

“Seek the Lord while He may be found”
-Isaiah 55:6

Seek Daily

A Book of Daily Devotion for Youths and Students

© 2019, Publishing Board, Nigerian Baptist Convention

ISSN: 2141-8802

Published by
Publications Department,
Nigerian Baptist Convention,
P.M.B. 5113, Ibadan.

Prepared by
Youth and Student Department,
Nigerian Baptist Convention,
P.M.B. 5113, Ibadan.

Abbreviations of Bible Version Quoted

AMP	The Amplified Bible
ASV	American Standard Version
ESV	English Standard Version
GNB	Good News Bible
KJV	King James Version
TLB	The Living Bible
NASB	New American Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
RSV	Revised Standard Version
NET	New English Translation

OUR VISION

To be the foremost Christ-like organisation in Nigeria, Africa and the whole world.

OUR MISSION

To be a community of believers that represents Christ by proclaiming the Gospel, discipling believers, caring and developing churches to be involved in holistic ministries - evangelistic, social and healing - and collaborating with other Christian agencies across the globe.

OUR CORE VALUE

- Soul Competency
- Priesthood of all Believers
- Congregational Polity
- Unity in Diversity
- Autonomy of the local Baptist Church
- Christian Virtues
- Righteousness
- The Great Commission
- Development of Human Resources.

2019 THEME:

Moving forward: Building a Great Church through Faithful Stewardship (1 Peter 4:10).

FOREWORD

Living an acceptable life and being victorious in our daily endeavours require that we seek the face of God through His Word on daily basis. This attribute was evident in the life of Jesus Christ. Little wonder He was able to put every situation that confronted Him under control. It may look difficult for those who have not tasted the goodness of meeting the Lord daily especially very early in the morning. However, it has been rewarding for those who have imbibed this habit. No one can dwell and enjoy God without being intimate with Him. We can only overcome the world and its decadence when we know the mind of God and abide in His presence. Hence, the need to hide God's Word in our hearts always just as Psalmist says: "Your Word have I heeded in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11)

Seek Daily is a spiritually packaged devotional book for all people who have been redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ and who seek to know His will daily. Using this book will open your eyes to more of God, you will learn how to relate with Him in an acceptable way and enjoy more of His presence which will translate to living an abundant life. To the glory of God, testimonies abound for those who are regular users of *Seek Daily*. Their unforgettable encounter with God is amazing. Yours will not be an exception in Jesus' name. You will surely discover God in an unusual way and this revelation will sustain and drive your life to God's desired destination in Jesus' name.

This year's edition has been written and compiled by inspired servants of God. We want to appreciate the efforts of Mrs Adetayo Thomas, along with other Publications

editors, under the guidance of the Director of Publications, Rev. Dr Adelokoji Ijaola and our editor, Mrs Eben Durodola, in making sure that this material is published in good time. May God continue to bless them and their family. You will surely be blessed as you study and meditate on the Word of God daily, using this book. Pick your copy and buy copies as gifts for others. God bless you.

Shalom!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Dr S.A.K. Olaleye,
Director, Youth and Student Ministries,
Nigerian Baptist Convention.

WRITERS FOR SEEK DAILY 2019

Jan. 1-7	Rev. Mrs Elizabeth I. Aderounmu, Student Ministries, NBC, Ibadan
Jan. 8-31	Rev. Dr S.A.K. Olaleye, Youth and Student Ministries, NBC
Feb. 1-15	Rev. Dr Mrs Folashade Oloyede, NBTS, Ogbomoso
Feb. 16-22	Rev. Diran Adeleke, Orita Mefa Baptist Church, Ibadan
Feb. 23-28	Rev. Akinwale Oloyede, NBTS, Ogbomoso
Mar. 1-31	Sis. Adebola Okunlade, Publications Dept. NBC, Ibadan
April 1-30	Rev. Gideon Akanbi, Godly Brains Ministries, Ibadan
May 1-24	Dr Dayo Fodeke, Beulah Baptist Church, Ile-Ife
May 25-31	Pastor Seun Olawoore, Peculiar People Baptist Church
June 1-15	Rev. Veronica Osagbowa, Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku
June 16-30	Rev. Samson Okediji, Student Ministries Division, Osun State
July 1-7	Rev. Dr Mrs Folashade Oloyede, NBTS, Ogbomoso
July 8-15	Pastor Taiwo Omisile, NBTS, Ogbomoso
July 16-31	Rev. Busoye Adigun, Poly Baptist Church, Apete, Ibadan

August 1-15	Rev. Sunday Olapoju, Shalom Baptist Church, Sango-Ota
August 16-31	Rev. Samson Adedokun, New Dawn Baptist Church, Ajah, Lagos
Sept. 1-15	Rev. Dr 'Yinka Ololade, Ogo-Oluwa Baptist Church, Ibadan
Sept. 16-30	Rev. Oyedele Oyeniyi, Victoryland Baptist Church, Abuja
Oct. 1-15	Rev. Segun Akande, El-shaddai Baptist Church, Ibadan
Oct. 16-31	Rev. Lekan Bamidele, Gloryland Baptist Church, Oyo
Nov. 1-7	Pastor Ibironke Afolabi, NBTS, Ogbomoso
Nov. 8-15	Pastor Gbenga Osho, SMD, Umuahia
Nov. 16-30	Rev. John Adeyemo, Victory Baptist Church, Ajah
Dec. 1-31	Sis. Adetayo Thomas, Publications Dept. NBC, Ibadan

Tuesday, January 1

1 John 2:9-11

LIVE IN LOVE AND LIGHT

"Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble." 1 John 2:10, NIV

Love is one of the most frequently used words all over the world. Ironically, it is often misused or misinterpreted. Love is something that cannot be touched or bought, yet it is better than money or any earthly objects. Love, according to wordnetweb is a strong positive emotion of regard and affection. It does not matter how many times you use the word, what matters is how often you act the word to others. Today's passage reminds us of the importance of loving one another. Love shines light on our path and gives meaning to our journey in life. Genuine love expressed in action is what the Lord requires from His children. This is what truly shows that we are children of God. The message of love must be a recurring decimal in the activities of the believers so that we can together project Christ in a world that has been darkened by hatred. The virtues of love and light are more urgent in a nation like ours where the message of the cross is being suppressed for political aspiration, financial gain, and crave for power. This new year, the Lord is depending on you, beloved, to showcase His love and dispel darkness around you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life I will be with you; I will never leave nor forsake you." Joshua 1:5

RBT Passage: Genesis 1-4

"No man can light a dark heart if the love of Christ is absent in his life." – Elizabeth Aderounmu

LIVE BY THE TRUTH

"...but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." 1 John 2:27b, NKJV

Truth is perceived as "the quality or state of being based on fact" and which is believed by all the people to be true. "Truth" in the context of today's text can also be viewed as a noun, depicting Christ - "The truth of God." The truth about Christ is a universal knowledge that is being denied by many who are called the anti-Christ's or men of lawlessness. They deny that Jesus is the Christ. It is easy to think that only non-Christians deny the lordship of Christ unfortunately, many supposed Christians who attend churches do not believe in the Lord of the Church.

