on the unchanging salvation in Jesus Christ, and realizing that my home is in heaven.

MONDAY, MARCH 15

1 PETER 5:10

2 TIMOTHY 2:1

“...be strong in the grace
that is in Christ Jesus.”

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

(3)

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (1 Pet 5:10)

The grace of God strengthens a believer by making him stronger during times of suffering. God’s grace is with all true believers no matter what happens.

No one is promised immunity from pain associated with human frailties. But when we see suffering from God’s perspective, it strengthens both faith and hope. When Peter promised to die for Jesus Christ rather than deny Him, he was relying on his own strength. Consequently, he was not strong in the grace that is in the Messiah.

The Apostle Paul said to his beloved spiritual son Timothy, “*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim 2:1). He was reminding him to be empowered in God’s Divine gift of “Grace,” found only in Jesus Christ, not in his own strength.

Such grace is only available through salvation. It is also important for strengthening the believer in daily living. “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*” (Heb 4:16). As Jesus Christ endured all the temptations we endure, our dependence must be on Him to supply all the grace we need (cf. Heb 2:17-18) and be strengthened during our suffering.

THOUGHT: Salvation of the believer is in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Consequently, strength is in unmerited favour from the “*God of all Grace*,” not in the reliance upon a natural ability.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray that I be strengthened during my trial. I give thanks for Thy strengthening grace and suffering grace.

TUESDAY, MARCH 16

1 PETER 5:10

COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

“... continue in the faith grounded and settled.”

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

(4)

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (1 Pet 5:10)

To be settled is to be literally “grounded,” or “fixed on a firm foundation.” The Sermon on the Mount presupposes the believer’s faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Jesus Christ compared the way to the Kingdom or to destruction as two roads, being the broad way and the narrow way (Matt 7:13-14); two trees, being a good tree and a corrupt tree (Matt 7:15-23); two houses, on two foundations by two builders (Matt 7:24, 27). The house that is founded on the rock will withstand the storm, as the foundation determines the ability of a structure to withstand the elements (Matt 7:24-27).

Those who place their trust in the Words of Jesus Christ and practise them are wise and build on a solid foundation (Matt 7:24). To the contrary, those who hear the truth but fail to apply it, build on sand (Matt 7:26; cf. Jas 1:22). Reaction to the storms of life (suffering and trials) will reveal which direction a person is traveling (Matt 7:25, 27), as the winds and rain will not destroy the house built on rock, but will destroy the house built on sand.

The KJV Bible Commentary said, “How lively must this imagery have been to an audience accustomed to the fierceness of an eastern tempest and the suddenness and completeness with which it sweeps everything unsteady before it!”

THOUGHT: Being firmly settled relates to a firm grounding in God’s Word as the wise man who built his house upon the rock. It implies a relationship which overcomes the troubles and persecutions of life.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the grace granted and proper foundation laid to weather the natural storms of life, that Thy Precious and Holy Name be honoured during my afflictions.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17

PSALM 84:11

JAMES 1:16-18

*“Every good gift every perfect
and gift is from above.”*

THE GIVER OF GRACE

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” (Ps 84:11)

God’s divine grace was present in the Garden of Eden when He gave the promise of redemption at the fall of man (Gen 3:15). Our God is *“merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth”* (Ex 34:6). Man can go to Him in prayer as He is gracious, compassionate and just, but His grace must not be taken for granted and must be understood within the Covenant context.

Having gone through the “Valley of Sorrow,” the Psalmist in what is considered as the “Pearl of Psalms” longed to be in the courts of the Lord to find refuge near the altar as even the sparrows and swallows had done (Ps 84:1-4). He delighted to fellowship with the Lord and contemplated His warmth and protection during trouble and joy. Just one day in God’s presence even as a lowly doorkeeper is far better than a thousand days elsewhere (Ps 84:8-12).

The Psalmist also considered the free gift of God’s grace (His unmerited favour), His forgiving mercy (Rom 11:6; Eph 2:5) and His glory and the fact that His promises secure happiness in this temporal existence on earth and in heaven. The Psalmist also pondered the wonderful promise that no good thing would the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly (cf. Ps 34:10; 1 Cor 2:9; 1 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:17). God’s promise of abundant and providential care for the righteous (cf. Ps 24:1) is that God will provide all that is permanently good, not all that man thinks is good.

