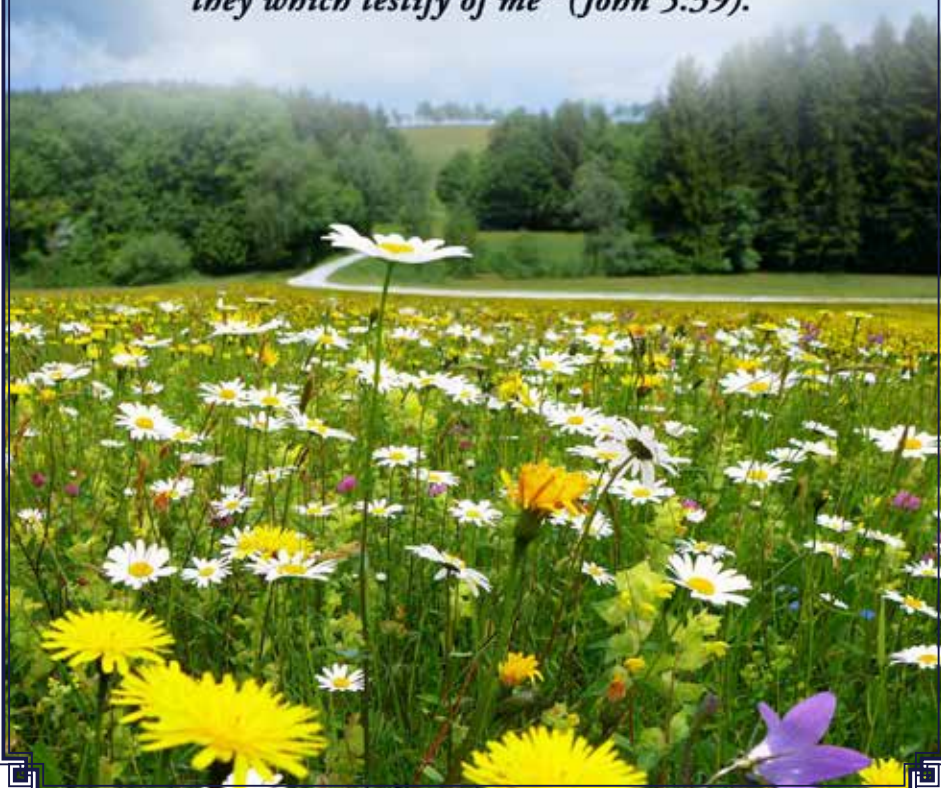


SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 50

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).



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OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

638 Lesson

DIVINE RETRIBUTION ON ABIMELECH AND THE SHECHEMITES

MEMORY VERSE: “Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?” (Job 20:4,5).

TEXT: Judges 9:34-57

Abimelech, son of Gideon by a concubine from Shechem, assumed the throne in Israel by slaughtering his father's seventy sons. He made himself king by eliminating all potential successors to the throne. His inordinate ambition to become king was in sharp contrast to Gideon's self-effacing and humble response when the men of Israel made an unsolicited request for him to be their king after his conquest of the Midianites (Judges 8:22,23). Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon escaped the massacre and cursed Abimelech and the men of Shechem. At first glance, Abimelech might seem like an ideal candidate for leadership as a gifted communicator and skilled tactician. He set his heart on becoming the ruler of the people. He had an unbridled passion to lead and effectively used his oratory to gain support. **“Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, whether it is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal which are three score and ten persons, reign over you or that one reign over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh”** (Judges 9:2).

Though Abimelech ascended the throne by subtlety and wickedness, his reign was short-lived as he was killed in battle after three years of turbulent rule. Today's lesson reveals a fulfilment of the law of sowing and reaping. **“For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap”** (Galatians 6:7). This lesson also shows the destruction of the impenitent because **“Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hands join in hand, he shall not go unpunished”** (Proverbs 16:5).

Question 1: How does the law of sowing and reaping apply to man's actions?

THE DRIVE AND DOMINION OF ABIMELECH (Judges 9:34-41; 2 Samuel 15:1-6; Matthew 18:1-4; 20:20-28; Isaiah 14:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:2,3; 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12).

“And Abimelech rose up and all the people that were with him, by night and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies” (Judges 9:34). Godly leaders are motivated by service and not by inordinate quest for power (Acts 13:36). But Abimelech’s inner drive was to dominate and destroy the men of Shechem whom he used as spring board to the throne. He reigned over Israel for only three years. He had no God in his programme. He fought wars by his personal wisdom and physical strength trusting in his sword, bows and arrows. To him, killing his fellow men, even his blood relations was normal. His war was without mercy; he killed or burned all who stood in his path. To the world and himself, he was great and strong, but to God who has the secret of every life, he was repugnant and condemned against **“...the day of judgment to be punished”** (2 Peter 2:9).

Abimelech had thought like Lucifer, **“...I will exalt my throne above...”** (Isaiah 14:13). Jesus, our Lord, rightly warns believers against pride, unholy ambition and self-exaltation. He says, **“whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”** (Matthew 23:12).

<p>Question 2: Mention four persons in scriptures who exalted themselves and what happened to them?</p>
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The scripture records some persons who exhibited ungodly ambition but suffered for it. Absalom and Adonijah both plotted to overthrow their father, David, from the throne; while Absalom died miserably in the forest, Adonijah died by the sword of Solomon. Athaliah who also usurped the throne of Israel was slain beside the king’s house. Such had been the lot of people who destroy others in order to assume power (Revelation 13:10).

Before the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ had the Christian experience of sanctification, they sought for positions above one another. They were interested in who becomes the greatest among them (Matthew 20:21; Luke

9:46). But the Lord said His principle was different: they must opt for ministering and service if they would be great in the kingdom of God.

Unholy ambition and desire to accomplish goals by shortcut, murder, slander, and ungodly means lead to destruction. Believers must trust in the Lord who **“lifteth up the meek: [and] casteth the wicked down to the ground”** (Psalm 147:6).

Though Abimelech got the throne through treachery and deceit, he soon got paid in his own coins. When Gaal started his rebellion, Zebul apparently did not speak boldly against his actions for fear of being killed. As a faithful officer of Abimelech, he secretly sent information and a war plan for the conquest of Shechem. He remained close to Gaal to ensure he delayed his possible early offensive against Abimelech. Zebul further suggested that the advancing army of Abimelech were shadows of the mountains so as to catch Gaal off guard. When it was clear that Abimelech was near the gate, he mocked him to show the power of his boasting. He suffered defeat and fled back into the city. Abimelech planted his garrison at Arumah. Zebul became bold to expel Gaal and his brethren from the city of Shechem, perhaps to ease the tension and fear in the city over Abimelech’s advancement. Those who conspire in evil soon betray one another.

<p>Question 3: What lessons can we learn from the treachery and deceit of Gaal and Zebul before Abimelech came to conquer Shechem?</p>

THE DEFEAT AND DESTRUCTION OF SHECHEM:
(Judges 9:42-49; Psalm 9:17; Deuteronomy 9:23; 2 Kings 3:25; Jeremiah 17:6; Zephaniahs 2:9)

Abimelech was bent on destroying the Shechemites for slighting him. God used him to punish the Shechemites for their support and conspiracy in the murder of Gideon’s sons. **“And Abimelech fought against the city all that day and he took the city and slew the people that was therein and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt”** (Judges 9:45). Sowing a city with salt was an ancient custom signifying perpetual desolation. Abimelech wanted the desolation of Shechem to be a memorial of his achievements against his enemies.

Question 4: Those who covenant and trust in idols reap disappointment. True or false?

“And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard, that, they entered into a hold of the house of the god Berith” (Judges 9:46). Abimelech’s second attack drove the remnants of the city to the tower of their god, Berith, who could neither deliver itself nor its worshippers from Abimelech’s fire. Entering into the house of the god Berith (meaning god of the covenant), the Shechemites thought that their god would defend them. How mistaken! Gods of this world are dumb idols that cannot deliver. **“They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not... They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them”** (Psalm 115:7,8).

Further exploits of Abimelech took him to the city of Thebez where a woman cast a millstone on his head. Evil pursues sinners and backsliders and sometimes overtakes them when they feel secure, even in times of seeming triumph. People around them sometimes get into trouble because evil men do not perish alone in their iniquity; they involve many more that follow their pernicious way. Believers must beware not to take side with rebels and wicked men but should remember that wickedness may prosper for a while, it will not endure for all times.

THE DEATH AND DOOM OF ABIMELECH (Judges 9:50-57; 5:24-27; 1 Samuel 31:3-6; 2 Samuel 11:17-21; 18:9-17; Luke 23:33,39-43; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:13-15)

Thebez near Shechem had no doubt joined in the rebellion against Abimelech. In his furious fight against Thebez, seeking to set fire on the city tower where the remnants of the people took refuge, he got a deadly millstone on his skull. Such is the abrupt end of godless exploits. Having ruined the Shechemites, it was his turn to pay for the bloody murder of his brethren. He was now face to face with death and hell; yet, he refused to seek God’s mercy because of pride. He told his amour bearer to hasten his death and exit to hell by his sword. **“That men say not of me, A woman slew him”**. Pride is the reason many sinners and backsliders refuse to repent and accept the Lord Jesus as their Lord even at the point of death. God wishes every sinner to be saved, **“For I have no pleasure**

in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezekiel 18:32).

Question 5: Why do sinners and backsliders die in sin even when they have opportunity to repent?

Sinners count men’s applause. They esteem their earthly gains and positions above their eternal soul. The rise and fall of Abimelech teaches the believer and unbeliever alike that sin is dangerous; self-will is destructive; selfless service to humanity is demanded from leaders; the stiff-necked shall be damned; supporters of evil shall be destroyed; scriptural prophecies must be fulfilled as declared; the season of reckoning shall come; and the God of vengeance would repay every evil work.

Sinners need to urgently repent, confess their sins and accept Jesus into their hearts as Lord and Savior. The thief on the right hand of the Lord Jesus at the Cross escaped hell at the point of death while the other proudly sunk down to eternal doom.

Self-examination, confession of sins, restitution and returning to God should preoccupy a dying backslider. The hardness of heart of kings Saul and Abimelech should be avoided. Saints should recommit their lives into the hands of God for sustenance until they draw their final breath (Luke 23:46; 2:25-32). There is no fear in death for the saints because it is a transition to a better, glorious life.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Joshua	22	Ezekiel	9-10
TUE	“	23-24	“	11-12
WED	Judges	1	“	13-14
THUR	“	2-3	“	15-16
FRI	“	4-5	“	17-18
SAT	“	6	“	19-20
SUN	“	7-8	“	21

639 Lesson

ISRAEL'S SIN AND MISERY

MEMORY VERSE: "Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (Judges 10:14).

TEXT: Judges 10:1-18

In the previous chapter, we read of the destruction of Abimelech, a wicked, ambitious and selfish usurper (who disturbed the peace of the people of God) and his Shechemite co-conspirators. After Abimelech, God raised Tola and Jair to judge Israel. The nation was quiet and peaceful for 45 years after which Israel forsook God and went back into their besetting sin of idolatry. Ordinarily, one scarcely thinks that Israel would get into sin again after being delivered from the horrible experiences of torture and servitude they had suffered in the hands of different oppressors due to their backsliding. The question is, why was Israel prone to idol worship? Wilful disobedience to clear instruction from God to wipe out idolatrous nations around them, failure of previous leaders and parents to teach their children the way of the Lord as commanded by Moses and the sedative power of prosperity and worldliness in a time of quietness and peace are the reasons they often fell into idol worship.

Question 1: Why was Israel in recurring backsliding?

Israel, an unconquerable nation and a terror to the heathen, went into sin and reaped oppression, misery and servitude. Had their God travelled, slept, been weakened or overpowered by His enemies? Not at all, for **"...he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep"** (Psalm 121:4). It was their iniquity that made God to forsake them. The consequence of sin is always the same for everyone the world over.

THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN ISRAEL'S FORTUNES:
(Judges 10:1-5; 8:33,34; Joshua 24:14,15,31; 2 Kings 18:1-7; Proverbs 29:2)

In our text, we see an account of two judges in Israel during whose leadership the spiritual condition of the people or

their relationship with God was not mentioned. Only their personal achievements were recorded. Nevertheless, the quietness and peace that prevailed during their regimes suggested that these judges were good administrators. Commendable biblical leadership is not measured by physical achievements, but the degree of the people's relationship with God. Even though no details were given concerning Tola's regime, one can easily deduce that he was a good mediator and administrator. His ability to calm down and neutralize the bitterness that Abimelech caused in Israel suggested he was a good leader.

Question 2: Why should leaders make themselves accessible to the people they lead?

Again Tola's example of staying close to the people, **"a man from Issachar, and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim"**, a city almost at the center of the nation, teaches us the need for leaders to make themselves accessible to the people so as to fully identify with them and know how best to minister to their needs. Similarly, Jair's regime provided peace and rest for the nation of Israel. But nothing remarkable or significant was recorded of him, except that he appointed his thirty sons to rule with him for a period of 22 years. This is a challenge for Christian parents to emulate, in bringing up their children in the way of the Lord.

Israel as a nation had witnessed a number of leaders whose actions either paved way for their fortunes or brought woes and calamities to them. In the leadership of God's people, it is not personal achievements or the number of years in service that matter, but personal commitment to live and work for God, and at the same time inculcate same in the lives of the people. A mighty man of valour like Gideon who did great exploits and delivered Israel from the terrible torture and servitude of the Midianites left no legacy of good relationship with God for the children of Israel. He failed to establish the nation of Israel in God's own way, for after his death, they all went back to idol worship (Judges 8:33,34).

Question 3: Why is it important for leaders to give priority to teaching their followers the whole counsel of God?

We learn the importance of leaders teaching the people the word of God so that after their departure, the people may continue to serve the Lord. This is evident in the life of Joshua who faithfully and diligently charged the people to wholly follow the Lord (Joshua 24:14). This resulted in Israel's long time allegiance and loyalty to God. **"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel"** (Joshua 24:31). As a believer, when your life is over, will people remember you for what you acquired for yourself or for the impact you made in other peoples' lives? What legacy are you leaving for the coming generation? Your decisions and actions today can help determine the destiny of many people tomorrow. A song writer captured it thus:

*Fading away like the stars of the morning
Losing their light in the glorious sun,*

*Thus would we pass from the earth and its toiling,
Only remembered by what we have done.*

REASONS FOR ISRAEL'S OPPRESSION AND MISERY
(Judges 10:6-9; Leviticus 26:1,14-21; Proverbs 26:2; Hebrews 12:15-17; Deuteronomy 28:57-62; Job 15:20)

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him" (Judges 10:6). After the death of Tola and Jair, Israel returned into their besetting sin of idolatry. They forsook God that brought them out of trouble and served other dead gods that brought them into trouble. God had earlier warned His people about the danger of compromise and idol worship. On entering Canaan, the Lord commanded them: **"... drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them"** (Numbers 33:55,56).

Before taking Israel into the land of promise, God had given definite instructions on their policy towards the nations inhabiting the land of Canaan. **“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God”** (Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

Question 4: What lessons can believers learn from Israel's compromise?

First, no matter how clever a believer may be, compromise will lead him/her to backsliding. Second, besetting sins not dealt with will overtake its victim; it's a matter of time. Third, whatever its type, size or shape, sin attracts divine displeasure and judgment. Fourth, the tendency to compromise and backslide is greater in times of peace and pleasure. A church that has been tremendously blessed with spiritual riches for upholding the truth of the word of God on holiness, Christian living, separation from the world and restitution, would be surprised to find the grace of God drying off as soon as her love for ease and material riches increase.

The result of forsaking God was that **“... the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel...”** (Judges 10:7a). It is obvious that there is no eternal security. Our deliverance, dominion and victory over our enemies are hinged on our abiding in the Lord and His will. For, **“...Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you”** (2 Chronicle 15:2). Sin is the chief source of man's miseries as in the case of Israel. They had no reason to be oppressed or go into bondage were it not because of sin. What powerful nations, kings, soothsayers like Balaam or diviners could not do, sin did to Israel (Numbers 23:19-21). The clear revelation of the scriptures is, **“Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities,**

are afflicted" (Psalm 107:17) and that **"....the way of transgressors is hard"** (Proverbs 13:15).

REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION: PATHWAY TO TRUE DELIVERANCE (Judges 10:10-18; Jeremiah 15:21; Luke 15:20; Isaiah 55:7; Luke 19:8,9)

God's judgment against sin as well as His forgiveness and restoration of the penitent to fellowship are unfailing. **"And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim"** (Judges 10:10).

The children of Israel were taking God for granted by their frequent backsliding, oppression and cry for deliverance. God recounted the frequency of their spiritual inconsistencies with Him. With pain, He said, **"Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more"** (Judges 10:11- 13). He directed them to go to their gods to deliver them out of their trouble. Let no believer think that he/she can exit and enter the kingdom of God at will. God will definitely give anyone who refuse to retain Him in his/ her knowledge to a reprobate mind (Romans 1:28). Since this eventually happened to Israel till date and God is a Respector of no one, believers must take heed lest they fall. It is for this reason that Paul, the apostle was careful not to be cast away, despite the fact that he had preached the gospel more than any other apostle.

Meanwhile, God never fails to rescue His own people whenever they call upon Him with a truly penitent heart. **"And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel"** (Judges 10:15,16). God, in His infinite mercy, responds to save people who genuinely repent of

sin. However, He will not excuse those who treat His grace and mercy with disdain through wilful disobedience and sin with the notion that He would always forgive (Romans 6:1-4; Hebrews 10:26).

Question 5: What are the proofs of genuine repentance?

Note that neither mere confession of sin nor nominal membership of a Christian assembly show evidence of genuine repentance or make one a true believer (Acts 8:9-23). Prompt obedience to God's instruction on restitution is a clear evidence of genuine repentance which guarantees total pardon and forgiveness of sin (Luke 19:8,9). A changed heart must be accompanied by change of attitude and behaviour. Like the children of Israel who put away the strange gods from among them, anyone today who decides to forsake sin and put away every idol in his life, and calls upon the name of Lord shall be delivered. **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"** (Isaiah 55:7). **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Roman 10:13).

After Israel's genuine repentance, God raised another judge who defeated the children of Ammon when they gathered against the Israelites. Today, the grace of God is still available to deliver as many as will come to God in genuine and total repentance.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Judges	9	Ezekiel	22
TUE	"	10-11	"	23
WED	"	12-13	"	24-25
THUR	"	14-15	"	26-27
FRI	"	16	"	28-29
SAT	"	17-18	"	30-31
SUN	"	19	"	32

640 Lesson

JEPHTHAH'S REJECTION AND RISE TO LEADERSHIP

MEMORY VERSE: "And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?" (Judges 11:7).

TEXT: Judges 11:1-28

In the concluding section of the previous chapter, we read about the Gileadites who were in search of a military captain to lead them to wage an urgent war against the children of Ammon and subsequently become their political head. The cruel oppression of Israel by the Philistines and the children of Ammon which had its epicenter on the other side Jordan soon became a national devastation as the more zealous Ammonites "... **passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed**" (Judges 10:9). The searchlight of the elders of Gilead now turned on Jephthah who had been driven away from his father's house by his half brothers as a result of his unfortunate origin.

Question 1: Mention some examples of people who were rejected of men but later rose to positions of leadership in Israel and state what you learnt from this.

It is awesome to observe how God locates despised and rejected men in the Bible as well as in contemporary times and lifts them to positions of spectacular usefulness. This was true of great leaders in Israel like Joseph, Moses, David and even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God does this to magnify the power of His grace and to cut off occasions of boasting from men (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

UNWORTHY GENEALOGY AND THE REJECTION OF JEPHTHAH (Judges 11:1-3; Deuteronomy 23:2,3; Psalm 51:5; Genesis 37:27-29; Acts 7:9,25-29,35; Romans 3:23; 5:12)

“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah” (Judges 11:1).

The description of Jephthah in our text started on a glowing note with a celebrated title – mighty man of valour (Judges 11:1). However, this great testimony became spotted with the careless and carnal life of his parents. Sadly, what was not his fault became his disgrace. His mother was a harlot who gave birth to him out of wedlock. This made his father’s sons to despise and send him away from home. From his genealogy, we learn that one, all men were conceived and born as sinners (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; 5:12). Two, there must be a change of our birth history or genealogy for us to become members of the body of Christ. Those who are not born of God will be rejected at the pearly gate of heaven on the last day (John 1:11-13; 3:3,5; Nehemiah 7:64; Revelation 20:15; 21:27). Three, although it was not Jephthah’s fault that his mother was a harlot, it became his shame, disgrace and stigma. How many children today bear the burden of shame, disgrace and stain of their parents’ misadventure? Parents must be careful how they live their lives in order not to jeopardize the future of their children and family. The negative effects of the sinful lives of parents can ruin the physical, social and spiritual lives of their children, the same way the righteous lives of parents can be a blessing to their posterity (Exodus 20:5,6; 1 Samuel 2:31-36; 2 Samuel 21:1-9; 2 Kings 8:19; Matthew 27:24,25). Also, children must not endorse or follow the bad examples of their parents in order to escape God’s wrath (Ezekiel 18:19,20).

UNMERITED GRACE AND THE RISE OF JEPHTHAH:
(Judges 11:4-11; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; 15:9,10; Ephesians 1:11-13; 1 Timothy 1:12-15)

“And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob” (Judges 11:4,5).

The war between the children of Ammon and Israel raged on and became fiercer. The aggressors, the Ammonites were now encamped in Gilead while Israel was encamped

in Mizpeh but without a military captain (Judges 10:9,17). In distress, the Gileadites remembered their rejected kinsman. They must have been led of God to make this decision of choosing Jephthah as their captain and political leader (1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 75:6,7; Romans 13:1). God often permits the humbling of those he designs to exalt. Thus, He used Jephthah's adversity to work out his advancement. His brethren's rejection gave him occasion to exercise and improve his martial genius.

It is instructive to observe the power of patience being displayed by Jephthah. Men of great endowments who are slighted or ill-treated by seemingly powerful men should bear it with meekness and cheerfulness. They should not yield to the temptation of discouragement, rebellion, murmuring and backsliding but allow patience have her perfect work (Psalm 27:13; Hebrews 6:12; James 1:2-4).

Question 2: State some positive attitudes displayed by Israel in seeking solution to their predicament. What lessons are there for seekers of divine favours?

Israel displayed some positive postures as they sought solution to their predicament. One, they were willing to go the way that they had rejected. Two, they did not linger in indecision. Three, they did not prevaricate or evade the real issue but spoke to Jephthah in plain language about their request. Four, their action was guided by humility, earnestness and honesty. They confessed their inability to deliver themselves and made no excuses when Jephthah remonstrated with them over the ill-treatment he suffered in their hands.

Question 3: Highlight some great challenges the response of Jephthah pose to all Christians today?

The prudent, prompt and patriotic response of Jephthah to the request of his brethren poses great challenge to all Christians.

One, he sought to provoke them unto repentance and make them aware of their obligations by making a brief reference to their past hatred. Their answer to his charge proved to him the sincerity of their repentance. This was akin to the strategy Joseph employed to try his brethren

who sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:26-28; 42:7-20). Believers must not be sentimental in their love for the brethren. They should be bold enough to wisely confront a fellow brother or sister when he/she goes the wrong way with the aim of bringing such a person back to the path of truth and rectitude (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 2:11-14; 6:1; Hebrews 10:24).

Two, Jephthah did not allow his past to hinder the bright prospects of the future. He readily forgave and forgot the rejection by his brethren and was prepared to defend them against the Ammonites. The grace for forgiveness is one true indicator of the strength of one's spiritual life. This Christian virtue removes rancour amidst brethren and restores ruined relationships by rebuilding the broken bridges of unity in the church (Psalms 133:1-3). On the contrary, the absence or lack of scriptural forgiveness makes the family or church a breeding ground for all evil works (James 3:14-16).

Three, the level of prudence displayed by Jephthah to bargain wisely for the future is a mild rebuke and also an eye-opener to some believers who are too simple in their regular transactions in the business of life. They believe almost anybody without first making a diligent inquiry and putting precautionary measures in place through careful self-examination and seeking scriptural counsel from mature Christian leaders. The result is that they easily fall prey to financial tricksters and other cunning agents of Satan who seek to destroy their souls.

Jephthah asked questions for clarifications of his doubts which prompted the elders of Gilead to make an oath to support their sincerity (verses 9,10). The oath – **“The LORD be witness between us”** – was an appeal to God's omniscience as the Judge of their sincerity and God's justice as an avenger if afterwards they prove false (Hebrews 6:16-18). However, New Testament believers are not permitted to swear or take an oath to prove their innocence or sincerity in any matter. They should simply but firmly speak or affirm the truth and leave the result in the hands of God (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12; 1 Peter 2:19-23).

Four, Jephthah acknowledged God as the Source of victory (verse 9). Believers should refrain from putting their trust in carnal weapons in the battle against Satan and the world. Like Jephthah, who started his campaign against the Ammonites with prayer, we must commit all our ways unto the Lord and lean not on our own understanding or connections for provision, protection and preservation from every evil work (Proverbs 3:5-7; 2 Timothy 4:18).

Five, the prompt response of Jephthah to the call of God through the elders is highly commendable. He was aware of Israel's distress and that they stood the danger of being overrun by the desperate aggressors who were now encamped in Gilead. Obviously, being convinced of the finger of God in the matter, he did not request for a day or two to think or pray over the matter; he immediately swung into action (verse 11). Because the great commission is urgent, our response to it should be prompt! Souls are dying daily without the hope of eternal life with God. We must be committed to the task of rescuing their souls from the agonizing torments of hell (Proverbs 24:11,12; John 9:4; Acts 16:9,10; Galatians 1:15,16). Six, we see the wonder of God's unmerited grace working effectually in the life of Jephthah as he responded appropriately to divine opportunity. He went with the elders of Gilead and the people made him head and captain over them (verse 11). A careless handling of this opportunity would have made him miss out God's plan for his life.

UNCOMPROMISING GROUNDS IN THE REQUEST OF JEPHTHAH (Judges 11:12-28; Genesis 39:7-9; 1 Kings 21:1-4; Amos 7:12-17; Acts 5:27-29; Jude 3)

Immediately after the people unanimously appointed Jephthah as their head and captain, he settled down to the urgent business of procuring peace for them. He sent messengers to the king of the children of Ammon. By requesting from the king of Ammon the reason for invading the land, Jephthah proved that he had no pleasure in war although he was a mighty man of valour. Also, it was evident that he delighted in equity and is ready to do justice if the aggressor produced genuine grounds for their invasion. Again, Jephthah was being scriptural by this approach (Deuteronomy 20:10-12). As heaven-minded citizens, we must be determined to seek peace and pursue it (Psalm

34:14; 1 Peter 3:11). It is safe and scripturally sound to go to our offenders for settlement than to complain, murmur, simmer with bitterness or plan subtle ways of revenge (Proverbs 25:19; Matthew 18:15; Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14).

The response of the king of the children of Ammon brought to light the insincerity of their demand. Their goal was to attack Israel, spoil and plunder the country and enrich themselves as they had done under Eglon (Judges 3:13,14). To cover the shame of their base intent, they concocted the reason for their invasion thus: “...**because Israel took away [our] land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably**” (verse 13).

<p>Question 4: What do you personally learn from Jephthah's uncompromising stand?</p>
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With great historical accuracy, Jephthah gave a full and satisfactory answer to the king of the children of Ammon, showing that his demand was unjust and unreasonable (verses 14-27). This answer highlights four grounds upon which Jephthah stood uncompromisingly against the pressure from the enemy to forfeit or relinquish Israel's divine inheritance.

One, he made it clear that Israel took neither the land of Moab nor that of the children of Ammon. They were ordered by God not to contend with them in battle for their land (Deuteronomy 2:9,19). Moreover, they did not even force a passage through their land when they were denied the privilege (verses 17,18). Believers must be lovers of peace. All their affairs must be guided by orderliness and discretion. To remain on the side of constant victory, they should only engage in battles that are approved and supported by God (Deuteronomy 1:41-45; 2 Samuel 21:1-6; Psalm 112:5; Matthew 5:9; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Two, that the children of Ammon were not in possession of the land in question, but had lost them to the Amorites from whom Israel had acquired it by right of conquest (verses 19-22; Numbers 21:26; Joshua 13:25). It is our duty to zealously guard what we have so we do not lose it

to the adversary who is tirelessly scheming to steal from us our divine inheritance (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8).

Three, that having received a grant of those lands from the Lord, they were entitled to maintain their right on the same principle that guided the Ammonites in purportedly receiving from their god the territory they now occupied (verses 23,24).

Four, that by a lapse of 300 years of undisputed possession, Israel had now established a prescription right to the occupation of the land (verses 25,26).

As believers, we must be urgent and aggressive in reclaiming our lost inheritance from the usurper before he gains full control over them. Like David, once we realize the loss we have sustained, we must mobilize and pursue the enemy until we recover all. The spiritual insensitivity, indifference and indolence of Ephraim must be avoided (1 Samuel 30:7-10,16-19; Hosea 7:8-10).

<p>Question 5: How best can believers prepare for victory in their battle against Satan, sin and the world?</p>
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The conclusion of Jephthah after a long dialogue with the king of the children of Ammon was: **“Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me...”** (verse 27). This, no doubt, helped to consolidate his foundation of truth and righteousness. It is instructive to note that he first made spiritual preparation for the looming battle by putting on the whole armour of God that will enable him to rout the enemy and his cohorts (Psalm 78:9,10; Proverbs 28:1; Ephesians 6:10-18). Little surprise then that Jephthah was bold in calling the Lord to be the Judge in the case between the Israelites and the children of Ammon (verse 27). We are reminded that victory in the battles of life is given by God and it is a decision guided by His impartial justice (1 Samuel 2:6-8; Proverbs 21:31; Luke 1:52). Those who disobey God and engage the powers of darkness in spiritual warfare will suffer shameful defeats (Deuteronomy 1:41-45; 1 Samuel 4:1-11).

“Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him” (Judges 11:28). The king of the children of Ammon

proudly rejected the truth that was plainly set forth by Jephthah. His heart, like that of Balaam, was so fixed on the anticipated spoils of war that he became impervious to reason. Even today, the voice of wisdom is loud in the streets, showing the plain path that leads to eternal life. All who humble themselves and fall on the Rock shall be broken into pieces and remoulded into the glorious image of the Son of God while those who refuse the passionate plea of love shall be grounded into powder and salted with unquenchable fire in hell. The wisest decision you can make at this moment is to willingly and unreservedly surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and be obedient unto His word for the rest of your life (Proverbs 1:20-33; Mark 9:48,49; Luke 20:17,18).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Judges	20	Ezekiel	33
TUE	"	21	"	34-35
WED	Ruth	1-2	"	36
THUR	"	3-4	"	37-38
FRI	1 Samuel	1-2	"	39
SAT	"	3-4	"	40
SUN	"	5-6	"	41-42

641 Lesson

JEPHTHAH'S VOW AND VICTORY OVER AMMON

MEMORY VERSE: “And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” (Judges 11:30,31).

Text: Judges 11:29-40.

Jephthah was rejected by his brethren on ground of the circumstances of his birth in the previous study. Now in grave distress, they invited him to assist in fighting against the children of Ammon who had threatened to destroy their country. They promised him headship if he would help defeat their enemy. Jephthah accepted the offer and invited Ammon for peaceful resolution in accordance with God’s command (Deuteronomy 20:10-12) but they turned down his offer. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot by his younger daughter (Genesis 19:38). They allied with the Amalekites and Eglon the king of Moab to smite Israel in the time of the Judges and to occupy Jericho, the city of palm trees (Judges 3:13). Israel was subjugated by these enemies for 18 years until they were finally delivered by Jephthah (Judges 10:6-11:33).

In this study, Jephthah, desperate for victory, vows to sacrifice whatever came first to welcome him to God if he defeated the children of Ammon. The essence of that vow, the victory over Ammon and his faithfulness in redeeming the vow form the main issues in this study.

JEPHTHAH’S DESPERATE VOW (Judges 11:29-31; Genesis 28:20-22; Numbers 30:1-16; Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Ecclesiastes 5:4-6; Psalm 132:1,2; Jonah 2:9).

“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me,

when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30,31).

Question 1: What is the meaning of the word 'vow'? State the different types of vow and the possible conditions under which they were made in the Old Testament.