Such people's lives contradict the Word of God. They tell lies, steal stylishly, malign others, and engage in divination; they are selfish and so on. What truth do you know about Christ? This is what will determine the quality of the life you live. Seek to know more about the faith you profess so that you will not be easily swayed by lies. If you are deeply rooted in the Lord, then let this anointing teach you what is right at all time. Lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Then your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear. Isa 58:8

RBT Passage: Genesis 5-8

"The end of learning is to know God, and out of that knowledge is to love and imitate Him." – John Milton

SUPPORT CO-WORKERS

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brother and for strangers. 3 John 2:5, NKJV

When the word 'needy' is mentioned, our minds quickly go to the less privileged and those living in disadvantaged areas. We forget that everyone, even people close to us, has one need or the other. There is something you can do for the person next to you to make his or her life better. The early church had a deep understanding of what support meant to the body of Christ. They therefore provided hospitality for those who worked in whatever capacity to proclaim Christ.

Support for co-workers in today's context can take diverse forms. It includes everything we can do to ensure that people's dreams are actualized; it means removing competition, jealousies and rivalries from our midst so that the gospel message can be proclaimed unhindered. We must note that in lighting the path of others; our own path is also lightened. Therefore, before you conclude that some people do not need help, take a closer look at their lives and you will discover something you can do to support them. You can support others by praying for them, giving them gifts and encouraging them. Lend that helping hand so that together we can shine for the Lord.

- **Birthday Blessing:** And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

RBT Passage: Genesis 9-12

"Faith is the art of holding on to the things inspite of your changing moods and circumstance." – **C.S. Lewis**

Friday, January 4

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

2 Thessalonians 2:15, NKJV

The world is a quick-sand; it seems harmless, but unfortunately it sometimes becomes deep wet sand in which careless believers can quickly sink. The world we live in is full of danger. This was why Paul encouraged believers to stand firm in faith without compromising. Apostle Paul sensed the disaster that was likely to happen to the believers in Thessalonica and, he was burdened to warn them and at the same time encourage them to hold fast the things they have learnt about Christ. When we hold on to our knowledge of Christ, we will have enough strength to withstand the devices of the enemy.

The decadence in our society can make believer compromise their faith in God. This is why we need to support one another in prayers and words of encouragement, so we can all stand for Christ in our respective duty post. Christian political candidates need a strong prayer support that will bolster their courage and fortify them against selling their conscience on the altar of money and fame. What are those enticements from your friends that can sway you from the faith? Is it examination malpractice, alcohol, sex, drug or cultism? You need to seek help so as not to give in. Do not allow the disaster that is swallowing the people of the world to overtake you. Choose to stand firm.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go....” Psalm 32:8

RBT Passage: Genesis 13-17

You can offer ideas to people as bullets or as seeds.

– Richard Halverson

Saturday, January 5

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

DO WHAT IS RIGHT

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

2 Thessalonians 3:13, KJV

It is increasingly becoming difficult to distinguish between right and wrong in today's world. Everywhere you turn, there is someone justifying the wrong thing, by using the right reasons. Doing what is right is a function of understanding what is right and to understand what is right we have to look in the right direction, which is the Word of God. Paul warns believers to dissociate themselves from people that are working against the Word of God.

The Knowledge of Christ and total commitment to it are determinants of doing things that are pleasing to God. How much of Christ we know, the extent of our surrender to Him will inform what we do or say when the goings are rough. The fear of isolation or being called names by peers can make doing right discouraging. As a child of God, however you, do not have an alternative outside of doing that which is right. Encourage yourself and other believers around you in right living because you are children of a God who is never wearied of doing good. By this you show you are God's child.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies. Genesis 26:17

RBT Passage: Genesis 18-20

Be like a postage stamp, stick to one thing until you get there. – Margaret Carty

Sunday, January 6 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 2 John 4:11

LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11, NKJV

Showing God's kind of love to one another is the demand of today's devotion. God, out of love provides for man beyond his daily needs. He gives rain and sunshine indiscriminately; shields man from dangers seen and unseen. God wants you to measure up to His standard. in the way you love fellow humans.

The gospel is being combated and challenged today because believers have failed to discharge their responsibilities to one another. You may truly love God as shown by your church attendance, giving towards church needs and such similar activities, but how much do you care for others around you? True love for God can only be evident in how we deal with one another in the school, office, market, football field, neighbourhood and other places. Demonstrate God's unconditional love to someone today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:18

RBT Passage: Genesis 21-23

Do all the good you can, by all means you can, in all ways you can, in all the places you can, at all times you can, to all people you can, as long as you can – John Wesley

Monday, January 7

Matthew 23:1-11

ONE TEACHER, MANY STUDENTS

"Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ." Matthew 23:10, NIV

One of the greatest challenges of teaching is the ability to strike a balance between what we say and what we do. It takes courage, discipline and determination because some things are easy to teach but hard to practice. This, however, does not change the fact that it is expected of every teacher to first teach in action before words. Jesus encouraged His followers, including His disciples, to obey the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but He warned them never to follow their deeds. This is because their actions are against their teaching.

Many church leaders of nowadays are like these people. They say one thing and act another. Many leaders have misled a lot of people because of their way of life. While it is not wrong to have models and people that inspire us to be better, planning our lives after theirs without giving room for God's direction might lead to ruin. Jesus, in today's text, made it clear that He is the only worthy Teacher to be emulated. Therefore, it is wrong to make any one our standard as believers. We should continually look up to Christ the great Teacher. As a leader can God depend on you to lead other right both in your words and action?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Genesis 17:2

RBT Passage: Genesis 24-25

"Behaviour is the mirror in which everyone shows his image." – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Tuesday, January 8

1Corinthians 12:19-26

MEMBERS DEPEND ON EACH OTHER

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" 1 Corinthians 12:26,

No one knew the importance of a church sexton until Mr James suddenly fell sick one Saturday night and he could not perform his duty of putting the church building in order for the Sunday worship service. Many things were affected that day. This gives credence to what we are being taught in today's text. There is no useless part of the body. God has put every part of the human body there for a specific purpose. Each part is important in its own right and no part can perform the function of the other. One may not know how important every part of the body is until one of them is injured and every other part suffers.

Your role as a member of the Church is important. Do not consider yourself insignificant or your role inferior; you are important to the body of Christ. Let each one of us be faithful in any assignment given to us and let us respect other people around us no matter the nature of their work. We cannot function in isolation because we depend on one another. As each part of the body is important and none is useless; so we depend on each other for success in life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." Psalms 105: 4

RBT Passage: Genesis 26-28

"If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life." – Anonymous

Wednesday, January 9

Matthew 5:21-26

SOLVE CONFLICTS ONE TO ONE

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you....First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift" Matthew 5:23-24, NIV

The Holy Spirit convicted a pastor as he was about to drive to the church on Sunday morning after fighting with his wife. He was to preach on family matter The Spirit of the Lord asked him how effective his message would be if he went to preach with bitterness in his heart against his wife. Immediately, he jumped out of the car and ran inside the house to seek peace with his wife before he took off to the church.