THOUGHT: As grace comes from God, those who trust in Him must walk blamelessly and uprightly, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth as a prerequisite for receiving His blessing.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thy redemptive mercy and for bestowing Thy unmerited favour on all who truly believe in Thee.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18

2 CORINTHIANS 12:6-10

1 PETER 4:14

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.”

ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor 12:9)

The trial that the Apostle Paul experienced was of a long duration, as on three occasions he begged the Lord to remove the thorn from his flesh. God kept the Apostle Paul from harmful pride by sending him an affliction and his humility was evident as he believed that God was in control and not Satan. The affliction was not removed and the Apostle Paul continued to suffer for the remainder of his life.

Kistemaker said, “Furthermore, after Jesus withstood three temptations of Satan, the devil left him for a while (Luke 4:13) and returned. Paul writes that Satan prevented him again and again from visiting the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:18; consider in addition 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 1:20). He also knew that Satan could appear as an angel of light and use his servant to deceive God’s people (11:14-15).”

An all-sufficient God gave all-sufficient grace for the Apostle Paul to endure his affliction. Finally, the Apostle thanked God for His enduring grace and then he took pleasure in his infirmity for Christ’s sake, because he found that when he was weak then he was strong. The Apostle’s boasting was in his weakness (2 Cor 12:5-10; cf. 5:12; 11:16-33).

God used the Apostle Paul and others (who have been afflicted and have experienced God’s grace by finding contentment) to comfort others in their time of affliction (2 Cor 1:2-7). To suffer for Jesus Christ is to share His past grief (1 Pet 4:13a, 14a, 16a) and to share His future glory (1 Pet 4:13b, 14b, 16b).

THOUGHT: During affliction, I must rely on God’s all-sufficient grace so as to bring about His intended result.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for all who suffer for the true faith, knowing that suffering with Jesus Christ now will mean reigning with Him forever.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19

ROMANS 5:15-17, 20

ACTS 4:33

“... great grace was upon them all.”

ALL-ABUNDANT GRACE

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”
(Rom 5:15)

As a result of Adam’s sin bringing physical and spiritual death (cf. Gen 3:19; Eph 2:1), condemnation and guilt is upon all people. Eternal judgment will come upon all unsaved (Rom 5:15a, 16a, 17a, 18a, 21a). To the contrary, the obedience of Jesus Christ (second Adam) brought righteousness, justification by faith, mercy, grace and life to all who believe in Him (Rom 5:18-21).

Wiersbe observes, “The OT is ‘the book of the generations of Adam’ (Gen 5:1-2) and ends with the word ‘curse’ (Mal 4:6). The NT is ‘the book of the generation of Jesus Christ’ (Matt 1:1) and ends with ‘no more curse’ (Rev 22:3). The paradise of Genesis that Adam lost is restored in Revelation through the cross of Christ.”

Christian acts of giving in Acts 4:32-35 were a result of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:23-31) and the believers’ prayer. The grace of God abundantly rested on the whole community. *“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4:33).

The doctrine the Apostles taught was the “Resurrection of Jesus Christ” which proves that He is the Son of God (Rom 1:4), guaranteeing our salvation (Rom 4:25), promising the resurrection of true believers (1 Cor 15:20-24), and an encouragement for believers to live steadfast Christian lives (1 Cor 15:58).

THOUGHT: Do I believe that God’s grace is all-abundant?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me a teachable spirit to understand Thy abundant grace. And help me to give abundantly.

SATURDAY, MARCH 20

EPHESIANS 1:7

EPHESIANS 3:16

“ ... according to the riches of his glory.”

THE RICHES OF GRACE

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph 1:7)

In Ephesians 1:3-14, the Apostle Paul praised the Triune Godhead (Trinity) for bringing about salvation which was purchased by the Son. Jesus Christ redeemed believers by His precious blood (Eph 1:7-8), and will someday gather believers in His name (Eph 1:9-10).

Believers were chosen unto salvation and sanctification by God in the past, even before the foundation of the world, and given every spiritual and heavenly blessing (Eph 1:1-6). Redemption is deliverance from bondage by means of a price being paid. As a slave was purchased at a market and set free, so have believers been purchased and liberated from slavery of self, sin and Satan. The Word of God says, *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36).

Therefore, believers are redeemed in the present by Jesus Christ, who redeemed them through His precious blood being the ransom paid, which was shed at the Cruel Cross of Calvary (Eph 1:7-8). Salvation is a matter of divine atonement, not human attainment.