A vow is a solemn promise or pledge to perform an act or pay something. In a religious sense, it is a binding pledge made to God to render what is promised. There are at least three basic forms of vow in the Old Testament, namely, vow of bargain (Genesis 28:20-22); vow of selfless devotion (Numbers 6:1-8), and vow of abstinence (1 Samuel 14:24).

The object of this study is the first type of vow which is suggestive of a promise made to God on condition that He gives a particular blessing to an individual. According to Deuteronomy 23:21-23, vows are of a voluntary nature; but once made, the individual is under obligation to fulfil the vow. The children of Israel made unique vows to God (Leviticus 27:2,3), more especially in cases of illness, danger or under an emotional impulse either in thanksgiving for blessings received or asking favour from God.

The object of a vow usually reveals how desperate an individual is and what is at stake. In this case, the sovereignty of Israel and the glory of God were at stake. Jephthah knew that Israel needed victory over Ammon by all means. If they lost the battle, they would have to lose over half of their land on the east of Jordan in addition to becoming servants to Ammon. Besides, the enemies of God's people would blaspheme His name (Numbers 14:13-16). And, only God could avert this ugly possibility. Therefore, Jephthah knew that only favour from God would secure victory for them. He was then ready to make any personal sacrifice that would attract the needed favour. He valued victory over Ammon above all his possessions. Jephthah's vow was to sacrifice whatever first came out of his house to welcome him. This vow has two possibilities: if the object be a clean animal, it was to be used for a burnt offering; but if a human being, it would be dedicated to the Lord for perpetual service as God would not accept human sacrifice (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5).

Sometimes, believers do not show enough desperation for what they desire from God. Not that God is interested in our paying for the favours we receive, but He wants us to demonstrate commitment. When the disciples confronted the Lord over a demonic case, He bluntly told them that, “... **this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting**” (Matthew 17:21). We must empty ourselves of all conflicting desires so as to exercise enough faith for what we need. This desperation is usually expressed through self discipline, fasting, prayers and vows.

The first recorded vow in the Bible was that of Jacob. “**And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee**” (Genesis 28:20- 22). Jacob was fleeing for his life. Weary and tired, he laid down to sleep and God met him. There he promised to serve God, build a house for Him and pay tithes of all he got if the Lord would bring him safe back to his land. Other vows recorded in the Bible include: Hanna’s vow (1 Samuel 1:11,27,28); Elkanah’s yearly vow (1 Samuel 1:21); David’s vow (Psalm 132:2); Jonah’s vow (Jonah 2:9) and Paul’s vow (Acts 18:18), among others.

Opinions and commentaries are divided over the propriety of Jephthah’s vow. While some consider it as impulsive and irrational, others believe he did it as the Spirit of God led him.

Question 2: What major lesson do we learn from Jephthah’s vow?

God forbids frivolous vows. He does not condone careless, thoughtless promises which people make knowing that they would not commit to redeeming them. True believers should be different and be mindful of and committed to redeeming the vows which they have made to God. “**When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay**” (Ecclesiastes 5:4,5). In the Old Testament, a vow uttered by an adult

remains binding on him while those of married women and minors will have to be validated by their husbands and parents respectively (Numbers 30:1-16). Some people under the weight of their problems make vows which they soon forget as soon as the burdens are lifted. Some promise to serve God the rest of their lives while others promise money and materials which they never redeem. But they err if they think God has equally forgotten; instead, He counts their words against them. Pledges made for church projects and programmes often go unredeemed as people forget that those are promises made to God and not to man.

JEPHTHAH'S VICTORY OVER AMMON (Judges 11:32,33; 1:4; 2:18; 3:10; Exodus 14:13,14,26-31; 23:27; 2 Samuel 5:24,25; 2 Chronicles 20:29; 32:8,21-23)

Question 3: What was the secret of Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites and what is the implication for believers today?

The endowment of the Spirit of God upon Jephthah at his critical moment was the key to their victory over the Ammonites. That the Spirit of God came upon Jephthah demonstrates how God raised deliverers for Israel. The Holy Spirit would come upon His anointed ones, inspire and endue them with power to fight or accomplish the purpose of God in whatever way He chooses to lead them to bring deliverance for His people. There is little the believer in Christ could do without the help of the Holy Spirit but with Him, all things are possible. There are many examples of patriarchs that were filled with the Spirit of God to do exploits for Him. They include: Moses (Numbers 11:17,25); the 70 elders of Israel (Numbers 11:25-28); Othniel (Judges 3:10); Gideon (Judges 6:34); Samson (Judges 14:6,19; 15:14); David (1 Samuel 16:13); Elisha (2 Kings 2:9-15); Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20); Paul, the apostle (Acts 13:1-11); the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 11:2; 61:1; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38).

Question 4: What was the secret of Jephthah's victory over the enemy?

Bearing in mind Jephthah's humble and detestable background, he could only depend on supernatural power for victory. Empowered by the Spirit of God, "**Jephthah**

passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands” (Judges 11:32). Victory had always been the portion of God’s people when they obey His word. Abraham, the father of our faith, demonstrated victory over the confederacy of kings that took Lot captive (Genesis 14:12-16); Moses defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 21:24; Deuteronomy 3:2,3); David conquered all the enemies that rose against him (Psalm 18:37). Also, God raised judges to deliver Israel from oppression whenever they repented and turned to Him (Judges 1:4; 2:18; 3:10). Thus it is with God’s children whenever they live in His will. He has promised us victory over our adversaries. Our Lord Jesus Christ declared that He possesses all power; therefore, He commands us to go in the strength of the Spirit **“and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** (Matthew 28:19). As we serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness, no power on earth or heaven shall be able to conquer us.

<p>Question 5: Recite some Scripture passages that assure believers that the Lord will defend them against the onslaught of the enemy.</p>

JEPHTHAH REDEEMS HIS VOW (Judges 11:34-40; Ecclesiastes 5:4,5; 1 Samuel 1:24-28)

It is instructive to note that Jephthah kept his own part of the bargain. He was not like some who renege on their pledge after they have received the blessing. For Jephthah, it was not a walkover. **“And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter”** (Judges 11:34).

There is considerable controversy as to what Jephthah actually did to his daughter. One view is that he killed her and offered her as a burnt offering to the Lord. Note that the idea of human sacrifice is repulsive and was never approved by God (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Only animals were sacrificed, human beings were dedicated, and then redeemed with money (Exodus 13:12,13; Leviticus 27:1-8). The other more acceptable view is that Jephthah gave his daughter to be a perpetual virgin in the service of

Jehovah. However it is looked at, the needful lesson is that Jephthah was faithful to his vow. **“And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back”** (Judges 11:35). His attitude and action mirror the essence of consecration that is expected of every believer. The psalmist puts it aptly: **“he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not”** (Psalm 15:4). Believers are under divine obligation to keep their vows unto the Lord either in tithes and offering or to assist in the building of God’s house or to offer themselves for God’s service.

Notice should also be taken of the cooperation of Jephthah’s daughter to her father’s vows. She consented to abide by what he had consecrated himself to do (Judges 11:36). Isaac was another example of great humility and meekness. He did not resist his father’s commitment to obey the Lord who had commanded him to offer him up (Genesis 22:9,10).

<p>Question 6: What should be the attitude of believers today to the issue of vows?</p>
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In conclusion, some sundry lessons emerge from Jephthah’s vow: One, we should conscientiously endeavour to pay the vows we have made to God either concerning our tithes, offerings and contributions to building God’s house, etc. or our determination to serve the Lord. Our communication must be “yea, yea; nay, nay” (Matthew 5:37). Jephthah said, **“I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back”**. Two, it is expected of godly children to cheerfully obey their parents in the Lord. They should comply with their parent’s pious resolutions for the honour of God and the upholding of righteous standards in the family even when they appear difficult. Three, we should shun the temptation to renege on our vows after we have received the blessing. Four, we should remain resolute in serving the Lord whatever happens or does not happen. Five, whenever duty calls, we should make ourselves available not minding who appreciates us or not. Jephthah swallowed former reproach and offered to be used of God for the deliverance of Israel. Six, Jephthah drew strength from the Spirit of God to fight the battle

of the Lord. No less can believers depend on the Spirit of God to conquer. Seven, we should humble enough to ascribe glory to God whenever He makes us instruments and agents of conquest for His people.

We must, however, note that nowhere in the New Testament are believers commanded to make vows before they can receive divine favour from God. Only absolute faith in God can produce answers to prayer and not unnecessary vows. Believers should stand on the unfailing promises of God's word for greater exploits (Acts 27:25; Daniel 11:32).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	1 Samuel	7-8	Ezekiel	43-44
TUE	"	9-10	"	45-46
WED	"	11-12	"	47-48
THUR	"	13	Daniel	1-2
FRI	"	14	"	3
SAT	"	15	"	4
SUN	"	16	"	5

642 Lesson

STRIFE BETWEEN EPHRAIM AND GILEAD

MEMORY VERSE: “And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?” (Judges 12:3).

TEXT: Judges 12:1-15

The preceding chapter showed how Jephthah made a vow to God in the midst of a difficult challenge and how God helped him win a decisive victory over the children of Ammon. In this lesson which concludes his ministry, Jephthah’s victory generated negative reaction from the men of Ephraim. They gathered together and went northward for an unprovoked assault on Jephthah, threatening to **“burn down”** his house on the spurious allegation that he did not call them to join in the battle against the children of Ammon.

Question 1: Mention another instance when the Ephraimites challenged leadership with allegation of non-inclusion in warfare against the enemy.

This, however, was not the first time the Ephraimites would react after victory was won: they once chided with Gideon for not calling them to fight against the Midianites (Judges 8:1). At the time of war, they seemed to have perfected the art of feigning ignorance or indifference only to realize later that they should have played a part in securing victory over the enemy. Some carnal, worldly-wise Christians also practice this principle of non-committal to the cause of Christ when their service is needed most only to raise spurious allegations of non-inclusion against the leadership. They fail to understand that God cannot be mocked and whatever a person sows is what he would reap. Christ said specifically, **“my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”** (Revelation 22:12). The Ephraimites tried it with the undiscerning Gideon and got away with it probably

because he did not also invite them. This time, their action precipitated an avoidable inter-tribal conflict which eventually left about forty-two thousand people dead.

EPHRAIMITES' UNPROVOKED AGGRESSION AGAINST JEPHTHAH (Judges 12:1; 8:1; Luke 14:31,32; Matthew 26:52; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:16,17)

“And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire”

(Judges 12:1). There is ample evidence to suggest that the men of Ephraim, in mustering themselves against Jephthah, were serious in their threat. In violation of their natural territorial boundaries, which serve as signposts for peaceful, mutual co-existence, they crossed over to Gilead's territory. This signaled the commencement of hostilities or armed conflicts (Genesis 19:9; 32:6,7). Thus, when the Ephraimites embarked upon this unprovoked aggression, Jephthah had to prepare for war. Had he not invited them, he would have apologized for excluding them like Gideon did. But he thought that they harboured a sinister motive for refusing to participate in warding off the external aggression only to now turn around and provoke inter-tribal strife. This should sound a clear warning to Christians never to engage on such ungodly ventures (Matthew 26:52). We should desist from engaging in any action that smacks of violence, whether it is a so-called peaceful protest, mild demonstration, solidarity rally and so on.

God is never pleased with those who engage in carnal strife underpinned by pride, envy, tribal sentiment, vain glory, retaliation, etc., which are **“works of the flesh”** (Philippians 2:3; 2 Timothy 2:24; Galatians 5:19-21). The underlying motivation for the action of the men of Ephraim against Jephthah stemmed from their envy, pride and an undue desire to share in the glory, triumph and spoils of war from the defeat of the Ammonites.

Question 2: Point out some noticeable flaws in the action of the Ephraimites as revealed in the text?

There are some lessons from the action of the men of Ephraim. There appears to be some elements of divine retribution behind Jephthah's seemingly harsh response to the Ephraimites' attack as they were in the habit of chiding their leaders. The scriptural warning that, **"Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction"** (Proverbs 16:18), could not be more apt than in the case of the men of Ephraim. They had arrogated to themselves the position of chief tribe either because their late leader, Joshua, was from that tribe or because they had gained prominence among other tribes (Joshua 17:14- 18). Thus, their pride reared its ugly head on a number of occasions. The same spirit of overarching self-estimation was the problem of the Pharisees when our Lord's fame began to outshine theirs with multitudes thronging His meetings. For envy, they looked down on His public ministry, blasphemed Him and made several attempts to kill Him (Matthew 12:14; Mark 3:6; 11:18; 14:1). The men of Ephraim were more poised to ignite tribal sentiments and inter-tribal conflict with their fellow countrymen than unite with other tribes to repel external aggression. Their threat, **"...we will burn thine house upon thee with fire"** is akin to that of their heathen neighbors and the ancient Sodomites (Judges 14:15; 15:6; Genesis 19:4). Thus, it could be said that they were guilty of copying heathen savage lifestyles instead of studying to obey the commandments of God contained in their laws (Leviticus 18:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:29,30; 2 Timothy 3:15). God commands His children not to **"learn"** the way of the heathen (Jeremiah 10 : 2). The Ephraimites were hypocritical in their claims because they had earlier declined to assist in the war.

UNMITIGATED RETRIBUTION FOR THE EPHRAIMITES' EXCESS (Judges 12:4; Romans 13:1-8; 1 Peter 2:13,14; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13)

"Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites" (Judges 12:4). Jephthah gathered the men of Gilead for battle against the Ephraimites. He must have acted in self-defence since he was at the risk of losing his

life and property. He had thought that having conquered enemies of the nation, there would be internal peace. But alas, there were dissidents within. Perhaps, if Jephthah had tried to pacify the Ephraimites considering the threat to his life, family and leadership, their anger might have assuaged (Proverbs 15:1; Judges 8:1-3).

Jephthah's reaction to the threat of the Ephraimites is not an excuse for present-day Christians to fight in similar circumstances. One, battles in the Old Testament dispensation were literal against humans but in the New Testament, we engage in spiritual warfare against the devil and his cohorts. Two, New Testament believers stand on a higher moral platform of grace through Christ's death and resurrection. Three, Christ is our perfect Example in Christian conduct and practice. **"...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"** (1 Peter 2:20,21,23). Four, internal strife and rancor always open up avenues for the enemy's attack as **"...the house divided against itself shall not stand"** (Matthew 12:25). We should be **"slow to anger"** and know when to give **"a soft answer"** in readiness to **"seek peace and ensue it"** because **"anger resides in the bosom of fools"** (Proverbs 16:32; 15:1; 1 Peter 3:11; Ecclesiastes 7:9). The New Testament clearly warns that, **"...the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient..."** even in the face of undue provocation (2 Timothy 2:24-26; Luke 9:51-56; 1 Peter 3:11).

Christian leaders and workers should note that no one had ever been able to please all classes of men while serving the Lord. Even our Lord, **"...who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil..."** ended up having more foes than friends and was often called names, accused of blasphemy and using the power of Beelzebub to effect healings (Acts 10:38; John 9:16; Luke 11:15; Matthew 10:25).

<p>Question 3: What is the responsibility of believers today in relation to their leaders?</p>

The Scripture instructs us to “...**know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves**” (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13). But the men of Ephraim not only despised their leader, they mustered forces and went on assault against him. And as if these were not enough, they consummated it by taunting Jephthah and his tribesmen as fugitives, which was contrary to the word of God (Romans 13:1,2).

The outcome of the war was defeat and killing of forty-two thousand Ephraimites (verse 5-7). The once boastful Ephraimites, now defeated in battle and their once arrogant tribal identity decimated, they resorted to lying and denying their identity in order to preserve their lives. But that lie, instead of salvaging them, tended to expose and imperil their souls at the “**passage of Jordan**” where they failed pronunciation test of the word “**Shibboleth**”. The Ephraimites would say: “**Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it.**”

<p>Question 4: What does the encounter between the Ephraimites and the Gileadites at the passage of Jordan teach believers?</p>
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Christians of all times and climes are enjoined to consistently speak the truth at all seasons no matter the odds, as only the truth can save (Matthew 5:37). Also, we should note that, as the Gileadites knew a little secret about the Ephraimites’ weak point, which thing the Ephraimites themselves did not know, and subsequently used to test and ensnare them, the same way the devil may know a thing or two about our weak point and often use same to ensnare us (2 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10). Therefore, we need to “**lay aside every weight and sin that doth so easily beset us**” and “**put on the whole armour of God**”, part of which is the belt of “**truth**”, so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Hebrews 12:1; Ephesians 6:11,14).