Relationship matters so much to God. And that is why the Bible teaches us how to live in peace with others. Jesus' teaching in today's text centres on having due regard for other people through our speech, conduct, action and reaction. We should not call anybody "a fool" or be angry with others for long. Our worship service is unacceptable to God if we hold a grudge and have unforgiving spirit. We are to settle every conflict with people before we approach the altar of God so as to obtain favour from Him. You cannot be fighting people and claim to be worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Take action now and reconcile with whoever you have a quarrel with. It is likely the answers to your prayers are delayed because of your unforgiving spirit.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Very soon my anger against you will end and my wrath will be directed to their destruction."
Isa 10: 25

RBT Passage: Genesis 29-31

'Go out into the world and do good until there is too much good in the world' – **Larry H. Miller**

LONGING FOR GOD'S HELP

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? Psalm 42:2

Nothing gives the human soul satisfaction as being in the presence of God. This is the secret behind the peace and joy David, the great psalmist, enjoyed. His life was full of trouble and persecution because of the anointing he carried. He was close to death many times, running from one bush to the other to escape the arrow of his enemies. But he overcame all because he knew how to tarry in God's presence. Those who have learnt to tarry in God's presence have always find peace for their souls.

David sought the presence of God like a thirsty deer seeks for water. He saw God as his Shepherd who provides sufficiently for him in all things and at every time. And he always sought Him for help. What are the challenges you are facing that seem greater than you? Do not give up and do not be dismayed. Seek the face of God now and crave His presence. Address your soul like the psalmist, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God" (vv. 42:5, 11) The Lord is not as far as you think. He is ready to fill the vacuum in your heart if only you will invite Him. You can do that now.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Ill-gotten treasures have no lasting value, but righteousness delivers from death." Prov. 10: 2

RBT Passage: Genesis 32-35

"God bestows His blessings without discrimination."

– F.F. Bruce

Friday, January 11

Romans 6:1-14

WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." Romans 6:12

This is a dangerous generation where people take liberty for license and commit sin in the name of fashion and modernization. It is a time people find attractive names for iniquity in order to align with what is in vogue. The spiritual sight of many people is becoming dim so much that they cannot discern clear instruction of the Bible on holy living. The incursion of worldliness into the Church is manifesting in false teachings through which some Christian leaders are hastening the footsteps of people to hell. It is indeed a perilous time!

The Bible stresses that we cannot live in sin and pray that grace of God will increase upon our lives (v.1). There is no one who has genuinely tasted the joy of salvation in Christ Jesus that can enjoy sin. The main purpose of our salvation is to cleanse our sins and restore us to life of purity and righteousness. A saved life can no more tell lies, watch pornography and films; commit adultery and hate others. When the Spirit of God takes over, flesh must surrender. Check your life and submit to Jesus Christ now! Call the Holy Spirit to come and indwell you that you may always be obedient to Him and deny your sinful nature. This is what it means to walk in newness of life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." Psalms 34:14*

RBT Passage: Genesis 36-38

"You can't build a great building on a weak foundation. You must have a solid foundation if you're going to have a strong superstructure." – Gordon B. Hinckley

Saturday, January 12

James 4:13-17

BOASTING AN INSULT TO GOD

"As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil" James 4:16

Boasting is a product of pride, and the proud is an enemy of God. Pharaoh boasted against God; God killed him and all his soldiers in one day. Nebuchadnezzar, in his pride taught he owned the world; God reduced him to a beast eating grass in the bush for seven years. Herod, in arrogance took the glory of God; he was eaten up alive by worms. These were powerful people in history who ended up shamefully because of pride. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples boasted in self-confidence not to deny His Master but fell at the face of challenge.

Today's passage encourages us to put God first in everything we do. God should be at the centre of our plans because He is the owner of our lives. We should not be like the foolish farmer who put himself at the center of his plan, with no regard to God. He lost everything before the dawn of another day (Luke 12:13-21). Learn to be submissive to the will of God. You and all that you have are God's property. You should not leave Him out of all your projections in life. Economists end their projections by saying: "all things being equal." Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy Will be done." Children of God should always end their plans with: "If God wishes." Recognize His sovereignty over your life and stop boasting.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Submit to God and be at peace with Him; in this way prosperity will come to you." Job 22:21*

RBT Passage: Genesis 39-41

"There is no event so commonplace but that God is present, leaving you room to recognize or not to recognize Him." –Frederick Buechner

Sunday, January 13

James 4:1-10

GODLY APPROACH TO WORLDLINESS

"Submit, then, yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" James 4:7

The faith of Charles came under serious test when he traveled abroad for further studies. He had served as the president of his school's Christian fellowship in Nigeria where he lived and taught holy living. He found himself in the midst of sinners and was tempted to compromise. However, Charles stood his ground and chose to be on the Lord's side. He testified that he would always remember, "friendship with the world means enmity against God" (v. 4).

In the quest to be like Romans in Rome, many people have missed the Kingdom track. It takes special grace of God not to fall into series of temptations luring people into hell at this age. Ungodly lifestyle is rampant and only the spiritually sensitive ones will overcome. However, God has not left His children without a guide. He offered us the right approach to worldliness. We are to submit to God, resist every attempt of the devil and be aware of his devices. Pursue purity and humility by all means. The Bible warns, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what's God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism." Colossians 3:25

RBT Passage: Genesis 42-43

"The true test of conviction is how we respond when everything opposes our faith." **T.Thomas**

Monday, January 14

Genesis 45:1-8

GOD SENT ME TO PRESERVE YOU

"But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" Genesis 45:7

There is power in vision. One of the major factors for leadership success is vision. An example of a leader that conceived and lived by vision in the Bible is Joseph, the son of Jacob. On different occasions when he should have behaved contrary to his vision, Joseph did not allow circumstances to change his God-given vision. When he should have justifiably taken revenge against his brothers, Joseph stood by his vision. He knew God has sent him ahead of his brothers to save their lives and preserve a remnant for the house of Israel. He said this repeatedly (Gen. 45:5, 7; 50:20). This was in line with the purpose of God for the children of Israel (Gen. 46:3-4).

God used Joseph to incubate the family of Jacob to become a nation of Israel. What has God sent you here to do and achieve? A visionless life is a purposeless, useless and fruitless life. Have you got hold of the purpose for your existence? Hold it firmly. The pursuit of your purpose for living will determine your success in life. If you have not discovered your life's purpose, it is not too late to approach the throne of grace now for direction. Let your life be a blessing to your generation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "As you come to Him, the living Stone- rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him" 1 Peter 2:4

RBT Passage: Genesis 44-46

"Act as if what you do makes a difference, it does."

- Williams James

Tuesday, January 15

Numbers 11:24-30

THE SPIRIT RESTED ON THE ELDERS

"...He took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied..." Numbers 11: 25

It is a popular saying that the most difficult set of humans to lead is human being. For one human being to lead another human being takes a lot of effort and a level of spiritual authority. In essence, leadership requires the power of the Holy Spirit to succeed. When Moses asked for more hands to carry out his leadership role, God took part of His Spirit in him and poured it on the seventy chosen elders and they prophesied. Jesus instructed his disciples to wait until they receive the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). Of course, these disciples could not do anything until the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 2).