By the grace of God believers are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:7); also justified (Rom 5:9); have their conscience purged (Heb 9:14); are forgiven (Col 1:14); cleansed (Rev 7:14); have peace (Col 1:20); and can boldly enter into the Holiest (God's Throne of Grace, Heb 10:19).

THOUGHT: The riches of God's infinite grace (Eph 1:7). The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Eph 1:18). The riches in God's mercy (Eph 2:7). The unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ (Eph 3:8). The riches of His glory (Eph 3:16).

PRAYER: Lord, teach me that I may understand the full extent of Thy love for me.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 21

1 PETER 1:1-2

EPHESIANS 1:5-11

*“Having predestinated us
unto the adoption of children.”*

THE SOURCE OF SALVATION

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” (1 Pet 1:2)

True believers have been chosen by God the Father (1 Pet 1:1, 2a), have been made holy by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:2b), and are cleansed by the blood of the Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:2c).

Speaking of election, Spurgeon said, “Election of God is sovereign. He chooseth as he will. Who shall call him to account? ‘Can I not do as I will with my own?’ is his answer to every caviler. ‘Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?’ is the solemn utterance that silences every one who would impugn the justice of the Most High.” “Whatever may be God’s reason for choosing a man, certainly it is not because of any good thing in that man.”

“As it is sovereign and free, so *election is irreversible*. Having chosen his people, he doth not cast them away nor call back the word that is gone out of his lips, for it is written, ‘He hateth putting away.’ He is of one mind, and who can turn him? Once more, *election is effectual*. For ‘whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them, he also glorified.’ And this *election is personal*, for he calleth out his children one by one by their names. He calleth them even as he leadeth out the stars, and so he bringeth them every one to the Father’s house above.”

Jesus Christ was elect (1 Pet 2:6), and God planned man’s salvation before the creation (Eph 1:5,11), choosing the elect on the basis of His sovereign will.

THOUGHT: “Election is a lesson for the more advanced students. Faith and hope must be learnt, first of all, in the infant class, to which we all must go if we would be wise unto salvation...” (Spurgeon)

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for being the only source of salvation.

MONDAY, MARCH 22

1 PETER 1:3-5

TITUS 3:4-7

“we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

THE GUARANTEE OF SALVATION

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Pet 1:3)

True believers have a blessed future because of the resurrection of Jesus. It is the hope of eternal salvation that is beyond change and is guaranteed by God Himself, with permanence in heaven (1 Pet 1:4) and His mighty power guarantees a safe arrival (1 Pet 1:5).

To be born again (1 Pet 1:23; cf. John 3:3, 5, 7) is to be given new life, and sinners are regenerated when they trust in Jesus (Titus 3:5). *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass”* (1 Pet 1:23-24). In 1 Peter 1:24-25, Peter quoted Isaiah 40:6-8 to show that although God’s glorious unfailing Word is everlasting, unredeemed humanity will fade like a flower that has fallen.

The new birth gives a new and living hope (1 Pet 1:3) and a new nature (2 Pet 1:4) by the Spirit of God (John 3:5-6) and the Word of God (1 Pet 1:23). Consequently those who are born again will live and abide forever.

When a person is regenerated it is because the Holy Spirit has convicted him of sin and spiritually changed the condition of his heart. Although many hear the truth, some are never purified by it, they will not submit to it nor obey it. The Spirit of God convicts the soul of sin and purifies it, granting faith (Acts 15:9), hope (1 John 3:3), the fear of God (Ps 34:9) and the love of Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Jesus also spoke of the regeneration of the nation Israel when He returns (Matt 19:28).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the guarantee of my salvation.

TUESDAY, MARCH 23

1 PETER 1:6-9

JAMES 1:2-4

*“count it all joy when ye fall
into divers temptations.”*

THE JOY OF SALVATION

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” (1 Pet 1:6)

True believers are promised that in the midst of trials joy can be theirs. They should rejoice in their assurance of salvation amid earthly trials and tribulations. Such joyfulness would demonstrate a faith that will bring them praise, glory and honor at the return of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:7).

Those who are truly born again (John 3:3) will believe that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God and will continually experience victory over evil. *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4). After new birth, believers through faith are shielded by God’s power and they have a future inheritance.

God allows Christians to go through trials to purify and strengthen them, and to prove by the testing of faith the eternal quality of the believer (cf. Jas 1:2-3). The testing by fire distinguishes true gold from that which is counterfeit. Likewise, trials distinguish those with a genuine faith from those with a superficial profession. May Christians be encouraged to live more positively, be happier, and offer praise in obedience to God’s Word for we want to hear Jesus Christ say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant”* (Matt 25:23).