There are some instances in the Bible where latent character traits imperceptibly resurfaced to betray verbal denials. One, Peter’s denial of his Galilean origin was later exposed by his native ascent (Matthew 26:69-73). Two, Jacob’s

denial of his identity before his father was later betrayed by his voice (Genesis 27:18-23). Three, king Saul's initial disguise before the witch of Endor later became uncovered by his unguarded emotions (1 Samuel 28:8-12).

JEPHTHAH'S DEATH AND HIS SUCCESSORS (Judges 12:7-15; Luke 8:14; Hebrews 11:1,2,32)

“And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died... And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem... judged Israel seven years. Then died Ibzan and was buried... after him Elon judged Israel... ten years. And Elon the Zebulonite died...” (Judges 12:7-15).

<p>Question 5: Point out some lessons believers should learn from the life and death of Jephthah's successors?</p>

After the strife with Ephraim, Jephthah lived and judged Israel six years. Though his life was characterized by strife, a period of tranquility ensued and continued after his demise. A marked period of peace and prosperity followed in Israel. There is a time of war and peace, tears and joy, storm and calm. Christians should not lose faith in God, no matter life's situation. Soon, days of tears and sorrow will give way to joy and laughter; famine and poverty to fullness and prosperity; darkness and difficulty to light and abundance (Psalm 126:5,6). We should endeavour to live as those who would one day die (Hebrews 9:27). Knowing that we all would stand before God after death to give account of our life on earth, we should not live our days carelessly but wisely (2 Corinthians 5:10). The consciousness of what good works we would be remembered for after we are gone should gear us up in active spiritual service for the Lord. Available records of Jephthah's successors reveal some things. One, Ibzan the Bethlehemite who judged Israel for seven years immediately after was busy with the issue of marriage of his sixty children. He had given birth to many children with the heavy responsibility of catering for them before he became judge. All he achieved, worthy of mention in Scripture, apart from maintaining peace in Israel, was sending thirty daughters out in exchange for thirty wives for his thirty sons. What a life of outright compromise of “unequal yoke” in marriage for his children contrary to God's word (Judges 12:9; Joshua 23:11-23). Believers and Christian leaders need to

be discrete in limiting child-bearing to the number they can cater for very well and still be able to discharge their God-given responsibility towards lost sinners. The cares of this life immobilizes the believer from effective service. Two, Elon the Zebulonite who judged Israel for ten years had zero record of achievement. Three, Abdon, the Pirathonite stepped in to judge Israel for eight years. His was a life of extravagance, amusement and amassing of wealth and filthy lucre, of **“forty sons and thirty nephews that rode on threescore and ten ass colts”** (verse 14), and these to the detriment of military and civilian exploits.

Thus, Jephthah’s successors merely existed without vision or passion for great service for God’s glory (Isaiah 64 :7; Daniel 11:32). This should not be our lot as Christians. We need to respond to Christ’s prompting to lift up our eyes **“and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest”**; being fully assured that **“...they that know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits”** and **“... he that reapeth, receiveth wages and gathereth (souls) unto life eternal”** (Daniel 11:32; John 4:35-38). And when the Lord of the harvest shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory to receive everlasting crowns and rewards.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Samuel	17	Daniel	6
TUE	“	18-19	“	7
WED	“	20	“	8
THUR	“	21-22	“	9
FRI	“	23-24	“	10
SAT	“	25	Hosea	11-12
SUN	“	26-27	“	34

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

643 Lesson

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE

MEMORY VERSE: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The text focuses on Paul’s famous discourse on love. It is the continuation of his teaching on the gifts of the Spirit which had been dealt with in the previous chapter. In the present chapter, he enlightens the Corinthians on how best to manifest the gifts in an environment of love for the edification of the body of Christ. In the Corinthian church, the emphasis was on spiritual gifts, which though good, was at the expense of the **“more excellent way”** (1 Corinthians 12:31). And Paul sensing the urgency and need for love among God’s people, wrote to correct their misplaced priority. Spiritual gifts will only be profitable in an atmosphere of love, for they are given in love, received in love and must be exercised in love.

Question 1: What central truth did Paul emphasize in this chapter?

Paul’s emphasis here was to show the pre-eminence of love. Love is greater than all spiritual gifts because without love, gifts are empty. While Paul did not condemn the Corinthians’ earnest desire and quest for spiritual gifts, he made it very clear that the use of God-given gifts would amount to nothing if they did not make love their priority. We all must acknowledge this truth that in whatever we do, selfless love is the priority for every Christian. This love is a clear proof of regeneration and a touchstone of our professed faith in Christ. It is clear from this point that God exalts Christian morals above ministry, Christ-like character above charisma and Christian grace above possession of spiritual gifts. The life of an individual must be transformed and influenced by the love of Christ which, **“is shed abroad in our heart”** before receiving a ministry and spiritual gifts for service. The lesson is very apt as it

applies to every aspect of our Christian life, family, church or social relationship.

THE PRIORITY OF LOVE TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 13:1-3; John 13:35; 15:12,13,17; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10; Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 2:7-10; 3:11-19; 4:7-21; Romans 12:9,10)

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass,... and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Question 2: What kind of love is Paul talking about here and how did Christ exemplify it?

Different words are used for love in Greek (the language used in writing the New Testament). The word translated ‘love’ or ‘charity’ here is not the Greek word *eros* which refers to erotic or sensual love, commonly used when people talk of “falling in love”. It is also different from *philia*, which means affection, friendship, a feeling of warmth towards someone else. Rather, it is *agape*, which is a commitment of the will to cherish and uphold another person. This is the word that is always used for the love of God. **“...God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”** (1 John 4:16). It is a caring, self- sacrificing and an unconditional love which shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. It involves a decision and commitment to treat another person with concern, care, and thoughtfulness and to work for his or her best interest.

In His sacrificial death on the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ is the epitome and embodiment of this kind of love. He is the One who imparts this love in the heart of people who are saved from sin. Saved, believers are enabled to obey Scripture command to **“love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”**, and **“... shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”** (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:30,31; Luke 10:27). As we abide in Christ, this love which is **“shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”** (Romans 5:5)

abounds more and more. It is impossible to love God and our neighbors without the new birth experience.

Question 3: Identify the gifts the Corinthian believers manifest without love in our text.

Paul tells us that love is of more value than our most valuable gifts and laudable deeds in the sight of God. He further exposes the pre-eminence of love by contrasting it with certain gifts that were highly regarded by the Corinthian church and are still highly regarded in many Christian assemblies today. The first is the gift of tongues. The Corinthian brethren valued, admired and enjoyed communication, eloquence and oratory without practical love. Paul reveals to them the emptiness of tongues without thoughtfulness for others' edification (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Secondly, he compares love to two other related gifts – the gifts of prophecy and knowledge – that were admired in the Corinthian church. Convincing prophetic powers and a deep understanding of mysteries without a benevolent and charitable heart are of no value. Love is superior to comprehension of spiritual realities. Obviously, Apostle Paul himself, a man of great prophetic gift and deep understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom, emphasized that possession of all these without practical love is of little value. People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Thirdly, love is also compared with the gift of faith. This has to do with the power to move mountains or do great exploits in the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 13:2). To possess great faith and the ability to accomplish things termed impossible by others is good and commendable; but without love, it profits nothing. Love, therefore, is indispensable.

Finally, the Apostle compares love with almsgiving or philanthropy and sacrificial zeal which may lead a person to give away all he has (1 Corinthians 13:3). In essence, he declares that if our acts of kindness are devoid of love, they will do little good. There are many reasons why people give. Some, like the human rights activists, give up their possessions and sometimes, their lives for the cause of social justice. Some philanthropists give for very selfish reasons, although their deeds may appear generous.

Others give to the poor just to impress people that they are willing to help, but still do not love them. If one gives away all he has but withholds his heart from God, it cannot profit him. The underpinning truth revealed here is that love is the paramount thing that makes life worth living.

THE PROPERTIES OF TRUE LOVE (1 Corinthians 8:1;13:4-7; Galatians 5:22,23; Romans 13:10; Ephesians 4:15,29-32; Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Peter 4:8,9; 2 Peter 1:5-9; Matthew 5:43-48)

Paul enumerates fifteen characteristics of love to show how love acts or looks like in everyday life.

1. It “**suffereth long**” (verse 4). This refers to endurance under provocation. This type of love does not seek revenge, but is slow to anger, endure personal wrongs without retaliation, and bear with others’ imperfections, faults and differences. It “**is kind**” (verse 4). This refers to the quality of goodness and the disposition to be helpful or useful to others. Kindness has been described as patience in action. A kind person is known by his/her eagerness to seek out the needs of others and look for opportunities to meet those needs with no mind of receiving back. He is tender, considerate, forgiving, respectful of others and responds to harsh treatments without grudge (Luke 6:33,35). Kindness motivates others toward positive change, just as God’s goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).
2. It “**envieth not**” (verse 4); it is not jealous of the talents or blessings of others, but rejoices in their prosperity. An envious and jealous person would not want to recognize others, their abilities, contributions, successes, etc. Envy generates unhealthy competition, cravings and conflicts among men (James 4:2).
3. It “**vaunteth not itself**” (verse 4). This means that true love does not brag, boast, parade or advertise itself. It does not seek to be the center of attention. Love allows others to enjoy their moments of success.
4. It “**is not puffed up**” (verse 4). Love is not arrogant or proud; it is humble, realizing that all our possessions come from God undeservedly (1 Corinthians 4:7).

5. Love “**doth not behave itself unseemly**” (verse 5). This refers to love never being rude or not acting unbecomingly and disorderly. Love does not offend unnecessarily. It is good mannered, courteous, polite, sensitive to the feelings of others and always uses tact. It always seeks to treat others with compassion and humility.
6. It “**seeketh not her own**” (verse 5). It is never self-centered or self-seeking, but is genuinely concerned with and places others’ needs and desires above its own (Mark 10:45).
7. Love “**is not easily provoked**” (verse 5). It is not touchy, not easily offended and not hot-tempered or angry. It does not intimidate, threaten or punish in anger.
8. It “**thinketh no evil**” (verse 5). Love keeps no inventory or record of past wrongs. Rather, it responds in a godly way by overlooking and forgiving others.
9. It “**rejoiceth not in iniquity**” (verse 6). It refuses to rejoice in the sin or failures of others. Rather, it intercedes on behalf of the erring ones.
10. It “**rejoiceth in the truth**” (verse 6). True love and truth go together (Ephesians 4:15).

<p>Question 4: How can love cover multitude of sins without condoning sin?</p>

Although love is kind and overlooks the faults of others, it does not compromise the truth or take a soft view of sin. To condone or cover up the sin of others is not love. True love boldly confronts and corrects sin, knowing the destructive consequences of sin.

11. Love “**beareth all things**” (verse 7). This is the quality of love to tolerate, patiently suffer or get along with unfavourable circumstances without complaining, recoiling or getting irritated. The second meaning implies that love does not broadcast the problems, weaknesses, failures and offences of others; rather, it defends the character of the other person as much as possible within the limits of truth. Although love would not lie about others’ weaknesses, it will not

sarcastically expose and castigate them. Love protects.

12. It **“believeth all things”** (verse 7). This does not mean that love is gullible, but that it is not suspicious and doubtful of others’ character and motives.
13. It **“hopeth all things”** (verse 7). Love never loses hope or gives up on any person, however hopeless the situation. It refuses to resign to failure as final, but expects the best possible outcome in all situations. This does not mean a fanatical ignoring of reality, but a strong assurance that, **“what God had promised, he was well able to do”**, because **“...all things worketh together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 4:21; 8:28).
14. Love **“endureth all things”** (verse 7). The word **“endureth”** is a military term meaning to sustain the assault of an enemy, to hold the fort, to stand its ground without giving up or abandoning its post. It has the idea of holding up under trials and in spite of difficulties. It is resilient, not transient. It hangs on even when all hope is gone. One major weakness of most believers is the tendency to defect or decamp when faced with tough or adverse situations. Where there is love, people will not leave the church or run out of their marriage relationships or families because of problems, disagreements or misunderstandings. All these characteristics reveal that love is not just idle talk but actionable and practical.

THE PERMANENCE AND SUPREMACY OF LOVE OVER OTHER GIFTS (1 Corinthians 13 : 8 -13; 14:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8; Colossians 3:1-3; John 13:34,35; Matthew 5:44,45; 1 John 4:7-13,16-21)

After enumerating the properties of love, the Apostle to the Gentiles makes a declaration of the permanence of love: **“Charity never faileth”** (1 Corinthians 13:8a). The enduring quality of love indicates its ability to abide over time. This refers to the tenacity, perseverance, and relentless nature of love that endures whatever situation it comes across in this present life. But the unfailing or unending character of love stresses the eternity of love. This refers ultimately to the love of God as reflected in

creation, redemption and in the future restoration. For “... **whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away**” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). These spiritual gifts of prophecy, tongues, knowledge, etc. are only given for the ministry of leading people to true love in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). The whole essence of Christianity is love; gifts are designed to lead us to love. Love will make us show concern for the soul of sinners by reaching them with the gospel message. Love will make us see men from eternity’s point of view.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). The glorious expectation of all heaven-bound saints is the dawning of the new and eternal day when all the imperfections of life will come to an end. All the gifts we receive here are, at their best, imperfect and give only a faint revelation of God’s mind and might. But the time is coming when the imperfect will give way for the perfect. Then, we shall understand clearly and fully that love transcends time.

Finally, Paul compares love with two other virtues that equally abide in order to show the supremacy of love over them. These are faith and hope. **“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”** (1 Corinthians 13:8).

<p>Question 5: Why did Paul regard love as the greatest of the three abiding virtues?</p>
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Faith, love and hope are often mentioned together in the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8). They are referred to as the cardinal virtues which summarize the whole Christian faith. These virtues will abide until they have brought us to heaven. But in heaven, only love will continue to exist through eternity as the saints behold the Father of love who gave His only begotten Son to die for mankind. Thus, while we desire spiritual gifts for effective service, we must ensure that we “... **follow after charity**”

(1 Corinthians 14:1).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	1 Samuel	28-29	Hosea	5-7
TUE	“	30-31	“	8-9
WED	2 Samuel	1-2	“	10-11
THUR	“	3	“	12-13
FRI	“	4-5	Joel	1-2
SAT	“	6-7	“	3
SUN	“	8-9	Amos	1-2

644 Lesson

PRECEPTS FOR USE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

MEMORY VERSE: “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:1-40

The Corinthian church was as controversial as it was spiritually gifted. The immaturity exhibited by members in the use of spiritual gifts generated confusion and made their worship disorderly and unedifying. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, had to call them to order in this epistle; **“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints”** (1 Corinthians 14:33). The Apostle zealously guarded that which he received from the Lord and passed it unadulterated to the churches. Earlier, he had informed them, **“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you...”** (1 Corinthians 11:23). It is the responsibility of church leaders to take necessary steps to correct any perceived deviation which is not in conformity with the Scripture. They should not fail to take corrective measures when their congregations drift away from the original standard of the word of God for fear of losing membership.

The focus of Apostle Paul in the text is to set out precepts for the proper use of spiritual gifts, especially of prophecy and speaking in unknown tongues. He points out that speaking in an unknown tongue, though scriptural, only profits the speaker: **“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries ...”** (1 Corinthians 14:2). He admonishes believers to rather seek the gift of prophecy which is far superior and better, because: **“he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort”** (1 Corinthians 14:3).

A clear understanding of the use of spiritual gifts is of paramount importance to every believer and all Bible-believing organization. However, spiritual gifts are not sought in a vacuum: those who desire to be partakers of these gifts must be saved, sanctified, separated, Spirit-filled and consecrated to the Lord to utilize them faithfully.

Question 1: What lessons do we learn from Apostle Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church as revealed in our text?

The Apostle Paul started by emphasizing the fact that spiritual gifts should be exercised in love. **“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy”** (1 Corinthians 14:1). In the previous chapter, he had proved that love is rated much higher than any other gift. **“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest is charity”** (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is the most essential ingredient in Christian life and service. Spiritual gifts are necessary for the Church to achieve her full potentials but at the same time, they can be misused if they are exercised without divine love. Believers who possess spiritual gifts need genuine (*agape*) love in order to impart Christ's life, love, healing, and power to others. Any exercise of spiritual gifts must be done in love in order to be acceptable to God. **“Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Romans 13:10). In other words, love must be the governing principle of all spiritual manifestations.