There are other spirits that are not of God which lead people today. However, Jesus says, "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. 7:16). Every child of God should be able to discern the spirit leading their leaders before submitting to such authority. The Bible says we should test every spirit to be sure of the ones that are genuine (1 John 4:1). Any spirit that works contrary to the revealed Word of God is of the devil. Let the Spirit of God indwell you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations." Revelations 2: 26

RBT Passage: Genesis 47-50

"It takes each of you to make a difference for all of us"

– Jackie Mutcheson

Wednesday, January 16

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

APOSTLES ARE FOOLS FOR CHRIST

"We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, we are dishonoured" 1 Corinthians 4:10

A young lady refused to surrender her life to Christ after being witnessed to by her friend. The major reason she gave was "Christianity is a foolish man's religion." She said Jesus taught His followers to love their enemies and do good to those who hate them. He also urged his followers to turn the right cheek when they slapped the left. "It takes a foolish person to abide by these injunctions," she concluded. Paul, in today's passage says apostles "are fools for Christ." This means they were completely sold to following and obeying Christ and could not claim any right, as any other person outside Christ could do. No one can do this without looking like a fool to the world. However, there is a need to understand that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who have been saved it is the power of God..." (1 Cor. 1:18).

Are you looking like a fool in some ways because of your determination to fully obey the Lord? Are you trying to compromise some areas of your life so you can look "wise" to the world? It is possible some people are making jest of you because of your stand in Christ. It is good to be a fool in Christ for the reward is unquantifiable. Those who played it wise yesterday are regretting it today. Stand on the path of honour.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this prosperity will come to you. Job 21:22

RBT Passage: Exodus 1-4

'There is no event so commonplace but that God is present, leaving you room to recognize or not to recognize Him.'

- Frederick Buechner

Thursday, January 17

Philippians 1:22-26

SHARING LIFE IN CHRIST NOW

"...through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me" Philippians 1:26, NIV

There are usually three reactions to the demise of a person. Some would be sorrowful because of the gains they derive from the life of the deceased; some may be happy because of the trouble that would end with the exit of the person from the world while some may not be moved because the life of the deceased had no consequence for them.

Paul once struggled on the decision to go and rest in the Lord or to continue to live. He counted dying as more profitable to him because that would mean rest to him. However, he preferred to continue to live so as to add value to the body of Christ. Paul's concept of living was to be a blessing to his generation. We have a lesson to learn from Paul. Our lives must be blessings to our generation. God has not preserved us for our own selfish reasons. Jesus saved us so that we can be instruments of positive change to others. . People must derive great benefits from our lives wherever we find ourselves. Let your life add value to your constituency.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." Romans 2:13

RBT Passage: Exodus 5-7

'What grieves you is a clue to something you are assigned to heal. What you hate is a clue to something you are assigned to correct.' - **Mike Murdock**

Friday, January 18

Philippians 1:27-30

BELIEVING IN AND SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" Phil 1:29-30

After a powerful and inspired message on commitment at a seminary chapel, the student preacher gave an invitation to those who are ready to suffer for Christ. The response was not very encouraging. This is the trend in the church today; people claim to believe in Christ but are not ready to suffer for Him. Children of God should not be swept away by popular prosperity message of today. Jesus did not call his disciples to come and enjoy with him but rather to "carry their cross daily and follow" him (Luke 9:23). This invitation has not been reviewed.

Our faith in Christ may bring some elements of suffering some times. We need to understand that we have been granted grace not just to believe in Christ but to also suffer for His sake, if that will bring glory to God and advance the course of the gospel. We should all be ready to forsake our comfort zones for the sake of Christ and his gospel. Some people paid for what we are enjoying today we should be willing to sacrifice for others as well. Be ready to pay whatever is required of you to promote the kingdom of God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like him" Romans 6;5

RBT Passage: Exodus 8-10

'Whether we're aware of it or not, at every moment of our existence we're encountering God... who is trying to...draw us into a reciprocal conscious relationship.' – **William Barry**

Saturday, January 19

Philippians 1:3-11

SHARING GOD'S GRACE

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me" Philippians 1:7, NIV

A group of people visited a mission field sometime. They saw what the missionary couple was passing through and felt sorry for them. To the visitors' surprise, the missionaries responded cheerfully and said they enjoyed what they were doing because the grace of God had always been sufficient for them.

Our interpretation of the grace of God most times is about enjoyment of life. Paul, in today's passage shows us another dimension of the grace of God. Sharing in the grace of God involves standing by or partnering with those who are proclaiming the gospel of salvation by whatever means. It is by God's grace we have a part in the gospel. We share this grace when we work as a team to spread the gospel. Are there some ways you need to share God's grace? Have you been overlooking some contributions you can make to hold the weak hands of those spreading the gospel? Decide to share the grace that has been given to you in the gospel. Don't take this grace in vain.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "No longer will they teach their neighbours, or say to one another," Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." Hebrews 8:11

RBT Passage: Exodus 11-13

'Don't treat people the way they treat you. Treat people the way God treats.' – Dave Willis

Sunday, January 20

Philippians 1:12-21

TELLING THE GOOD NEWS

“Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” Philippians 1:14, NIV

Fear has been one major weapon the devil uses to prevent believers from preaching the gospel. While we are comfortable to discuss several subjects with colleagues, friends or neighbours, sharing the gospel becomes difficult to us. We suddenly become dumb and instantly keep mute when we have to preach the gospel. The early Apostles conquered fear first before they could exercise freedom to share the gospel. Paul testifies that his being in prison had opened the door of opportunity for others to preach the gospel. Instead of feeling sorry for himself being in chain, he rejoiced that the scope of the gospel was being expanded.

Today, the challenge to you is to overcome the fear of sharing the gospel message to others. There are people you might have once determined to witness to, but you have been keeping quiet because of fear. You can go and exercise your freedom of speech in preaching the gospel by going in the power of the Lord to declare the gospel message to them. Fear is of the devil and it brings slavery. Boldness is of God and it brings freedom. Go and tell the good news to others now and experience the grace that follows the Gospel of Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. John 2:23

RBT Passage: Exodus 14-16

‘As we walk to create light for others, we naturally light our own way’ – Mary Anne Radmacher

Monday, January 21

Isaiah 52:13-53:9

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering...and we esteemed him not.” Isa 53:3

A programme was organized by a highly rated organisation in Nigeria. Publicity was very high and big people had been invited. The guest minister was still being awaited after about half hour to the commencement of the programme when most invited dignitaries were already seated. When it was becoming prolonged, they decided to look for alternatives. However, they were shocked to learn that the guest minister came earlier in a taxi but was not allowed beyond the gate. They were expecting somebody who would come in a flashy car with so much noise. That was the first lesson for the day.