After repenting of sin, David prayed to return to a conscious favour with God and not lose his anointing as king saying, *“...take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation”* (Ps 51:12).

THOUGHT: Even though trials cause temporary grief, they cannot lessen the deep abiding joy of salvation nor one’s living hope in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the joy of salvation even during the fiery trials of faith in this transitory life.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24

1 PETER 1:13

TITUS 2:11-15

“Looking for that blessed hope ...”

SPECIAL MANIFESTATIONS OF GRACE

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet 1:13)

1 Peter teaches us about being holy, having a fear (reverence) for God and loving one another. The Holy One exhorts believers to *“be holy,”* as they await the soon return of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:13-17; cf. Lev 11:44; 19:2; Heb 10:1-18). This is an admonition to sanctification as the glorious salvation should cause believers to live with an expectation fixed upon its grace. Holiness is based on God’s holy character (1 Pet 1:14-16). As a result, the future revelation of the grace of Jesus Christ should result in present goodly and godly behaviour which requires both mental and spiritual preparation.

The Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary says, “The primary meaning of ‘holy’ (1:15) is ‘separation.’ Moral purity is an outgrowth of the concept of holiness, for that which is separated unto the Lord must be in conformity to His righteous standards.”

On four occasions the Apostle Peter spoke of the Saviour’s return and the accompanying stage of salvation (1 Pet 1:5, 7, 9, 13). As believers have been saved by grace (Eph 2:8-9), they will experience the grace of Jesus Christ in this life, and can depend on God’s grace moment by moment (1 Peter 1:10). As believers contemplate the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, they are strengthened in faith and hope.

Jesus Christ (the sinless, spotless Lamb of God) paid the price of salvation (1 Pet 1:19). As believers are redeemed by God’s grace they should daily live for Him and look for Him (Titus 2:12-13).

THOUGHT: Special manifestation of God’s grace will be evident at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:13).

PRAYER: Lord, grant me understanding of special manifestations of grace.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-58

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

“We which are alive and remain shall be caught up.”

BEING CAUGHT UP

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” (1 Cor 15:51)

As the first Adam brought about ruin and death (1 Cor 15:21a, 22a), so the second Adam (Jesus Christ) from above, brought about resurrection and deliverance (1 Cor 15:21b, 22b). The mystery of the rapture is when all who are alive when Jesus Christ appears will be caught up to His glory with a glorified body in an instant, and mortality will be changed for immortality. After His crucifixion, Jesus Christ was resurrected from death unto life with a glorified body of flesh and bones (1 Cor 15:20, 23a; cf. Luke 24:30-31, 40-43; John 20:26).

The Apostle Paul rebuked Christians for listening to the lies of unbelievers who deny the resurrection. As Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead and was the firstfruit, so will all believers experience the resurrection at His appearing (1 Cor 15:23b, 51; cf. 1 Thess 3:13; 4:14-18), and their bodies will be incorruptible, not affected by viruses or diseases and will be with the Lord forever (1 Thess 4:17).

When a seed is sown in the ground it must first be dead before it can germinate (cf. John 12:24). Then it brings forth an abundant harvest. When Jesus Christ appears as a thief in the night (1 Thess 5:1-2), He descends from His Father’s House (where a place is being prepared for believers) to receive them to Himself (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:16). His appearing will be in the clouds and when the trump shall sound, the dead in the Lord shall rise first in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16-17), and living believers in the Living and True God will be changed instantly.

THOUGHT: The Archangel Michael described as *“the Great Prince”* (Dan 12:1) will be present at the rapture of the believers (1 Thess 4:16).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the promise of a glorious body.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26

1 CORINTHIANS 15:50

GALATIANS 5:13-21

“... only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.”

FLESH AND BLOOD

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” (1 Cor 15:50)

God promised that flesh and blood, which is corruptible, cannot inherit God’s Kingdom (1 Cor 15:50), and the mystery associated with this promise is that all believers alive at the appearing of Jesus Christ will go to heaven without experiencing death (1 Cor 15:51). Being born of the flesh constitutes a child of Adam, whilst being born of the Spirit constitutes a child of God. The flesh is the sinful nature of man (Gal 5:13) which has been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20).