The Corinthian believers seemed to have overestimated the importance of the gift of tongues in relation to other spiritual gifts and this led to confusion in their public worship. He explained that speaking in unknown tongues without interpretation is out of place in corporate worship. He encouraged believers to desire the gift of prophecy above other gifts because that is beneficial to others. In the spirit of love, what is beneficial to others is preferred to what is of benefit to oneself. The believer that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks mysteries which edify only him. On the other hand, the believer who prophesies edifies both he and others. He proceeded to contrast the gift of speaking in an unknown tongue and the gift of prophecy.

PROPHECY AND UNKNOWN TONGUES CONTRASTED

(1 Corinthians 14:1-17; 12:1-10; Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:1-8; 21:8,9; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6)

Prophecy, in a general sense, is a supernatural prediction that something will happen. In this context, it is an inspired, anointed utterance given to the believer by the Holy Spirit to edify, exhort, comfort, counsel, or warn the Church in accordance with the Scriptures. The gift of diverse kinds of tongues manifests by way of utterances in different kinds of languages previously unknown to the speaker. Again, it should be noted that prophecy is not necessarily to foretell future events. Apostle Paul proved that the gift of prophecy is more beneficial than speaking in an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:2-17).

The gift of unknown tongues is contrasted with the gift of prophesy as follows. First, he that speaks in unknown tongues speaks to God; he that prophesies speaks to men. Second, unknown tongues are mysteries unknown to men; prophecy carries a clear message to men. Third, tongues elicit no purposeful action since no comprehensible instruction is passed; prophecy gives understandable instructions that could be acted upon. Fourth, speakers in tongues will appear barbaric to the uninformed but prophecy gives credibility to the speaker. Fifth, while tongues need interpretation in order to be understood, prophecy requires no interpreter.

Question 2: Contrast prophecy with speaking in an unknown tongue.
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“And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?” (1 Corinthians 14:7). There are several lessons from this passage. Ministers of the gospel should use clear and simple words in presenting their messages so that their audience will understand them. Also choristers should be careful so that the melodies of their songs do not overshadow the important message they intend to convey. Parents should give simple understandable instructions to their children if they expect them to act on them. In large gatherings, the technical crew is expected to ensure that the message is clearly transmitted to the entire audience. One could imagine what would have been the

lot of mankind if the way of obtaining salvation is not stated in the Bible in simple language for every sincere seeker to understand.

Question 3: How should ministers present their messages?

THE PLACE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 14:18-25; 2 Corinthians 10:8; John 16:7-14; Acts 8:5-8; Romans 12:6-10; 15:2; Ephesians 4:11-13)

Having spelt out the supremacy and pre-eminence of love in 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle exhorted the believers to earnestly desire spiritual gifts because of its place and importance in the Church. Earlier in chapter twelve, he had explained the manifestations of the Holy Spirit given to and through the believers, stressing that they all are from God and for the benefit of the Church. Gifts generally attest to the authenticity of the gospel as coming from God (1 Corinthians 13:3-5; Acts 13:6-12). Also, the exhortation to believers to desire spiritual gifts points to the fact that they are indispensable in the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts when used properly will not only edify the Church but would lead to the conversion of sinners. As a matter of fact, when Paul came to preach to the Corinthians, he ministered to them under the unction of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). This led to their conversion and subsequent establishment of the Church. It is obvious that he did not speak to them publicly in an unknown tongue.

The tongues' extravagance was dismissed by the Apostle's statement that five words in an understandable language are better than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:19). The Scripture abounds with five-word statements that are capable of edifying the hearers. For instance, **"Ye must be born again"** (John 3:3); **"Behold the Lamb of God"** (John 1:29); **"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners"** (James 4:8); **"Touch not the unclean thing"** (2 Corinthians 6:17); **"Sanctify them through thy truth"** (John 17:17); **"Go, and sin no more"** (John 8:11); **"Lay hold on eternal life"** (1 Timothy 6:12); **"Hold fast till I come"** (Revelation 2:25); **"I am crucified with Christ"** (Galatians 2:20); **"Rejoice in the Lord alway"** (Philippians 4:4); **"Evil communications corrupt good manners"** (1 Corinthians 15:33); **"Speak evil of no man"** (Titus 3:2); **"Wisdom is the**

principal thing" (Proverbs 4:7); **"Bear ye one another's burdens"** (Galatians 6:2); **"Add to your faith virtue"** (2 Peter 1:5); **"The Lord is at hand"** (Philippians 4:5); **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"** (Revelation 22:20); and many more are powerful words which can transform, get us closer to God, keep us steadfast in the faith, help us live lives of continual holiness and eventually take us to heaven instead of speaking 10,000 words in an unknown tongue that do not profit others. The rebuke of the Apostle was a way of curtailing the excesses of speaking in an unknown tongue in the church without interpretation.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit in the Church is to convict and convert sinners, instruct, guide, teach and mature believers, among others. These roles could not be fulfilled just by speaking in unknown tongues. An unbeliever who comes into an assembly where members are speaking in unknown tongues will certainly become confused. This will defeat the purpose of the Holy Spirit for such a person to hear the gospel message and be convicted and saved. The opposite effect is produced if the unbeliever hears the convicting message of the Holy Spirit in a language he or she understands.

Immature, childish use of spirituals gifts in the church creates strife, misunderstanding, disunity, disharmony and disorderliness. Needless to say that such an atmosphere does not serve the purpose of God for giving the gifts to the church.

<p>Question 4: What problem does improper use of spiritual gifts pose in the church?</p>

It is most unfortunate that what Paul the Apostle by the Spirit's leading corrected in the Corinthian church is practised in many so-called Pentecostal and charismatic assemblies in contemporary times. But care should be taken in every Bible-believing church so that members coming in from various backgrounds would not introduce abusive uses of spiritual gifts into the church. This can be achieved through proper teaching of God's word, training of believers before enlisting them into the workforce, effective supervision of newly recruited leaders, and avoiding putting untested and unproved people into leadership positions.

PROCEDURE FOR PROFITABLE USE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 14:26-40; 12:7; Titus 1:5; Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5)

Following his teaching on the use of spiritual gifts, Paul the Apostle gave practical instructions to enforce compliance. He laid down the procedure for exercising spiritual gifts in public worship. This is a commendable approach when handling matters in the church. It behoves true disciples of Christ that we follow standards enshrined in the Holy Scriptures “...**as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount**” (Hebrews 8:5).

Question 5: What lesson do we learn from Paul's approach in handling the controversy in the Corinthian church?

According to the Apostle, the following procedures were to be observed: First, two or at most three are to be allowed to speak in unknown tongue if there is an interpreter. Second, if there were no interpreters, no one should speak in unknown tongue in the church. Third, two or three were to prophesy while others scrutinize to ensure adherence to the Scriptures. Fourth, while one is prophesying and another receives a revelation, one should hold his peace and allow the other to speak. Fifth, prophecy should be one at a time. Sixth, spiritual gifts do not make someone uncontrollable. Seven, women should not usurp authority over men in the church. Above all, he asserts that “**the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.**”

In conclusion, the Apostle made it clear that the instructions he had given to the Corinthians and by extension to all believers in Christ were by divine authority. Whoever therefore objects could not be said to be acting by the Spirit of God, whatever gifts he professes. The Spirit of God cannot contradict Himself. He restated what he posited earlier that the brethren should rather covet the gift of prophecy which is more beneficial to the Church. The great lesson for all is that in the Church of God, all things must be done decently and orderly.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Samuel	10-11	Amos	3-7
TUE	“	12	“	5-6
WED	“	13	“	7-9
THUR	“	14	Obad	1
FRI	“	15	Jonah	1-2
SAT	“	16-17	“	3-4
SUN	“	18	Mich	1-2

645 Lesson

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

MEMORY VERSE: “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 Corinthians 15:52).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

In the previous chapter, Apostle Paul acknowledged the spiritual gifts which God bestowed upon the Corinthian Church. However, he exhorted the church to covet the best gifts which should be exercised in the spirit of love for the edification of the body of Christ.

In this lesson, Paul the apostle deals with the subject of the resurrection of the dead. He establishes the truth of Christ’s resurrection as the first fruit which was confirmed by infallible proofs and authentic witnesses. Refuting the claim of those who deny Christ’s resurrection, he affirms that it is the basis of true believers’ hope of a future resurrection in glory. He expresses the transformation that true believers will experience at resurrection and their final victory over death, sin and Satan. In order to partake of this glorious event, the Apostle exhorts believers to be steadfast, obedient and diligent in God’s service.

Question 1: Why is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead so important to the Christian faith?

The suffering, sacrifice, agony and death of Christ on the Cross for the remission of the sins of the whole world would be of no value without His resurrection. The truth of His prediction to rise the third day after death (John 2:19) and His claim to deity as well as victory over sin, Satan and death and a blissful eternity with God after death would be vain and false without the resurrection of the dead. But Christ resurrected and we shall also rise from the dead.

CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION (1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Acts 2:23,24; 26:22,23; Matthew 16:21; 28:1-10; John 2:19; 20:1-8; Psalm 49:15; 2 Timothy 1:10; Romans 10:9)

Question 2: What are the proofs of Christ's resurrection and the lessons believers can learn from it?

Christ's death, and particularly His resurrection are indispensable truths of Scripture. The four gospel writers gave clear account of these because of their significance to the Christian faith. While it took Christ's vicarious death on the Cross to pay our sin-debt, it took His bodily resurrection to make apparent the seal of God's approval of the redemptive work. The transforming power of the gospel is hinged on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Paul affirms this truth: **"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"** (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

The earliest convincing evidence of His resurrection was the empty tomb (John 20:1-8). After His resurrection, Christ remained on earth for 40 days, appearing and speaking to the apostles and many of His followers of things pertaining to the kingdom of God (John 20:11-18; Luke 24:13-32,34,36-43; John 20:26-31; John 21:1-25; Matthew 28:9,10,16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:6-8; Acts 1:3-11).

There is no salvation from sin outside Christ's death and resurrection. For **"...if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished"** (1 Corinthians 15:17,18). The resurrection of Christ from the dead sets Christianity apart from other religions with its eternal hope and miraculous power of transformation. Christ is **"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"** (Romans 1:4). Today, the living Lord reveals Himself to men and women who believe in Him, an evidence that He is alive. He declares, **"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"** (John 11:25).

IMPLICATIONS OF DENYING THE RESURRECTION (1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Acts 17:30-32; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Acts 23:8; Matthew 16:6; 22:23,34)

Having confirmed the truth of Christ's resurrection, Paul refutes the claim of those in the church at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead. **"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead"** (verse 12). There were some among the Corinthians who thought the resurrection to be an impossibility. Some heretics like Hymenaeus and Philetus also spoke against the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:16-18). Clearly, those who deny the reality of the resurrection of Christ and of the dead deny the Christian faith altogether.

Question 3: From our text, enumerate the logical consequences of denying the resurrection of the dead.

Denial of the resurrection of the dead has grave implications. It would appear that Christ, the God-man is defeated, dead and is still in the grave (verse 13); that the apostles were false witnesses of God (verses 15,16); that the faith of Christians and the labours of ministers of the gospel are all vain (verse 17); that believers who died in Christ like Stephen, James and others are forever lost since the only hope believers have in Christ expires at death (verse 19).

Both the Old and the New Testaments testify of people who were raised to life as proof that the dead shall live again by the power of God. The son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:22), the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32-35), the dead man that touched the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20,21), Jarius' daughter (Matthew 9:18,25; Mark 5:42), dead saints that were seen at the time of Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 27:52,53), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:44) and Dorcas (Acts 9:40) were all raised to life.

The first man, Adam, brought death to all humanity through his wilful disobedience, but the last Adam, Christ, brought life and immortality to all through His obedience. For Christians, the life to come would be comprehensively and incomparably superior to the present one. The resurrection from the dead refers to redemption to fullness of life. We trust that we shall live again, even if we put off "this tabernacle" at the revelation of Jesus Christ, for **"if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"**. We are **"to awake to righteousness"**,

because of this lively hope of resurrection from the dead.

To deny the resurrection is to negate the gospel and open the door to sin and unbridled sensuality. **“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”** (1 Corinthians 15:32). Those who deny the resurrection of Christ are in danger of losing so great a salvation and ultimately incurring the wrath and judgment of God. By their attitude of doubt and unbelief, they regard themselves as unworthy of the ‘Good News’, which is the product of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. To be saved, we must believe the gospel. This requires that we both trust in His death, burial and resurrection and receive the person of Christ as Savior to be saved from sin (Revelation 3:20). **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Romans 10:9,10).

GLORIFICATION AND VICTORY OF TRUE CHRISTIANS AT THE RESURRECTION (1 Corinthians 15:20-58; Luke 20:36; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; John 6:40; 11:25; Acts 24:15; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 John 3:1-3; Revelation 20:4-6)

Christ is the **“first fruits”** of the dead who rose from the grave. Since death came through man, Christ incarnated as a man to make resurrection possible. His resurrection will be followed by that of all believers who received salvation through His sacrifice. This will be a resurrection to life. But all sinners that ever lived shall be resurrected to eternal damnation. Meanwhile, Christ will continue to reign over and conquer all His enemies, the last of which is death.

<p>Question 4: With what body form shall believers inherit the kingdom of God?</p>

Having overcome Satan and death through Christ's resurrection, believers now affirm faith in that victory through observance of water baptism. They are baptized into His death by immersion in water and raised to newness of life. Apart from being the basis of the doctrine of water baptism, Christ's resurrection is the anchor of hope of eternal salvation for believers who suffer persecutions. It is the reason for consecration, sacrificial service and

cleaving to the Lord in spite of the storms that we face. **“And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die”** (1 Corinthians 15:30-32).

Christ's resurrection proves that He is the Son of God (John 10:17,18; Romans 1:4), guarantees the efficacy of His redemptive work (Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:17), validates the truth of the scriptures (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31; Luke 24:44-47), proves the reality of future judgment on the wicked (Acts 17:30,31), engenders the spiritual life of believers (Acts 2:32,33; Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:45), makes available the presence of Christ and His power over sin to every true believer from day to day (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:18-20) and assures believers of their resurrection or translation and future heavenly inheritance when the Lord returns (John 14: 3 ; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Peter 1:3,4).

Believers who doubted Christ's resurrection in the Corinthian church were those who indulged in ungodly association with unbelievers or heretics and had their spiritual senses dulled. No matter how wise a Christian is, unequal yoke with unbelievers will definitely influence his conviction. **“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not...; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”** Unbelief in the resurrection of Christ and of all men is sin, aside erasing borders of holy living. Ignorant believers in Corinth, asked: **“How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”** The Apostle answered this question clearly by alluding to their agrarian life (verses 35-50). The body of the grain sown is not the same as that which will be harvested. **“But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body”** (verse 38). Just like animals and galaxies exist with different body forms, so will the resurrected body be different from the human body. The dead will be **“raised in incorruption”, “glory”, “power”** with a **“spiritual body”, “the image of the heavenly”** which is **“immortality”**. The conclusion is that the natural body cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

To inherit the kingdom of God, we shall be changed! **“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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 Corinthians 15:51,52). This supernatural transformation and change of the natural bodies of believers into celestial, glorious, heavenly bodies will happen at rapture. This is a great mystery the Lord has revealed to His church. With this new body, death is swallowed up in victory because sin which is the messenger, instrument and sting of death is removed (verses 54-56). **“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (verse 57). Note however that this victory comes and can only be obtained through Christ. Victory over sin is so interwoven with the resurrection that to deny one is to deny the other. Prayer of faith in His sacrificial death and resurrection makes the experience of salvation real in the penitent.

<p>Question 5: What encouragement and challenge can believers receive from the truth about the resurrection of the dead?</p>

The dead shall be raised to wear exactly the same celestial body our Lord Christ had when He rose from the dead. There shall be no barrier or obstacle before us **“but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”** All men, without exception, shall rise again; some will rise to glory and honour, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who have received the grace and salvation of God through Christ, and continued faithfully unto death, shall have a resurrection to everlasting glory.