Jesus is the One that introduced the concept of suffering servant leadership. Prophet Isaiah gives a graphic picture of who this leader would be and Jesus fulfilled every word of this prophecy. Jesus, the greatest leader that ever lived gives us a picture of true and genuine leadership. He became a suffering servant for the purpose of redeeming humankind. It is strange in our society today to refer to a leader/boss as a suffering servant. What we see all around even in the church today is the picture of pride and display of human ego. Imagine a campus student fellowship leader who is still very young takes pride in being addressed as “Papa” and cannot even carry his Bible again. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus and learn the true heart of leadership.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “So that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God’s power.” 1 Corinthians 2:5

RBT Passage: Exodus 17-20

‘I’ve seen and met angels wearing the disguise of ordinary people living ordinary lives’ – Tracy Chapman

LEARNING GODLY WAYS IN HUMILITY

“It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees” Psalm 119:71, NIV

At an ordination programme of a pastor, the ordinant positively embarrassed an old woman during his appreciation speech. He asked the woman to stand up in the congregation. He told the audience that the old teacher gave him the best discipline while in primary school 30 years ago. According to him, the woman gave him six strokes of cane for his misdeeds then. That discipline became a turning point in his life.

The psalmist understands what God's discipline does for a penitent heart. It turns out to be a point of strength and step to growth in life's race. Those who consider God's discipline from a positive perspective grow to become great and valuable to their generation. The scripture enjoins us to regard hardship as discipline because God as a good Father, allows us to pass through this for our good. It is to make us mature and productive in life and ministry (Heb. 12:5-11). Are you passing through some hard moments that are shaking you to the root? Can you see God taking you through this as a training ground for your future usefulness and productivity? Be humble in the midst of hardship and trials of life. Hold faithfully to your faith at this time, and look forward to a glorious future.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.” Luke 7:7

RBT Passage: Exodus 21-23

‘Live today the way you want to be remembered tomorrow’
– Dillon Burrouhs

Wednesday, January 23

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

MESSAGE OF THE GOOD NEWS

"By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain"

1 Corinthians 15:2, NIV

An Islamic cleric was reportedly preaching from the Bible and pointed out different ways the Bible authenticate Islam. He read some portions of the Old Testament on some religious rituals to back up his claim. Some people believed in his presentation for lack of understanding of what the Christian faith stands for.

Christian faith is not based on religious activities, rituals, miracles or human conduct. Our faith stands on the fact "that Jesus died for our sins, he was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1Cor. 15:3-4, 17). This is the gospel message! What type of good news did you receive and which one are you preaching? Do not be deceived. Our belief in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection brings us salvation. That is the anchor of our faith. This looks too simple to the perishing world. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1Cor. 1:18). Surrender your life to Jesus, believe in his sacrifice on the cross; go out and witness this to the perishing souls.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:5

RBT Passage: Exodus 24-27

'Be not simply good; be good for something'

– Henry David Thoreau

LEARNING OBEDIENCE THROUGH SUFFERING

"Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered." Hebrews 5:8

A young man, the only child of his parents, after his graduation from university said that God has called him to become a missionary in a remote area. He couldn't be persuaded to change his mind. Life was tough in the first five years that he almost lost his life. Everyone abandoned him but he held on to his faith. Later, some industries were sited in the area and it became "a small London". The young preacher became very influential and wealthy and became the breadwinner of his extended family. His obedience paid off.

Jesus had all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18) yet he willingly surrendered himself and suffered for our salvation. We are expected to have the same mind with Christ, "who made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). We have no better example than Jesus Christ. In our quest to be obedient to God's instructions we can face hardship. This does not mean God has abandoned us. Every faithful biblical character and celebrated men and women of God passed through trials and hardship. Whatever situation you find yourself, do not veer off the path of obedience.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds."
Isaiah 3:10

RBT Passage: Exodus 28-30

'Go extra mile, it's never crowded' - Anonymous

Friday, January 25

Philippians 2:12-18

SERVE AND WORK FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

"Do everything without grumbling or arguing."

Philippians 2:14

A young man graduated from Teacher's College and was posted to a village. He rejected the posting and sought his brother's help in the Ministry of Education who insisted on his going to the village. Grudgingly, he went but hated his brother. However, he became their acting pastor and everyone loved him. He built a house within two years. He later appreciated his brother. There are eye-service Christians in church today who serve for the praise of people. These are "water Christians" –always looking for easy service. The Bible admonishes us to serve the Lord without grumbling and argument. We should be diligent in service, putting all our efforts to do the best and please God not people.

As a child of God, your service should make people know the type of spirit that resides in you. In doing your assignment, you should "shine among them like stars in the sky" (Phil.2:15). Jesus says, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Work to show the character of Christ in you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come." Mark 13: 7

RBT Passage: Exodus 31-34

'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire' –St. Catherine of Siena

Saturday, January 26

Philippians 2:19-30

ENVOYS OF MINISTRY IN CHRIST'S MISSION

"I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concerns for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interest, not those of Jesus Christ" Phil. 2:20-21

Many churches established in recent times are for profit-making, not for the expansion of the gospel. The vision of some so-called ministers of God is not about Christ or gospel but about money. The concern of some church leaders is not the welfare of people but the benefits they can derive from them. Many people also attend churches not to encounter Jesus Christ and grow in Him but for other ulterior motives.

Paul commended the ministries of Timothy and Epaphroditus in today's passage. While everyone was looking out for their own interest, Timothy was showing genuine concern for the people's welfare and Epaphroditus almost died for the work of Christ (vv. 20, 30). These were true messengers of Christ. They did not serve for personal gains but with total commitment to the cause of the gospel. What motivates you to serve in your church or fellowship? Have you abandoned some assignments because you do not derive personal gains from them? Be a true envoy of Christ. Devote your life to serve people by thinking about how to meet their needs instead of your own welfare. Let us learn from our Lord Jesus, who forsook all to make us to enjoy all.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ." Ephesians 1:9

RBT Passage: Exodus 35-37

"What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and immortal." --Albert Pine

Sunday, January 27

Philippians 2:1-11

YOUR CALL TO UNITY AND HUMILITY

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" Phil. 2:3

A recently converted man from cultism became disappointed when he saw the type of relationship that existed in a church he attended. According to him, he would have gone back to his old way of life if not of his strong conviction in the Lord Jesus. He said he felt more sense of affection in his old community than the church community. Cultists sort after the good of their fellow members more than what obtains in many Christian communities.

A church community that is not expressing sense of affection for one another needs to check its spiritual state. The Church was built on the foundation of love: "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16). "By this shall the world know you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). It is in the atmosphere of love that we can talk of unity, oneness of spirit, humility, and selfless service. Today's passage admonishes us not to do anything out of selfish ambition or vainglory. We are urged to place other people's interest above ours. Our spirit must be united with Christ as we relate with one another (v.5). The closer you are to Christ, the more humble you will be. When the spirit of humility resides in you, it will be easy for to have compassion for others.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18

RBT Passage: Exodus 38-40

"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." – **Apostle Paul**

Monday, January 28

Romans 2:25-29

A MATTER OF THE HEART

"... and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by Spirit, not by written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God." Romans 2:29, NIV

Christianity is not a religion but living out the life of God. Religions of this world are usually based on sets of laws, rules, regulations and codes. People measure their faithfulness by what they are able to do or refrain from doing. Judaism (Jewish religion) is based on the law of circumcision but Jesus came with a lifestyle that is beyond the law.