The believer’s resurrected body will be more glorious than the present one. The new body is superior to the old and the new keeps its personal identity (1 Cor 15:38; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; Phil 3:21). In answer to the second part of the question *“How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”* (1 Cor 15:35), Paul explained that not all Christians will go through the process of death, but all need to be changed. This change is mandatory for the believer to realize the promised blessings. The natural body cannot enter eternity so there was a need for it to give way to the glorified (1 Cor 15:50).

The glorified body being the new body will be raised imperishable (1 Cor 15:42b), raised in glory (1 Cor 15:43b), in power (1 Cor 15:43d), raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44b, 46b, 48b), giving life (1 Cor 15:45b). It will come from heaven (1 Cor 15:47b), and will be raised bearing the likeness of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:49b). Christians have a certainty of eternal salvation beyond change and decay, guaranteed and protected by God (cf. John 10:22-30).

THOUGHT: The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, and never fadeth away (1 Pet 1:4).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the promise of a glorious future.

SATURDAY, MARCH 27

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-58

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

*“Voice of the archangel,
and with the trump of God.”*

THE LAST TRUMPET

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor 15:52)

Referring to the removal of the Church from the earth, Paul used an illustration of a Roman army practice. The last trump of 1 Corinthians 15:52b will signify the fulfillment of this promise. The “first trumpet” signalled an army to break camp and assemble for war (Judges 3:27), whilst the “last trumpet” was the signal to begin to march. The KJV Bible Commentary speaking of 1 Corinthians 15:52 said, “This is not the last trump of Revelation 11:15 but the last trump of 1 Thessalonians 4:16.” The trumpets in Revelation refer to judgments during the tribulation, whereas the trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52b is related to the rapture of the Church.

The trumpet (Hebrew: “shophar”) was commonly made of a ram’s horn and was later made of metal, including silver. In the Old Testament, the trumpet signalled the appearance of God (cf. Ex 19:16). It was used on joyful occasions such as for jubilees (Lev 25:9), for calling assemblies (Num 10:4), in conquest (Josh 6:5), the rallying of an army (Judges 3:27; 6:34) for battle (Judges 7:16), in victory (1 Sam 13:3; cf. 2 Sam 18:16), to call off a pursuit (2 Sam 2:28), in celebration of the Ark (2 Sam 6:15), in perceived victory (2 Sam 15:10), and for getting public attention (2 Sam 20:1). The trumpet was also sounded in times of danger (Ezek 33:3-6; Joel 2:1).

At the appearing of the Messiah in the clouds, the “last trump” in 1 Corinthians 15:52 will signal the removal of the deceased believers from their graves and the catching up of living believers to heaven in their glorified bodies.

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ’s appearing for His saints will be announced from heaven forcefully and dramatically.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to live as a pilgrim on this earth.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 28

ISAIAH 62:1-5

REVELATION 21:1, 2, 9-27

*"And I John saw the holy city,
new Jerusalem ..."*

THE LORD'S DELIGHT

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (My Delight is in Her), and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Isa 62:4)

In the Messianic Kingdom, Israel will be redeemed, vindicated, honored, and protected, by God Himself, but Israel has experienced separation from God because of her sin (Isa 50:1). There is a day coming when Israel as a believing nation will be fully restored as Yahweh's Bride (cf. Isa 54:4-10). Isaiah prophesied Zion's glory and restoration (Isa 60-62) and was desirous to see his prophecy of glory for Israel fulfilled (Isa 62:1). Isaiah prayed as the Messiah's representative for Jerusalem to illuminate the entire earth (Isa 60:1-3) that all the nations may see her light, taking away Israel's shame and giving her a new name.

Isaiah would not rest until he saw the day when Israel's name would be changed from "*Forsaken*," "*Deserted*," or "*Desolate*" to "*Hephzibah*" which means "my delight is in her" and "*Beulah*" which means "married" or "cared for." Jerusalem's new relationship with God is compared to the happiness of a marriage. God Himself was to be her Husband (Isa 62:4, 5, 12).

God was so desirous of restoration that He placed "*watchmen*" on Jerusalem's walls (Isa 62:6). Isaiah was fully confident that Zion's day of salvation would come (Isa 62:11). The Word of God says, "*And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*" (Rev 21:2).

THOUGHT: The Prophet resolved to perform his duty faithfully, and would not hold his peace until he had finished his work.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Israel will be restored to glory and Thy purposes for Jerusalem will be fulfilled.