From the foregoing, the hope of resurrection was the reason Paul, the Apostle was unrelenting in preaching the gospel, fighting the good fight of faith even with beasts at Ephesus, enduring afflictions, writing this epistle to nullify falsehood and establishing the truth, answering questions about the resurrection and challenging believers to uncompromising and faithful spiritual service that would be rewarded by the Lord in the end. If anything, erroneous teaching weakens and discourages people to abandon spiritual service since they might be serving in vain. That is why

the Apostle rounds off this exposition on the resurrection of the dead with exhortation to steadfast and enduring service for the Lord. This exhortation is for believers then and now. **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (verse 58).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	2 Samuel	19	Micah	3-4
TUE	“	20-21	“	5-6
WED	“	22	“	7
THUR	“	23	Nahum	1-2
FRI	“	24	“	3
SAT	1 Kings	1	Habak	1-2
SUN	“	2	“	3

646

Lesson

PAUL'S CARE FOR THE SAINTS

MEMORY VERSE: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (1 Corinthians 16:1).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

In the previous chapter, Paul, the apostle explained the full gospel that revolves around Christ's death and resurrection. He used this, especially the resurrection of Christ, to counter false belief of some so-called believers among them who denied the doctrine of resurrection.

In this last chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul sets out to deal with the issue of collection for the saints and prescribed the best way to do it. He promises to pay the brethren a visit at winter and gives directives about the treatment of his co-workers in transit. He exhorts to watchfulness and strength in the faith and commends the visit of some brethren and their supply to his needs. After the salutation of some co-workers, Paul laments the awful state of the enemies of Christ and concludes the epistle with an apostolic benediction.

MANNER AND RULES OF COLLECTION FOR NEEDY SAINTS (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:1,2; 8:1-4,7; Romans 15:25,26)

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (verses 1,2).

At the time of Paul's writing, Christians in Jerusalem and Judea were experiencing hardship because of the famine earlier predicted by Prophet Agabus (Acts 11:27- 30). The order to make contributions for the saints in Jerusalem was earlier given by the apostle to the churches of Galatia. Paul at this point also told the Corinthian church to do likewise. We can learn from the wisdom of the apostle to “...

consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Hebrews 10 : 24). The duties and responsibilities believers have towards one another are here underscored. They are to diligently and attentively consider each other’s trials, difficulties, weaknesses, and to abound in love one to another.

Question 1: What are the practical steps we need to take to alleviate suffering of believers in need?

The welfare of needy believers should be of utmost concern to us. We are not to be selfish. Rather, we are expected to demonstrate Christ-like love and sympathy to suffering and needy brethren. We should strengthen and encourage each other in their trials and in their godly responsibilities. To realize this reciprocal care, we **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”** (Philippians 2:4). Therefore, the heaven-bound believer should not be selfishly engrossed with the care and attention of his concerns or that of his own family, but should show some care and have the welfare of other believers dearest to his heart.

The Apostle gave directives as regards the manner of collection from which we deduce the following:

- (i) the collection is universal – everyone is to make it a duty and responsibility to give for the care of the saints (Exodus 30 :15).
- (ii) It is to be systematic and regular. The contributions are expected to come in every first day of the week.
- (iii) It is to be planned: the brethren are to set aside or save something for that purpose. **“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity...”** (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- (iv) It is according to one’s ability. **“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea”** (Acts 11:29).
- (v) It should be voluntary; **“not grudgingly, or of necessity”**.
- (vi) It should be done willingly, **“for if there be first a**

willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath..." (2 Corinthians 8:12). Every believer is to apportion his or her resources to the collection, not by pathetic appeals and compulsion but of their volition. The brethren have to designate in their own minds the sum of money which they can give.

(vii) It should be done cheerfully "... **for God loveth a cheerful giver**" (2 Corinthians 9:7.)

Question 2: Point out from the Scriptures clear proofs of worship on the first day of the week.

We see the apostle directing the collection to be taken on the first day of the week (Sunday), the day Christians observe as their day of rest and worship. The Apostle's instruction to receive the contributions on the first day of the week gives a foundation for our worship on Sunday contrary to the belief by some sects to keep the Jewish Sabbath as a day of worship. Christians started observing the first day of the week as the day of worship after the resurrection of the Lord. Further proofs of the first day of the week as the day of Christian worship abound in the Scriptures. First, the same order for the collection on the first day of the week was given to all the churches proving that they worshipped on the first day of the week. Second, it was the custom of the early church to gather together on this day to break bread (Acts 20:7). Third, the seal of the Pentecost day on which the church began was on the first day of the week. Fourth, John the beloved through the Spirit of God identified it as the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10).

"And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem" (verse 3). Paul requested that the contribution be reckoned properly and delivered through trusted hands with covering letters. We note from this directive that reckoning and documentation of offerings as well as letters of introduction of brethren in transit are necessary to forestall the risk of bearing losses through false brethren. Church leaders and members will do well to follow this scriptural precept given by the apostle.

MISSION PLANS AND RECEPTION OF FAITHFUL

MINISTERS (1 Corinthians 16:5-12; Acts 20:1-5; 28:11-15)

“Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go” (verses 5,6). The Apostle here outlines his plans to visit the churches in his journey to Macedonia as part of his itinerary. Paul was still at Ephesus and he purposed to visit the brethren at Macedonia and perhaps spend the winter in Corinth. This he did by spending three months (Acts 20:3). We recall that he had a vision to leave Troas for Macedonia where the gospel was greatly needed (Acts 16:9,10). Geographically, Macedonia was not in the direct way from Ephesus to Corinth, yet he purposed to go there first and after visiting the churches, then he would go to Corinth. He had long laboured in these churches and had his heart set to see and stay with them. Like Paul, the heart of the Christian minister must be much towards the people he leads.

Question 3: What do we learn from Paul’s articulation of his itinerary and guidance of the Spirit in his evangelistic missions?

The itinerary of Paul also teaches us that it is important to have a diary of evangelistic programmes according to the will of God. This will spur the believer or Christian worker to be on course and move towards greater success in ministry and life. We should also endeavour to have a contrivance for our own personal business to enhance greater success. As much as other duties of his office allowed him, he was willing to see, stay and check up on the progress of his flock so as to impart a greater benefit on them (2 Corinthians 1:15). His excuse for not seeing them at the present was to assure them that he would not pay a passing or transient visit that would not satisfy them. Therefore, he would not see them now, but another time when he could tarry longer with them. This teaches us that our evangelistic visitation should be planned ahead in prayer and greater intake of the word of God so that our hosts would have great spiritual benefits.

We also see the dependence of the apostle on the will of God. He did not make his plan to the exclusion of God’s

permission knowing that he was His servant and could be led by the Spirit to change plans. We observe this in the Macedonian call when he and his company were still in Troas when the Spirit of God forbade him twice from his intended destinations. We learn here that our plans and purposes must be made with absolute submission to the will of God and His divine providence. We do not have the liberty to carry out our own designs without divine approval; we must do everything under God's power, permission and directive.

Question 4: What should be our attitude in the face of oppositions to the propagation of the gospel?

“But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (verses 8,9).

While in Ephesus, the Lord gave Paul the apostle a grand opportunity to preach and extend the gospel with great success. It was an opportunity for him to bestow more labour as many Ephesians were prepared to receive the gospel from him. There was a great prospect that many more would come into the Kingdom with more labour. For this reason, the apostle determined to stay on and labour for a while in Ephesus.

However, there were adversaries of the gospel which made his stay longer in Ephesus. It is instructive to note that great success in ministry is attended with many adversaries and great opposition. The devil stirs up all rage and fury against the preachers of the gospel where he has been greatly affected, and that should encourage us to stay in our duty posts, though our difficulties may be many and our discouragement great. The adversaries in this case were not secret but open as was Demetrius and his protest group who felt threatened about the loss of their trade through gospel-preaching. Adversaries will always arise when the kingdom of Satan is shaken and ready to scatter. Such opposition is often an indication of the presence of the Spirit of God and a proof that the enemy is stunned and losing out in the battle. Paul did not see the opposition as a reason to leave; it made him to see the need to stay on, help the converts and win more souls. The contemporary soul-winner should never give up the

work or leave the place for the enemy to regain control over his former subjects because of opposition.

MINISTERIAL EXHORTATIONS, SALUTATION AND BENEDICTION (1 Corinthians 16:13-24; Romans 16:1-24; Corinthians 13:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28)

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity” (verses 13,14). The apostle exhorts the Corinthian brethren to four main duties of their faith namely, watchfulness, steadfastness in the faith, courage and love. First, watchfulness is a necessary and daily duty of every Christian. The believer cannot afford to be careless. Therefore, we must watch against all sin, all appearance of sin and all temptations. The Corinthian brethren were in great danger by reason of their many feuds; so, they were to watch against divisions, false doctrines and false teachers. Second, steadfastness in the faith is a great and an indispensable duty of every believer that understands the value of his soul’s salvation. A true believer must not work disorderly. Third, a believer is also exhorted to be strong and courageous. He is to stand his ground and adhere to the revelation of the truth. Fourth, they are also advised to be careful to practice charity in all things as **“charity shall cover the multitude of sins”** (1 Peter 4:8).

The apostle gives particular directives concerning some saints among them. These men and women had always shown care for Paul or supported him through personal accompaniment and physical provision. Stephanas was said to have addicted himself to the ministry of the saints. That means, he so sold himself to it that it became part and parcel of his life and was commended by the apostle. Therefore, such persons deserved to be treated with proper deference and regard in their assemblies. This is a commendable gesture and virtue which should be emulated by contemporary Christians.

Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned among the eminent group of persons deserving honour as well as their house fellowship. The self-devoting love of this couple leaves a mark for Christian couples of today to follow.

Furthermore, the apostle tells them to salute one another with an holy kiss. In the custom of the day, it was an

expression of mutual affection and friendship. Many so-called modern Christians have tried to apply this Scripture to satisfy their fleshly lust. The heaven-bound Christian must be wary of this and not swim with the tide of sensuality.

Question 5: Explain the practice of 'holy kiss' as a form of greeting in the church today.

What did Paul mean by an holy kiss then? First, it should be clear that he cannot in any way encourage any practice that could arouse sensuality among believers as that would mean pulling down the foundation of what he had already built. It was their custom in the Middle East and other climes to give a peck or a mild touch of an 'insensitive' part of the body of a cherished one such as the neck or cheek with the mouth, the shoulder-to-shoulder embrace or a pat given to someone at the back were forms of intimate greetings. In asking the brethren to greet each other with a kiss, Paul was only recommending a mutually deep and warm greetings among the brethren. For avoidance of doubt, he qualified it as an "holy kiss" to eliminate any shade of uncleanness to be associated with the practice.

The Apostle closes up the chapter with the salutation of love and the pronouncement of curse on any one who will not love the Lord while pouring benedictions of love and grace upon believers in general. This teaches the need for preachers of God's love to balance their teaching by highlighting consequences of spurning the love of God. **"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"** (Romans 11:22).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	3-4	Zephaniah	1-2
TUE	"	5-6	"	3
WED	"	7	Haggai	1-2
THUR	"	8	Zechariah	1-2
FRI	"	9-10	"	3-5
SAT	"	11	"	6-7
SUN	"	12	"	8-9

647 Lesson

COMFORT FOR SUFFERING BELIEVERS

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 1:1-24

The second epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Church at Corinth opens with a strong emphasis on the ministry of comfort and support for suffering believers. The epistle appears intensely personal and the words flow apparently from the heart of a caring and enduring shepherd.

Specifically, this chapter addresses some questions regarding Paul’s calling and ministry. It also reveals what our conduct should be in times of severe or extreme afflictions arising from our faith in Christ and ministry. Moreover, our text highlights our responsibilities to hurting and suffering saints whether near or far from us. It is edifying when ministers and other members of the church serve as agents of comfort to suffering believers who are in dire need of encouragement.

THE MANDATE AND SALUTATION OF A PERSECUTED APOSTLE (2 Corinthians 1:1-2; Acts 9:15,16; 26:15,16; Romans 1:1; 11:13; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 15:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 11:5; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1)

As his manner in most of his epistles, Paul introduces himself at the outset of this epistle as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. He mentioned this because there were some skeptics in Corinth who had raised question about his apostleship. He clarified that he neither assumed the apostolic ministry by his own will nor was he ordained by men but by God (Acts 9:15,16; 26:15-18). Circumstances surrounding Paul’s conversion and

commission were such an unforgettable experience. It was the consciousness and assurance of this divine call that sustained his apostolic ministry during periods of intense persecution and affliction.

Question 1: What lesson can we learn from Paul's salvation experience in our text?

Believers and ministers of the gospel today have two major lessons here. One, they should be able to recount their individual encounter with the Lord and the accompanying experience of salvation underpinning their spiritual service. Two, they must know that their call to ministry can only come from God. **“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”** (Hebrews 5:4). A self-appointed ministry or leadership is a self-serving, self-destroying and soul-damning ministry. The examples of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Absalom, and the consequences that followed would suffice us here (Leviticus 10:1,2; Numbers 16:1-33; 2 Samuel 18:9-15; 18:19-32). Other instances of self-appointed ministry or leadership could also be seen in the following passages (Jeremiah 23:21; Acts 15:24; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 3 John 9,10). We must all ensure that ours is not a carnal, self-appointed ministry or leadership but that which is by Jesus Christ through the will of God. Whenever we are pressed beyond measure in ministry, it is this assurance of divine call that will keep us going in the face of difficulties (Romans 8:35-39).

The apostle Paul, in humility, makes mention of Timothy in his salutation, thus signifying that the latter was with him at the time the epistle was written. Earlier, Timothy had been sent by Paul to Macedonia with instructions to go on to Corinth if possible (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10). As an associate of Paul, he was a well-known minister to the Corinthian church. This underscores the importance of proving ourselves faithful companions in ministry when working with either our leaders or colleagues in the church.

This epistle is specifically addressed to **“the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia”**. The recipients of the epistle who are addressed as **“the church of God”** refers to an assembly

of the redeemed believers who belong to God through Christ's vicarious sacrifice on the Cross. It was not a heathen assembly, a social club or a religious cult, but a body of believers in Christ, saved and called out from the world to be God's peculiar people (Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:9,10). The epistle, however, is not addressed only to the church of God in Corinth but to all the saints in Achaia as well. The Roman province of Achaia included all the Southern part of Greece where other churches had been planted. The apostle desires this letter to be circulated among them all.

Today, the Church must realize her position as God's peculiar treasure and, therefore, should not be conformed to the world (Romans 12:1,2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Another point to note is that those who are yet to be saved or born again are not members of the Church no matter how long they have been attending fellowship. Moreover, the universality of the gospel message and the sustainability of our doctrinal standard should make us circulate the sound message and teachings we have received to every local church in our regions (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 1:38; Luke 4:43). The literature ministry is particularly underscored here.

<p>Question 2: From the text, what is "Church" and how can one become a member of it?</p>
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The salutation of Paul the Apostle in this letter is also quite instructive. **"Grace be to you and peace..."** has become the customary and refreshing salutation that Paul has come to be associated with in most of his epistles. Through this salutation, he wishes to express his greatest affectionate desires for the people of God. It is important to note that these wishes are purely spiritual and not materialistic in nature. Unlike Paul, many modern day preachers seldom labour for the spiritual blessings of their congregation. Their ministration and prayer for their members center mostly on material things. While there is nothing wrong with these kinds of blessing, we must note that they are transient and ephemeral.

In our text, Paul boldly placed the Lord Jesus Christ side by side with God the Father (verse 2). This means that Christ is equal with the Father in the Godhead. The

passage, thus, corroborates the doctrine of Trinity of the Godhead which the church teaches.

THE MINISTRY OF COMFORT AND SUCCOUR TO SUFFERING BELIEVERS (2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Acts 14:21, 22; Jeremiah 38:4-13; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Philippians 1:28,29; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-7; Hebrews 13:3; Romans 15:25,26)

Paul, the apostle thanked God for the comfort he received in the midst of severe persecution, distress and afflictions (verses 3-11). Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit was the principal Source of this comfort he enjoyed (Act 9:31; John 14:26; 15:26). Paul's comfort also came partly through the physical presence and companionship of Titus and partly through the good news about the spiritual progress of the Corinthians which Titus had brought to him in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 7:6,7). The apostle then goes on to show that whether he is afflicted or comforted, all turns out for their eventual good, consolation and salvation. The thanksgiving of Paul is addressed to **"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"**. Moreover, God is described as **"the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort"**. It is from Him that all mercies and comforts flow (Isaiah 61:2; Zechariah 1:17; Acts 9:31; John 14:16,26). It is this God **"who comforteth us in all our tribulation..."** In all his afflictions, Paul was conscious of God's comforting presence. One of the many reasons God comforted Paul was that he might, in turn, be able to comfort other suffering believers with the same comfort with which he was comforted by God. We should remember that when we are comforted that we should practically seek to pass on this comfort to others in their time of need.