The Old Testament circumcision was that of the flesh but the New Testament circumcision, introduced by Jesus Christ is of the heart. This is not by obeying a set of rules but through total surrendering of one's life to the lordship of Jesus Christ. No one has been able to obey the law by the circumcision of the flesh. Despite circumcision and religious rituals, the Jews still struggled to obey the laws of God. It is the heart circumcision that gives freedom to obey the law without being coerced. You are not a Christian by the number of religious rules you obey or roles you perform because they cannot justify you before God. You can only please God when you surrender your heart to Jesus Christ and yield totally to the control of the Holy Spirit. Have you experienced heart circumcision? You need this to enjoy intimacy with God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of comfort." 2 Corinthians 1:3

RBT Passage: Leviticus 1-4

'If it is to be, it is up to me.' –Anonymous

PERSISTENT FAITH

“Lord, she replied, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Mark 7:28

Three applicants sat at the office reception of an institution waiting for an interview for a particular juicy job. A man just called from outside “can a servant come and help me get this box inside?” Two of them felt too big to be called servants but the third went to carry the box. They were surprised to see the man who was sorting for help at the head of the table for the interview. He was the General Manager, who had the power to employ. “The servant” eventually got the job.

Some people have lost great opportunities due to ego. Jesus tested the ego of the Syro-Phoenician woman when she came to him for assistance over her sick daughter. Many people would not be able to accommodate such big insult on their personality and race like the woman did. The response of this woman pleased Jesus. She got her request granted immediately. Her daughter was instantly delivered from demonic possession. Can you examine your life if pride is depriving you of some benefits of life? What looks like humiliation to you may be God’s way of teaching you humility. Is your faith undergoing some kind of test? Ask for the spirit of God to help you give appropriate response to the challenge of your life so that you can move to a higher height.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” Isaiah 60:3

RBT Passage: Leviticus 5-7

“Not a great faith we need, but faith in a great God.”

– Hudson Taylor

Wednesday, January 30

2 Corinthians 11:21b-30

PAUL'S SOLID CREDENTIALS FOR MINISTRY

"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." 2 Corinthians 11:30

Have you ever been where somebody was giving testimonies of woes that had befallen him and still show evidence of joy? The testimonies people give in the church these days are full of personal victories and prosperity with little relating to challenges of faith. While the world is boasting of personal achievements and life attainments, Paul places his boasting on his walk with Christ. That has led him to face many hardships and threat to his life, which he counts as evidences and credentials of his ministry. He rejoices in what he suffered in pursuit of his ministry as a servant of Christ. This is quite different from what we consider as evidence of the presence of God.

We often desire victory and a life of affluence. Any appearance of hardship is considered to be of the devil. However, we should remember that God works in diverse ways. He can choose to take us through our own walk of perfection through our pains and suffering. We should not only be willing to identify with the goodness of God, we should also appreciate Him when He is dealing with us in unpleasant ways. This will strengthen us at such times and give us the courage to pull through. In all things be delighted in the power of God that is capable of upholding you in the face of difficulties.

Birthday Blessing: "We know we have come to know him if we keep his commands." 1 John 2:3

RBT Passage: Leviticus 8-10

'The great use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it' - William James

Thursday, January 31

Philippians 3:1-6

BOAST IN CHRIST JESUS

“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” Philippians 3:3

When a man beats his chest in pride, there is something he relies on. The Psalmist says, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalms 20:7). While many people boast of their sphere of influence because of the connections they have, Paul, today's text, encourages us to boast only in Christ. This is because every other connection may fail but our connection with God can never fail. Even when we feel we have made landmark achievements, holding on to those things will still not last. The only connection that will not fail is God.

Paul had many human achievements he could boast of but forsook them and held on to Christ. He did not put confidence in the flesh. He put his entire life on Christ and was not disappointed. What human flesh can achieve cannot stand the test of time. Whatever we are in Christ will stand for eternity. Stop boasting on your intellect, connection, power, position, influence or wealth. Even when you are tempted to sort for alternatives, submit everything at the foot of the cross. God has never disappointed those that put their trust in Him and He will not disappoint you also. Every other thing may fail, only the power of God cannot.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.” Jude 2

RBT Passage: Leviticus 11-13

‘You can’t build a great building on a weak foundation if you’re going to have a strong superstructure’ –Gordon B. Hinckley

Friday, February 1

Philippians 3:17-4:1

LIVE AS HEAVENLY CITIZENS

"... our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20

Citizens who serve as ambassadors in other nations represent the interest of their homeland and must continue to live as citizens of their home countries even on a foreign soil. Same attitude is expected of Christians as we are ambassadors of Christ on earth. In today's text, Apostle Paul alluded to his example of Christian living, charging the brethren not to live as enemies of the cross of Christ by becoming worldly. He reminded the Philippians of the demands of their identity as citizens of heaven who await the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a Christian, you must live with the consciousness of your identity in Christ. It doesn't matter how appealing the patterns of this world are to you, you must always live for Christ. You must not let material gains rule over you, neither must you glory in shameful deeds. Remember that you have a cloud of witnesses around you; the saints gone ahead are watching how you fight. Besides, at the same point where you want to compromise and conform to the pattern of this world, some other believers are standing for Christ. You can be that believer that will stand out and live as a heavenly citizen. Do not compromise your identity.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land" Isaiah 1:19.

RBT Passage: Leviticus 14-15

"I would not give one moment of heaven for all the joy and riches of the world, even if it lasted for thousands and thousands of years." – **Martin Luther**

Saturday, February 2

Philippians 4:2-9

GUARD YOUR HEART AND MIND

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

Often at the close of each day, people do routine security checks, confirming if gates and doors to houses and rooms are shut before going to bed. Those who can afford it also engage the services of hired security officers. But the question is: are people that concerned about the security of their hearts and minds? Having addressed the issue of conflict in the church at Philippi, Apostle Paul instructed the brethren on how their hearts can be guarded. He charged them to develop positive attitudes as they use prayer and thanksgiving as antidotes to anxiety; doing His will allow for the peace of God to guard their hearts.

As the peace of God guards your heart, you must also watch your thinking pattern. If you have to run a security check on your heart now, what kind of things will you find there? How will you rate the songs you listen to, the films you watch, the sites you visit on the internet, the gist you partake in and the things you reflect on? Can they be said to be things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy? You must guard your heart and mind against pollutions and threats of all sorts.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “...your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear.” Isa 58:8

RBT Passage: Leviticus 16-18

“We must guard our minds and our hearts, starting with our eyes.” — Craig Groeschel

BE OF THE SAME MIND

"...I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press towards the goal to win the prize...in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

In May 1954, Roger Bannister covered a mile in 4 minutes, breaking world record. In June of the same year, John Landy beat that record by 1.4 seconds. Then in August, both athletes came for the last lap and Landy was apparently going to win that race until he lost focus. He couldn't resist looking back over his shoulder to wonder about Bannister's position. As he looked back, his pace dropped and Bannister got to break the tape before him. Landy later said, "I would have won the race if I hadn't looked back: if I hadn't taken my eyes off the goal."