MONDAY, MARCH 29

HEBREWS 10:35-39

HEBREWS 6:9-12

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work...labour of love.”

THE PROMISE OF HEAVEN

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.” (Heb 10:35)

The author of Hebrews called upon his readers to rekindle the joy they experienced as new believers even when they were persecuted for Jesus Christ. They were called upon to remember that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ allows true believers to boldly petition God at His throne (Heb 10:19-22), and that believers are to be kind one to another (Heb 10:23-25). They were also reminded that for those who continue to deliberately sin after they know the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice to cover their sins (Heb 10:26) but only judgment.

It is recorded that God punished those who rejected the law of Moses (Heb 10:26-28). Likewise God will punish all who reject the Lamb of God (Heb 10:29). Consequently, we are assured of the certainty that God will judge His people. (Heb 10:30-31).

The author of Hebrews also called upon the readers to acknowledge and not forget God's past faithfulness during their sufferings (Heb 10:32-34). They must also remember His permanent faithfulness in whatever the present or future holds (Heb 10:35-39). They were assured that they could depend on His continuous care as the just shall live by faith (cf. Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11). God will richly reward endurance (Heb 6:10-12) that comes with perseverance, with the confidence of eternal inheritance of Heaven.

THOUGHT: In Hebrews 10:19, the author identified himself with true believers who had suffered for Jesus Christ, but in Hebrews 10:39, he separated himself from those who were in danger of going back to the sacrifices of the unbeliever.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for saving me and for granting me the perseverance to remain faithful unto Jesus Christ with the promise of heaven.

TUESDAY, MARCH 30

ISAIAH 65:20-25

JOHN 5:14-15

“Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more.”

THE LORD WILL HEAR

“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” (Isa 65:24)

During Isaiah’s time, the effects of sin ran deep and none called upon the Lord and God consumed them because of their iniquities (Isa 64:7; cf. Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10). Due to the depravity of their sin, they had forgotten God and He turned His face from them. Delitzsch said, “The people were robbed by their sins of all vital strength and energy, like dry leaves which the guilt and punishment springing from sin carried off as a very easy prey.”

In Isaiah 65:12, the rebellious ones because of their perversions of idolatry, witchcraft, and hypocrisy paid for their sins and were destroyed because they did not listen to God. The Word of God says that God does not hear the prayers of sinners (John 9:31; cf. Prov 15:8; 21:27) neither the prayers of the unrepentant (Ps 66:18; Prov 28:9).

In John 5:14, Jesus found the man (whom He had healed earlier) praying in the Temple and told him, *“Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”*

Sin alienates people from God, and creates a distancing from the Lord that prevents a calling on His Name, but the prayer of the righteous will be heard, especially during the Millennium Kingdom. The Millennium Kingdom will be a time when prayers are answered instantly, even before they are spoken (Isa 65:24).

THOUGHT: Are there sins in my life that I need to confess to God?

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Thy forgiveness. Keep me ever obedient to Thee.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

REVELATION 1:17-18

1 CORINTHIANS 15:21-22

*“in Christ shall
all be made alive.”*

HE THAT LIVETH

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Rev 1:18)

Jesus laid His hand upon the shoulder of John and comforted and reassured him as he was fear-stricken, mentioning that He was dead but is alive forever and that He holds the keys of death and the grave (Rev 1:17-18). The Messiah has absolute authority over death (cf. John 5:21-26; 1 Cor 15:54-57; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:12-14).

Some 60 years prior to John's exile on the Isle of Patmos, he walked and communed with Jesus for some three years. He witnessed His ministry, heard His sermons, saw Him betrayed, arrested, and crucified on the “cruel cross.” John rejoiced in His resurrection, and witnessed His glorious ascension.

John was the son of Zebedee and brother of James. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20-24). John was prominent among the Twelve as indicated by his presence with James along with Peter, when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51), at His transfiguration (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28), and with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:37; Mark 14:33). Luke 22:8 records that John and Peter were instructed by Jesus to make the preparations for the Passover.

Jesus lives in heaven where He sits at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56; Eph 1:20) who sits on His glorious throne (Rev 4:2-5). Believers who are with Him are resting from their earthly labours (Rev 14:13), are praising God (Rev 4:10-11), are being comforted (Luke 16:25), are enjoying paradise (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:3-4), are serving the Lord (Rev 7:15), and are waiting for their resurrection bodies (1 Thess 4:14-16).

THOUGHT: *“...in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee that my life is in the hands of a Living God.