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounded in Christ". It should be noted that **"the suffering of Christ"** here means that believers can and do suffer because of their identification with Christ (2 Timothy 2:11,12; 1 Peter 2:12-23; 4:12-16; Matthew 10:17,18,22-28).

<p>Question 3: Mention some of the reasons for suffering and the benefits that come from it.</p>

Believers suffer reproach, persecution, rejection, hostility, hatred, imprisonment, denial, betrayal, false accusation,

martyrdom, etc. on account of their faith in Christ. They are common experiences believers go through at one time or the other on their pilgrim journey to heaven. The Bible gives account of godly men and women who went through great afflictions and sufferings for righteousness' sake such as Joseph, Job, David, Christ, Paul etc. While the devil aims at using suffering to discourage us from following and serving the Lord, God allows it to toughen our spiritual muscles and make us stronger in faith.

All sufferings, irrespective of how painful or distressing, always come with some benefits. (i) It makes us to seek after God and His divine intervention (Psalm 94:12; 126:1; Daniel 9:2,3; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10); (ii) It refines and purifies us (Isaiah 48:10); (iii) It teaches us obedience (Psalm 119:67); (iv) It makes us compassionate and merciful to others (2 Corinthians 1:4; Hebrews 2:18); (v) It also makes us to rest in the Lord knowing that He loves and cares for us and will deliver us.

Paul's emphasis in our text is that there is a rich compensation for all the trials believers go through. We enjoy a corresponding share in the consolation of Christ. **"And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer"** (verse 6). Here the apostle could see good outcome from both his afflictions and his comfort. They would be encouraged and challenged by Paul's endurance and would reason that if God could give him grace to bear sufferings, He could likewise give them grace.

Moreover, the apostle expresses his confidence that just as the Corinthian believers had known what it was to suffer on behalf of Christ so they would experience the comforting experience from Christ. Sufferings never come alone for Christians. They are always followed by the consolation of Christ.

Question 4: What should be our consolation in times of suffering?
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"For we would not brethren have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia..." Having spoken in general terms of afflictions and comfort, Paul now tells more specifically of a terrible affliction he suffered by God's grace in Asia Minor. He was **"pressed out of measure"**

beyond the ordinary human natural power of endurance **“that we despaired even of life”**. Paul’s condition was so gloomy and extremely depressing that he had the feelings of a man that was sentenced to death. It is instructive that God allowed his commissioned servants to go through such a harrowing experience so that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. The omnipotent God is the hope of any man who is doomed to die like Paul the apostle. It is cheering to know that God who delivered Paul from such a **“great death”** will continue to deliver his servants until that final moment when we shall be ultimately released from all the tribulations and persecutions of the present evil world. We must however continue to intercede for missionaries and other brethren going through sufferings and tribulations in different parts of the world (verse 11).

MAINTAINING A GODLY CHARACTER IN LIFE AND MINISTRY DURING SUFFERING (2 Corinthians 1:12-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:2-10,14; 1 Corinthians 4:12-13; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2; 8-11; 6:3-8; 1 Timothy 4:10-12; Hebrews 11:24; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 3:14-17)

Paul could boast of his integrity towards the sheep which God has made him overseer. His conscience bears witness to the fact that his conduct was characterized by **“simplicity”** and **“godly sincerity”**. He did not stoop down to the methods of carnal and unregenerate men, but rather demonstrated a holy conduct before them by the grace of God (1 Thessalonians 2:10). We learn from Paul that suffering does not excuse believers from manifesting godly character in life and ministry.

Question 5: How should we conduct ourselves in times of suffering?

With the confidence that they rejoiced in him as a true apostle of Jesus Christ and as one whose sincerity is above question, Paul wanted to visit them with the assurance of their trust, esteem and affection for him (verse 13-16). He intended to come first to Corinth before going to Macedonia and then back to Corinth on his return from Macedonia so that they might have a second benefit. Paul’s original plan could not work out as he thought because of some developments beyond his control (2 Corinthians 1:16,17; 2:12,13). Against this backdrop, Paul maintains that he does

not plan according to fleshly nature of speaking with both sides of the mouth. He asserts his trustworthiness because there was no vacillation or changeableness in Christ that he preached. In other words, Paul could not preach about a faithful God and himself be unfaithful to his own word. God does not send fickle-minded persons to effect such a marvelous transformation in their lives.

God is true and unchanging; and so are all His promises. **“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us”** (verse 20). Suffering believers should draw comfort from the fact that all the promises of God are unchanging and unfailing. God has also given all true believers the anointing and seal of the Holy Spirit as a mark of divine ownership and security irrespective of the suffering we are going through (2 Corinthians 2:21,22). **“Now he which stablishes us with you in Christ and hath anointed us is God who hath also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”**

The Lord has promised divine support for all suffering believers. However, at such times of adversity, believers need to pray and ask for God’s help (Psalm 34:17,19); read and meditate on God’s word (Romans 15:4); encourage themselves in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:6); continue trusting in God and exercising patience (Hebrews 10:35-39); remember God’s past faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22-26; Psalm 77:1-12; 2 Corinthians 1:10); and look on the brighter side of life (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	13	Zechariah	10-12
TUE	“	14	“	13-14
WED	“	15	Malachi	1-2
THUR	“	16	“	3-4
FRI	“	17	Matthew	1-2
SAT	“	18	“	3-4
SUN	“	19	“	5

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

648 Lesson

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY GHOST

MEMORY VERSE: “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37).

TEXT: Acts 2:1-40

The Holy Ghost power Jesus calls all believers to experience in our memory verse is as sure and real as heaven and earth. In the New Testament, it is a requisite experience for every believer. Surprised at the weakness and fruitlessness of some ignorant Ephesian believers, Apostle Paul asked, “**Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost**” (Acts 19:2). The question, by extension, comes to the individual believer today. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is a definite Christian experience, subsequent to sanctification, whereby the believer is anointed with the power of God and energized for service. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of the word of God.

Question 1: Why is the baptism with the Holy Ghost important?

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the spiritual life and service of every believer. This third work of grace is vital and central to victorious Christian living and effective Christian service. Filled with power from on high, the feeble believer becomes dynamic, the lukewarm becomes aggressive in evangelism while the ordinary believer becomes a mighty instrument in the hand of God. Without this experience a good number of people try to serve God in the energy of the flesh. Some who started in the Spirit are now relapsing into formalism. Even believers who started out with enthusiasm, great expectations and zeal are now fagged out. They need spiritual (re)activation through the Holy Ghost baptism.

REVELATION CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 2:1-4,17,18,38; Romans 8:14,9; Jude 19; Ephesians 4:30-32; John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; Romans 8:2; 1:4; 1 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 10:29; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Peter 4:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18)

Question 2: Who is the Holy Ghost? And what work does He do in believers?

The Holy Ghost is the third Person in the Trinity. He has a distinct personality as God. He thinks, teaches, talks, leads and can be grieved. As such, He, the Spirit of God leads and guides the sons of God the way they should go. This same Spirit that worked supernaturally in the life and ministry of Christ is also with us. He can also work in believers who receive Him. He is called (i) the Spirit of God (ii) the Spirit of Christ (iii) the Spirit of truth

(iv) the Spirit of life (v) the Spirit of holiness (vi) the Spirit of faith (vii) the Spirit of power (viii) the Spirit of love (ix) the Spirit of grace (x) the Spirit of promise (xi) the Spirit of glory (xii) the Spirit of the Lord. These titles of the Holy Spirit reveal more of His impact, work and ministry in believers' lives and service.

As indispensable as He is, sinners and backsliders do not have, and cannot receive, the Spirit of God except through repentance. And He does not continue to abide in the believer who grieves Him. Likened to a dove in gentleness, His character conflicts with sinful attitudes like bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice; and He does not dwell in any heart which harbours them. He is the Spirit of truth who is opposed to error. He does not energize those who perpetrate error. **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth"**. He quickens as well as dwells in the believer with the principles of life because He is the Spirit of life. He leads and inspires children of God to live a holy lifestyle. He is holy. Immorality does not originate from Him. But as believers, we do have the Spirit of faith who produces faith in our hearts to be healed, receive miracles and hold on to the promises of God. We receive Him as the Spirit of power when we pray to receive His baptismal measure of power.

He is the Spirit of love who helps us to demonstrate Christ-like love. Those who claim they are Spirit-baptised but who

devise how to hurt others lie and need God's forgiveness. As the Spirit of grace, He does not only help us to know more about the grace of God but also gives us the grace we need as believers for every challenge that we face and in every situation. He is the same Spirit that Christ promised believers and by which they are sealed. The Spirit of God is also called the Spirit of glory. He reproduces the character of the Lord in us so we can be conformed to the image of the Lord. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is of great value. This is because it is through Him that we have a lively and enriching relationship with God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we live as victors as our prayer life is also enriched by the Lord. The life of the believer who has the Spirit of God dwelling in him is positive, practical, purposeful and powerful.

POWER THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S BAPTISM (Acts 2:1-11; 1:8; Luke 4:18,19; Acts 10:38; John 20:22; Acts 4:19, 20)

Our text centers on Pentecost, one of the most important events in the history of the early Church and in the Book of Acts. It was that momentous event that precipitated all the acts which we read about in the Acts of the Apostles. The disciples were all prepared for the enduement with power from on high **"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"** (Acts 2:4).

This same power that they received was what Jesus received before the commencement of His public ministry. The anointing of the Holy Ghost He received made Him to do mighty works of healing and deliverance by the power of the Spirit. He affirmed that, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken- hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord"** (Luke 4:18,19). **"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him"** (Acts 10:38). It is an idle dream for the believer in this dispensation to do similar works without experiencing baptism with the Holy

Ghost. That was why the Lord told His disciples: **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you”**. The word translated “power” in the original is “dunamis”. It is from this word we got the English word for powerful engine – Dynamo. The statement means that you will receive the dynamite of God that will make you an effective and powerful witness of the Lord’s saving grace. When they were baptized and endued with power on the day of Pentecost, the disciples knew that it was in fulfilment of the promise of the Lord. The initial evidence was speaking in a previously unlearned tongue. Wherever the Holy Ghost is, He reveals Himself through supernatural utterances and manifestations. His utterances are not taught in the schools of men. He is God. To speak in tongues without any visible manifestation of His power in life and ministry is questionable as the experience is for fruitful service in God’s vineyard (Acts 1:8).

<p>Question 3: What difference did the Holy Ghost baptism make in the life of the early disciples?</p>

The point is that baptism with the Holy Ghost comes with accompanying supernatural manifestation of power. For instance, Peter, one of the disciples who had just received the Holy Ghost spoke with power, fresh anointing and unusual Spirit-imbued boldness. He made all the people - **“Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians”** - who were present in Jerusalem to worship God to understand that it was in fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy that the Spirit of God descended on the disciples. The Baptism with the Holy Ghost made a great difference in the life of the disciples of the Lord in that they were transformed into different men and women after the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. Before Pentecost, they were seen huddled together behind closed doors **“for fear of the Jews”**. But they could not even be kept behind prison doors after they received the Pentecostal power as they became as bold as lions and stood before their persecutors in the power of the Holy Ghost (John 20:19; Acts 5:17-20; 4:19, 20).

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S BAPTISM (Acts 2:12-21; Ezekiel 37:25-27)

Question 4: Mention pitfalls to be avoided when seeking to be baptized in the Holy Ghost?

Peter's defence was in response to the misconceptions of worshippers about the Holy Spirit's baptism due to their spiritual ignorance. **"And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."**

As it were, there are unscriptural extremes and fanaticism in some circles regarding the Holy Ghost baptism necessitating a balanced teaching on the subject. Our experiences and practice must conform to the principles and teachings of Scripture. There are Pentecostals who profess to be baptised with the Holy Ghost without its accompanying power. The "tongues" of some people are too monotonous, repetitive and shallow to be classified as the powerful evidence of the Spirit's baptism. Some even go as far as copying the pattern of other people while others "speak in tongues" in such a way that is completely unintelligible. Although those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit are supposed to speak in an unknown tongue, this does not mean that every "speaking in tongues" is genuine, powerful and refreshing. Many people profess to be baptized in the Holy Ghost but are as cold as ice in their spiritual lives perhaps because they do not continue in and build up themselves in the Holy Ghost. Others only have testimonies of once-in-a-life-time experience when their hearts were warmed by the Holy Ghost. They have not discovered the marvels of the refreshing power of the Spirit of God. Baptized believers should strive to dig deeper and enjoy the inexhaustible treasures of the Spirit baptism.

Question 5: Explain the difference between Holy Spirit baptism, salvation and sanctification.

It must be stated that baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the same as salvation or sanctification experience. There are those who deceive themselves by claiming that baptism with the Spirit happen automatically at the instant one receives salvation experience. It is also wrong for anyone to feel that because he has not received the baptism in

the Holy Spirit that he has not been saved. The new birth experience is different and distinct from baptism with the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that their names were written in heaven which means that they were saved. Yet, He told them to tarry in Jerusalem so that they could receive the Holy Ghost.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is different from sanctification. Sanctification removes the Adamic nature. It brings about purity of heart, intention and purpose whereas the Holy Spirit baptism brings power from on high for service. And truly we see that this mark of unity was manifested in the lives of the apostles after they were sanctified. In Acts 2:1: **“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place”**. One accord means unity of mind, judgment, intention, consideration for sacred things and for the service of the Lord.

PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE SPIRIT’S BAPTISM (Acts 2:22-40; Ezekiel 36:24-26; Acts 2:8; John 7:37; Luke 11:13; Matthew 7:8).

<p>Question 6: What important Christian experiences must you possess before seeking Holy Ghost Baptism?</p>
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The Spirit baptism is a gift of God’s grace for His children. To receive this experience then, the sinner and backslider must repent of their sins and be saved. It is also indispensable to seek the experience of sanctification as the Holy Spirit does not descend into an ‘unholy’ life and heart. God has promised to grant these gracious experiences of salvation and sanctification/circumcision of heart to everyone who wholeheartedly seeks (Ezekiel 36:24-26). When you are sanctified, you will have the unity of the Spirit with believers. There will be no envy or jealousy; there will be nothing within you that defiles. Your heart will be pure and your life will conform to what the Bible teaches. The believer must of necessity live a practical life of obedience to His words and be passionate to win souls with a pure motive of bringing glory to God.

Finally, you must also thirst for this experience, for Jesus says: **“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”** (John 7:37). Are you thirsty? Do you want the Lord to fill you? Then, call upon the Lord and you will receive

the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Have faith in God. Jesus said: **“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”** **“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”** (Luke 11:13; Matthew 7:8).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	20	Matthew	6-7
TUE	“	21	“	8-9
WED	“	22	“	10
THUR	2 Kings	1-2	“	11
FRI	“	3	“	12
SAT	“	4	“	13
SUN	“	5	“	14-15

649 Lesson

QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION

MEMORY VERSE: “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

TEXT: Genesis 19:27-29; 28:18-22; Exodus 34:2-10

As soon as a child is born into the world, his need of breath becomes evident. Shortly afterwards, he cries, expressing his desire for water and, later, for food. His need of love is taken care of by the welcome attitude of the mother, father and other members of the family. The same goes for the newly saved believer who, on receiving the initial assurance of salvation, discovers his need for developing a regular “observance” of a time of prayer and reading the Word of God for growth and personal spiritual upkeep (1 Peter 2:2). Not only that, the need to observe such a time with other members of the family also becomes apparent. He later learns that such times of personal study of the word of God and prayer are referred to, by believers, as quiet time. The issue of quiet time today, must be taken seriously by individual Christians and families who want to maintain a victorious Christian life in this wicked world and also function effectively in their service for God.

THE PRIORITY OF QUIET TIME (Genesis 19:27; 28:18-22; Exodus 34:2; Jeremiah 33:3).

Question 1: Give two reasons believers need to observe Quiet Time and family devotion.