Today's passage reveals the importance Paul attached to his walk with God, his desire to know more of God, and his ever-increasing passion to press on towards the goal of his calling in Christ Jesus. The Christian life is a journey and the kind of company you keep can aid or hamper your journey. Are you surrounded by people like Paul whose example of Christian living can boost yours? Are you blinded by the feats of yesteryears that you no longer make progress today? Don't be like Landy; instead, be like Paul: forget about what is behind, and strain towards what is ahead.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land..." Isa 58:11

RBT Passage: Leviticus 19-21

"If there is such a thing as good leadership, it is to give a good example." – Ingvar Kamprad

Monday, February 4

Matthew 16:13-20

SON OF THE LIVING GOD

"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'" Matthew 16:16

While, teaching students how to do literature review, a lecturer insisted that the student should not stop at merely parroting what others have said about the subject matter. Instead, they should go on to engage the authors and come up with their own opinions about the subject of discussion. In today's text, Jesus asked His disciples the all-important question on the subject of His identity. Like those students, the disciples were quick to recount others' opinion of Jesus' identity. But the Master pushed further. He wanted to know the disciples' opinion of His identity. Peter, of course, had the right answer: he acknowledged that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

What is your opinion of Jesus' identity? Is He just what your parents, Sunday School teachers, pastors or world-wide evangelists say He is? Jesus affirmed that God Himself had revealed the Son's identity to Peter. Having a correct view of the Son of God attracts blessings such as divine commissioning, destiny establishment and divine authority. You need a personal revelation of the Son of God. Rise beyond what others say of the Lord, seek to know Him personally so that you can also be a witness of His sonship.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Do not withhold your mercy from me, LORD; may your love and faithfulness always protect me." Psalm 40:11

RBT Passage: Leviticus 22-23

"...We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son... full of grace and truth." -**The Holy Bible**

I AM THE LORD

"I will make known my holy name among my people Israel...and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel." Ezekiel 39:7

Chidinma became fatherless a month before her wedding; then, she lost her fiancé a week to the set wedding date. She was so devastated and overwhelmed by the bouts of tragedy around her but she cried out to the Lord. Soon after, the Lord comforted her and settled her with a loving young man who helped her achieve all her goals that seemed to be going down the drain with the earlier tragedies. Looking back at her days of tragedy and her current breakthrough, Chidinma declared that the Lord is indeed good.

Like Chidinma, Israel had been under the affliction of some nations until God showed Himself mighty as He came to the rescue of His people. God did this to ensure that His name was not profaned among the nations. He did this to declare His holiness and sovereignty among the nations. The victory was so great that the weapons of their enemies were to serve as fuel for seven years and the Israelites were to continue to enjoy the plunders. What troubles and afflictions are you enduring now? God is willing and able to show up for you. He will do it for His name's sake; He will do it to declare His holiness and sovereignty before the enemies. You only need to call on Him to show Himself mighty in your situation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail..." Jeremiah 20:11

RBT Passage: Leviticus 24-25

"When you come to the end, that's where God begins."

– Mitch Albom

Wednesday, February 6

1 Peter 2:1-8

GROW INTO A PRECIOUS SPIRITUAL HOUSE

“...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood....” 1 Peter 2:5

A tour round a developing area will reveal stages of building constructions. While some buildings are on foundation level some have gone to window level or even lintel level. While some are just being roofed, others are being plastered, and some others are undergoing finishing and furnishing. Some houses may appear more beautiful than others; but what makes a house really beautiful is how strong it is. Houses that appear attractive today are so because the builders built on the right foundation, used the right materials, kept at their jobs and did not abandon the building at any level before its completion.

Today's text stresses the need to get rid of unwholesome 'materials' such as malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander in order to keep growing into a precious spiritual house. Instead, believers are enjoined to crave spiritual milk which is profitable for proper spiritual growth. It is as you come to Jesus, the living Stone, the precious Cornerstone, that you are built into a precious spiritual house. Is your spiritual growth rooted in Christ Jesus? Are you building your Christian life on the right foundation and with the correct materials? If you will grow into a precious spiritual house, your life must not harbour unwholesome materials such as listed above. Keep growing, don't stop.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding...” Colossians 1:9b

RBT Passage: Leviticus 26-27

“Becoming like Christ is a long, slow process of growth.”

– Rick Warren

MAJESTY OF GOD'S RULE

"The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure." Psalm 93:1

In a Home Economics' class, the teacher cited the example of a traditional ruler whose robes were always seamless as they were custom-made for him. The royal father was praised for the splendour of his appearance and for the expanse of his domain. God is incomparably awesome in majesty. The psalmist makes it clear that God is robed in majesty and armed with strength; His domain transcends the earth and His reign is from eternity. The seas acknowledge and respond to His majesty, His palace is beautified with holiness and His rule is not limited to time.

When nature declares the majesty of God, what are you doing to acknowledge and sing His praise? You only need to pay attention to all that God created around you and then let ceaseless praise flow from your inner being to the Most High God. Reflect this day on the wonders of creation and let the mighty deeds of God spur you to deep worship of God for His majestic rule. Join the composer of Baptist Hymnal 118 to sing: "Majestic sweetness sits enthroned upon the Saviour's brow; His head with radiant glories crowned, His lips with grace overflow."

- **Birthday Blessing:** "May the LORD cause you to flourish.... May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 115:14-15

RBT Passage: Numbers 1-2

"Happy the soul that has been awed by a view of God's majesty." – A. W. Pink

Friday, February 8

Psalm 48:4-8

RULERS ASTOUNDED WITH CITY OF GOD

"When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together, they saw her and were astounded; they fled in terror." Psalm 48:4-5

A Yoruba proverb says one who has not visited another man's farmland will conclude that his own farm is largest. So is the experience of the kings and rulers in today's text. Kings and rulers are known for splendour and glamour; yet in this passage, kings in their combined honour and majesty cannot beat the glamour of the City of God. The rulers are seized with shock, terror and trembling. They are gripped with pain and destruction at the sight of the City of God. These are rulers considered supreme in their domains; yet they are astounded and terrified seeing the City of God because God is her security.

Are you overwhelmed by the strength of opposition against you and you feel incapable to face your adversaries? Then, check your source; check your root in God. As long as you are connected to God, your security and victory is sure. Do you feel worthless and de-graded; revisit your fellowship with God. He is able to beautify your life and make you a wonder to many. The presence of God in a person's life is what makes the whole difference. Be connected always to God and He will beautify you and confound your adversaries.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "He raises the poor from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and makes them inherit a throne of honour...." 1 Samuel 2:8-9

RBT Passage: Numbers 3-4

"One man called to God is worth a hundred who have elected to work for God." –Oswald Chambers

Saturday, February 9

1 Corinthians 14:26-33a

BUILD UP EACH OTHER IN WORSHIP

"When you come together....Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." 1 Corinthians 14:26

The building process involves the inputs of different people who perform different roles to ensure the delivery of a well-constructed house. Imagine if a bricklayer wants to steal the show without allowing other workers to play their roles, or an electrician not allowing the plumber or the painter carry out his role. The product of such a building process will definitely be defective. Worship, like the building metaphor, is also enriched by the variety of roles played by different worship participants.