The need for the practice of individual quiet time and family devotion cannot be over-emphasised. Two reasons stand out (among many) for this. First, God wants man to be in fellowship with Him. As a loving Father, He wants to have communion with His children on a daily basis so as to reveal more of himself to them and also direct their path. Sin made man to lose this privilege but Christ came to restore it (John 14:6). God calls us to meet with Him everyday. We should, in reciprocal gratitude, respond

positively and not be like the children of Israel of whom He said, **“I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me”** (Jeremiah 35:14b).

Secondly, regular study of God’s Word and communion with Him in prayer enhance rapid Christian growth (1 Peter 2:2). A Christian cannot grow spiritually without spiritual food as he cannot grow physically without physical food. Like a garden of flowers, God’s friendship needs careful cultivation and this demands consistency. We must maintain a continuous link with God through personal devotional prayer.

THE PLACE AND TIME OF QUIET TIME (Exodus 16:21; Psalm 55:17; 88:13; Mark 1:35; Matthew 6:6).

Question 2: Why is the morning time best for personal/family devotion?

When and where should a believer observe his quiet time? A thorough study of the Scriptures shows that the best times are early in the morning and late in the evening before going to bed. This means we should observe our fellowship with the Lord daily. In Exodus 16:21, manna was gathered morning by morning and our ‘manna’ today is **“every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). The Levites (Old Testament type of New Testament believers) offered a daily sacrifice. David performed his vows and cried unto God on daily basis (Psalm 86:3). Paul prayed and was renewed in the inner man (obviously by meditative study of the Word) daily (2 Timothy 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:16). So did the Berean Christians of his time (Acts 17:11). The examples of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35), David (Psalm 55:17) and Daniel (Daniel 6:10) together with that of numerous Christians down the ages teach us the necessity of starting the day with God because the mind is always fresh in the morning. Rising early helps immeasurably in getting the best from study of God’s Word and prayer (Genesis 28:18; Exodus 29:39,42; 30:7; Psalm 5:3; 59:16; 63:1). Also, to have the best from this gracious exercise, one needs a place that is free from distraction and characterised by seclusion and quietness. We get all these from our present places of abode by rising early to read, meditate on the Word of God and then record. His disciples were with Him, yet “he was alone praying” (Luke 9:18). We can shut off

the distraction of people, events and things to concentrate on prayer and study of God's Word.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE WORD DURING QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION (Luke 4:4; Job 23:12; Colossians 3:16 Proverbs 13:13).

In order to benefit maximally from personal Bible study, we need to know the purpose and focus of the Holy Writ. The Bible, though a revelation of God, and containing more information about man's past, present and future than any other book, its design is to show man the salvation of God, obtainable through Christ Jesus (Psalm 27:1a; John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 20:32). The Bible has a practical purpose of guiding us into the experience of salvation and spiritual maturity. Since this salvation is exclusively through Christ, the focus of the entire Bible is centered on the Savior (John 5:39,46; Luke 24:25-27,44). Christ is made and kept real to us as we study the Word "day by day". For times of meditative study of the divine book, our prayer should be:

*Break thou the bread of life Dear Lord to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves Beside the sea
Beyond the sacred page I need Thee Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O Living Word.*

<p>Question 3: With what attitude should we study the Bible?</p>

To understand God's revelation in the Scriptures, we must come with open minds, surrendered wills, and faith to believe. It is wisdom for the ignorant to acknowledge his situation before God and only such will be made wiser (Luke 10:21). Individuals who are wise "in their own conceits" languish in continued blindness and spiritual impoverishment (John 9:41). Then, we must approach God's Word with a willingness to comply with whatever he is asking us to do. We must, like Christ, be willing to say, "**Not my will but thine be done**" and in this prove our love for him (John 14:21). Thirdly, those parts we cannot, with the intellect, comprehend, we must, with faith, believe. We must deliberately choose to believe the Word as we read it, accounting that God is faithful to all His promises. We must commence the walk of faith (and grow in the same) by hearing (and reading) the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

We should constantly study the Bible with the aim of having our lives transformed into the likeness of Christ (John 8:31; 2 Corinthians 3:18). We should be primarily preoccupied with what God has to say to us. Helpful questions while studying the Bible should include: what does the passage say? What does it mean? And how does it apply to me? We should not seek far-fetched interpretations for simple, easily comprehensible passages. We should be careful not to constantly search the Scriptures during our quiet time for sermons to preach to others rather, for personal application. We must seek out from study passages, examples to follow, commands to obey, errors to avoid, imperfections to forsake and promises to claim. Other aids to fruitful study include the use of helpful books such as balanced commentaries, Bible atlas and concordance. It also helps to keep records of lessons in notebooks and memorise Scriptures on regular basis. Character, books and topical studies have their places and advantages but in all, we must seek to have God speak to us as individuals.

PRIMACY OF PRAYER DURING QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION (Daniel 6:10; Psalm 55:17; Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12).

Question 4: What are the major activities that constitute a rich quiet time?

Prayer is complementary to Bible study in the practice of quiet time. For our Bible study to be meaningful and effective, our prayer should be conditioned and moulded by God's self-revelation in the Bible. God has taken the first step in reconciling man to Himself. Man needs to reciprocate this love of God (1 John 4:19). Approaching the throne of the King of kings is a privilege specially reserved for God's children by virtue of Christ's death on the cross. God's manifold blessings upon sinners are for the purpose of drawing them to repentance (Romans 2:4). We pray also because we love God. Prayer is one of our offensive weapons against the enemy. It is the believer's spiritual breath. We "pray in" what we have gained from the Word of God, expressing our response to what He has said to us. Daily prayer should include the following: worship, thanksgiving, intercession, supplication and commitment. We worship and adore the Lord for Who He is.

We should express our gratitude for all God's past mercies received even when we still have some that are yet to be met (Luke 17:12-19; I Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28). We should confess our frailties and imperfections to Him and solicit His enabling grace. We should also pray earnestly for other people and present their needs to God as Abraham did for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:23-33), Jesus for us (John 17:9,11) and Epaphras for the Colossians (Colossians 4:12). Then we should supplicate for our personal needs, great and small. Finally, we should commit all our activities for the day unto Him, asking Him to be "Lord of all". This is the secret of joy in His presence everyday.

FAMILY DEVOTION (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11:18-21)

Every believer should know that it is his responsibility to lead the entire family in the way of righteousness. Abraham did and had God's commendation (Genesis 18:19), Samuel's parents did and had one of the prophets. Hezekiah led the whole city of Jerusalem to seek the Lord in his time (2 Chronicles 29:20). Rhoda, Timothy and the daughters of Philip also had good parental tutelage.

Question 5: Why is family devotion essential in the home?
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To accomplish God's purpose for the family, there is a need to worship together, study together and pray together. The father, as the spiritual head of the home (Ephesians 5:23) takes the lead. A regular time of family altar is ensured when the members have time to sing songs/choruses of worship, the father (or his appointed representative) leads in reading and explaining Scripture passages and time is given for heart-lifting praises, intercession, supplication and commitment. This is preferably fixed before the activities of the day are embarked upon. Both parents may prefer to have their individual Quiet Time before waking the other family members for corporate worship or choose to have it after. There is no hard and fast rule. It is also helpful for the family to pray together before going to bed. All these will help the spiritual growth of the young family members and their understanding of scriptural truths. If we must become men and women who have authority over heaven, then, we cannot do without patterning our lives according to all

that we have learnt today with respect to communion with God.

Question 6: What should be our aim as we constantly study our Bible during Quiet Time?

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	2 Kings	6	Matthew	16-17
TUE	"	7-8	"	18
WED	"	9	"	19
THUR	"	10	"	20
FRI	"	11-12	"	21
SAT	"	13	"	22
SUN	"	14	"	23

650 Lesson

PRAYER AND FASTING

MEMORY VERSE: “Howbeit this kind goeth not but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

TEXT: Luke 11:1-13; Esther 4:1-17; James 5:13-18

Bible has much to say on prayer and fasting. The subject of prayer and fasting is very vital today for successful Christian living and service. As no individual can continue living without breathing, so no Christian can remain spiritually alive without praying or without making use of the benefits of fasting.

Fasting accomplishes a good number of things in the life of the believer. These include chastening and humbling of the soul before God (Psalms 35:13; 69:10), crucifying the appetite to give time to seek the Lord (2 Samuel 12:16-23), focusing one’s attention on God to the exclusion of all else (1 Corinthians 7:5). Moreover, it aids in temptation (Matthew 4:1-11), helps in exercising power over demons (Matthew 17:14-21) and makes prayer powerful and effective.

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER AND FASTING (Psalm 42:1,2; Exodus 22:23; Matthew 7:7-11; Psalm 27:8; Isaiah 55:6,7; Matthew 6:16; 17:21)

Question 1: Why is it necessary to pray and how often should we pray?

From Bible references, prayer means communing with God. It is the soul’s desire for God (Psalm 42:1,2), a cry or supplication (Exodus 22:23), an appeal from a child to the Father (Matthew 6:6), an instinct that must have utterance (Luke 18:7,13), beseeching (or calling on) the Lord (Exodus 32:11; Acts 7:59), lifting up (or pouring out) the heart (Psalm 62:8) and seeking the face of the Lord (Psalm 27:8). Though prayer should be the most natural thing for mortal men, the flesh is often most unwilling to pray. Hence, God has found it necessary to give express instructions

concerning praying in the Scripture. There are various commands to pray in both the Old and New Testaments. All men are commanded to seek the Lord and the wicked is enjoined to forsake his ways in prayer of repentance (Isaiah 55:6,7). As believers, we are enjoined to ask, seek and knock (1 Chronicles 16:11; Matthew 7:7-11). We are commanded to pray without ceasing (1Thessalonians 5:17).

BIBLICAL PATTERN OF PRAYER AND FASTING (1 Timothy 2:8; Psalms 5:3, 88:1; Luke 6:12; Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10; Exodus 34:28; Luke 4:2; 2:36,37; Acts 13:2)

The Scripture makes it clear that we can pray everywhere and every time (1 Timothy 2:8). We have examples and pointers to the appropriateness of praying daily – morning (Psalm 5:3), night and day (Psalm 88:1; Luke 6:12;), thrice daily (Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10), without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). God expects every believer to be constant in prayer as this is the magnet that will attract His power upon our lives when exercised in faith and righteousness. Prayer becomes more effective when combined with fasting.

Question 2: Mention four people who observed prayers and fasting in the Bible.

Various categories of people – kings, prophets, saints, sinners, men, women and children fasted (with results) in the Old Testament. Examples of people who observed fasting in the Bible include Moses (Exodus 34:28), Ahab (1 Kings 21:27), Ezra (Ezra 10:6), Daniel (Daniel 10:3), Christ (Luke 4:2), Paul (Acts 9:9), the Antioch church leaders (Acts 13:2), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:23). Those who observed it according to God's pattern had answers from God. Because they observed prayer and fasting according to the divine pattern, the exercise strengthened their individual lives and ministries, changed the course of events, brought God's mercy, granted them favour before God and men. When we also observe it in line with God's command, we shall get result, even greater result.

SCRIPTURAL GUIDE TO PREVAILING PRAYER (Jeremiah 29:11-14; 33:3; 2 Chronicles 7:14; John 14:13,14; Psalm 91:14,15)

Question 3: Mention three conditions for and three hindrances to answered prayers.

Various passages of the Bible radiate with God's promises to answer prayer (Psalm 91:15; Luke 11:9; John 14:13,14). But it is also clear that the only form of prayer that God answers must be offered to the Father (Matthew 6:6; John 16:23; Ephesians 3:14), through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:23,24; Matthew 18:20). We are enjoined to pray continually, in faith (Mark 11:24), wholeheartedly (Jeremiah 29:13), with forgiving spirit (Mark 11:25), with perseverance (Luke 18:1), in righteousness and obedience (1 Timothy 2:8; 1 John 3:22). Examples of people who received answers to their prayers in the Bible include Moses (Exodus 15:24,25), Solomon (1 Kings 3:11-13), Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 18:31), Zacharias (Luke 1:13), the early church (Acts 4:31), etc.

Question 4: Mention four possible postures for prayer.

There are no hard and fast rules as to the proper posture to assume before we can pray to our Father in heaven. The Bible reveals various positions including bowing down, bowing the knees or the head (Psalm 95:6; Romans 14:11; Exodus 4:31), falling on one's face, kneeling (1 Kings 8:54), standing, sitting, lying, looking up or lifting up or spreading out the hands (1 Timothy 2:8; Exodus 9:29). Other forms include weeping, talking, agonising and groaning. It is expected that one would close one's eyes while praying to avoid distraction. Closing one's eyes in prayer enables the believer to get rid of all things that will prevent him from concentrating fully on the Lord.

However, praying without repentance and salvation from sin, without transformation of life and character, without righteousness, holiness and purity is a waste of time. Righteousness is very important in our lives. Whatever Christian activities we are engaged in, if our heart is not right with God, our prayers will not be answered. The religious sacrificial activity of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord. Righteousness is our power in prayer. Other causes of unanswered prayers include: disobedience (Deuteronomy 1:43,45), secret sin (Psalm 66:18), neglect of mercy (Proverbs 21:13), stubbornness (Zechariah 7:13),

blood guiltiness (Isaiah 1:15), doubt (James 1:6,7), and self-indulgence (James 4:3).

BENEFITS OF SCRIPTURAL FASTING (Isaiah 58:3-14; Matthew 6:16-18; 17:19-21; 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Fasting is a scriptural, beneficial, spiritual exercise that can accomplish great things when used in combination with prayer and faith. Basically, fasting means abstinence from food (solid or liquid). The Greek word “Nestho” translated fast, means Ne (not to) and estho (to eat). Fasting is not optional. It is imperative (Matthew 6:16). The Lord Jesus Christ taught the disciples that it is a necessary and rewarding exercise that He expected them to be involved in it (Matthew 9:15).

Question 5: Why is fasting imperative for all believers?

It also helps when one is worried (Daniel 6:18), under judgement (1 Kings 21:27), in need or in danger (Ezra 8:21; Esther 4:16), in trouble (Acts 27:9,33) or when ministering (Acts 13:1-3). That fasting complements believers’ prayer is revealed in the case of a demon possessed man whom the disciples could not help (Matthew 17:19-21). When they asked the Master (Christ) why they were unable to cast out the devil, He said, **“this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”** Esther was a woman who believed strongly in prayer and fasting. When the life of the entire Jewish nation was in danger as a result of the evil which Haman was determined to carry out, she and her people resorted to fasting and seeking the face of God. She said unto Mordecai **“Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish”** (Esther 4:16). Through this singular act and total dependence on God, Esther and all the Jews were saved from the plot of Haman. This is a lesson too loud for indolent and gluttonous believers who cannot set aside a day to pray and fast to develop their spiritual muscle so as to deliver the oppressed world.

Some people have certain objections to fasting but the Scripture has an answer for all such. Contrary to the objection of some Christians, fasting was not abolished

with the law of Moses. It neither makes one to be like a false prophet, a Pharisee nor an unbeliever. Jesus did not condemn the hypocritical Pharisee for fasting but trusting in his self-righteousness and despising others (Luke 18:9-14). It is neither legalistic to fast regularly, nor is it wrong to join in corporate fasting.

However, we need not fast as a condition for any gift such as salvation, sanctification or Holy Ghost baptism. The only condition for these is faith (Luke 11:13). Furthermore, extremely long fasting that can tamper with our health and usefulness should be avoided (I Samuel 14:24-28). It is scriptural to fast for as long as our physical strength can carry us.

If believers and Christian workers will only practice the scriptural principles of fasting and praying, we are sure to enjoy the fulness of heaven's blessings on a continual basis. Fasting and prayer are invaluable means of grace, victory and inestimable spiritual blessings.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	3-4	Zephaniah	1-2
TUE	"	5-6	"	3
WED	"	7	Haggai	1-2
THUR	"	8	Zechariah	1-2
FRI	"	9-10	"	3-5
SAT	"	11	"	6-7
SUN	"	12	"	8-9

**THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED
THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT
BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANY TIME). THEREFORE,
ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.**

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New Jersey	9:00 AM
Bronx/Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island	9:00 AM
Rockland County	10:30 AM

MONDAY BIBLE STUDY

Rockland County	7:00 PM
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TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Bronx/Queens/New Jersey/Co-op City and Staten Island	7:00 PM
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WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Brooklyn	7:00 PM
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THURSDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

Rockland County	7:00 PM
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FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

All the Church Locations except Rockland County	7:00 PM
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ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS

Bronx – First Friday of Every Month	7:00 PM
Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
New Jersey – Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM

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