In this passage, Apostle Paul charged the Corinthian Christians to promote a variety of roles that culminates in appropriate building up of the church. He encouraged them to tow the path of orderliness in their use of spiritual gifts as God is not a God of disorder. How do you use your spiritual gifts? Do you see the gifts as an avenue for beefing up your self-importance or as a means of serving the Lord and blessing His Church? When God chooses to use another person to accomplish what you 'normally' do in worship, do you sit there judging and running the individual down or you graciously embrace the blessings of God through this other vessel? Worship roles are not anybody's exclusive right. Seek to build others up and to be built up in worship.

- **Birthday Blessing:** 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts, I will be their God, and they will be my people.' Jeremiah 31:33

RBT Passage: Numbers 5-6

"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another." – **Charles Dickens**

Sunday, February 10

Psalm 48:1-3, 9-14

PRAISE GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE IN WORSHIP

"Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness." Psalm 48:9-10

In Yoruba land, kings' courts are characterised with on-going praise-singing. There are people whose main duty is to chant the kings' praise, tell of the kings exploits and those of their forebears, and speak of the splendour of their reign. While these earthly kings can never be compared with the Sovereign God, the events of praise-singing in their courts are instructive to believers. Psalm 48 affirms that God deserves ultimate praise for who He is. His name, the beauty of His place of abode and His deeds among His people are all testifying to His greatness.

Pause for a moment and reflect on God's awesomeness. Give Him the praise that is due Him for who He is, for what He is doing in and around you and for what heaven and earth, as His handiwork, declare about Him. As you go for worship this morning, meditate on God's unfailing love and let praise rise to God from within His temple. Beyond the praise that you offer God in church, the physical temple, let your life be the spiritual temple from which praise arises to the throne of God on a regular basis.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will tell of the kindness of the LORD, the deed for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us...." Isaiah 63:7

RBT Passage: Numbers 7

"Daily as I live, often as I breathe, let my whole life be expression of your grace." – **Chris Morgan**

Monday, February 11

Psalm 56:1-8

IN GOD I TRUST

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Psalm 56:3-4

On the school play-ground, Kunle, a J.S 1 student, felt uncomfortable and threatened by the bullying acts of some senior students. He then made a quick decision to run for safety in the arms of the senior prefect who was his 'school father'. While in his safe arms, he looked back at the bullies and watched them as they pant like toothless dog. Like Kunle, David was bullied by the Philistines when they seized him in Gath. In this psalm, David recalled his prayer for mercy and deliverance on account of the conspiracy of the enemies against him. He also expressed his confidence in the secured Everlasting Arms who keep records of his pains and misery.

Are you also encumbered with a load of care, burdened by conspiracies against you? Then, run to God for deliverance, safety and succour. Are you threatened by the devil and his agents? Are you scared of possible attacks from cultists and drug-addicts on your campus? Are you under a threat of not graduation because you refused to compromise your faith? Like David, run to God for safety, call on Him for mercy and He will show up for you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid..."
Psalm 27:1-2

RBT Passage: Numbers 8-10

"Are you weary, are you heavyhearted ...Tell it to Jesus alone." – **Jeremiah Eames Rankin**

Tuesday, February 12

Luke 18:9-14

GOD LISTENS TO THE HUMBLE

"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 18:14

A rich girl turned down the marriage proposal of a poor boy, spiting that his monthly salary was less than what she spends daily. Ten years later they ran into each other in a shopping mall and the girl spitefully announced how much her husband was earning to the boy who had proposed to her years before. As she ranted on, her husband came to the scene, greeted the other man with enthusiasm and introduced him to his wife as his kind boss who is paying him so much. In shock, the girl could no longer say a word.

Jesus observed some self-righteous people who were looking down on others and He told a parable to illustrate that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. The arrogant Pharisee in the parable declared his self-acclaimed righteousness by comparing himself with a tax collector. The tax collector on the other hand was begging God for mercy not minding who was around. Don't look down on others; don't judge others' progress by yours. Like that rich girl, your show of arrogance is only an indicator of your un-mastered weakness which will soon run you down if you do not repent.

- **Birthday Blessing:** He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness..." 1 Samuel 2:8-9

RBT Passage: Numbers 11-13

"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self."

– Ernest Hemingway

FAITH TESTED BY FIRE

"...though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith..." 1 Peter 1:6a-7

Tough times', Robert H. Schuller says, 'never last, but tough people do!' This saying summarises the life and ministry experience of Charles Edwin Smith who was the only survivor of four American Baptist missionaries who arrived the shores of Nigeria in 1884. In addition to the loss of his missionary partners, he also lost two wives one after the other. One would think he would abandon the mission field to go and lick his wounds. But he was resilient. He stayed on and later became the founding father of a foremost theological institution which has been training God-called individuals for 120 years now.

Having offered praise to God in this passage, Apostle Peter acknowledges that the brethren may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. But he states that the suffering is only for a while if compared with the praise, glory and honour that lie ahead. He makes it clear that the trials are meant to prove the genuineness of their faith. Don't give up because of the tough times you are passing through. The hardship is not meant to break you but to make you and you will come out stronger with your faith proven beyond every iota of doubt.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

RBT Passage: Numbers 14-15

"Breakdown comes before breakthrough." – **Doug Addison**

Thursday, February 14

James 5:7-12

THE LORD IS NEAR IN SUFFERING

“You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.” James 5:8

Suffering is an unwanted, yet inevitable, part of life. Often, our favourite song is ‘Me I no go suffer, I no go beg for bread.’ Yet, we feel the presence of God strongly and appreciate His intervention better at the face of serious challenges and suffering. Alluding to how a farmer waits patiently for the yield of his farm, Apostle James admonished the brethren to wait patiently and be firm having the consciousness that the Lord is near. He gave instances of prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord yet were not immune to suffering, calling attention to how Job’s perseverance ended in glory.

Are you wondering where the face of God is in the midst of your challenges? Or are you wondering why the good God will ever allow you to suffer? Note that the Lord is near you even in your troubles. Like he did for Job and other saints of old by showing up strong on their behalf, God will show up for you. God will grant you the grace to endure the challenges of the moment and come out unhurt and stronger. Believe in the unchanging power of God and you will experience His ever-abiding presence.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1

RBT Passage: Numbers 16-18

“The darkest night brings the brightest stars.”

– James B. Comey

Friday, February 15

Joshua 4:19-24

CROSSING THE JORDAN ON DRY LAND

“For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan until you have crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea....” Joshua 4:23

William Cowper would have committed suicide but for God’s intervention. His life was in total disarray and constant depression that led to mania in some cases. God used Mary Unwin to care for him. The unexpected turnarounds in his life made him to write the hymn “God works in a mysterious way... He plants His footsteps in the sea.”

Today’s passage records a turnaround: the Israelites passed through river Jordan on dry land miraculously and rested at Gilgal. Joshua set up the twelve stones they had carried from the river as a memorial at Gilgal. He admonished the people to use the monument to teach their children what God did for them at Jordan and at the Red Sea. God wrought the miracle for everyone to know that He is powerful and for them to fear Him always. Are you in a hopeless situation like Cowper? Trust God for intervention. Have you experienced God’s mysterious works? Share the testimony of His wonders to encourage others. God saved, helped and delivered you so that you can know Him more as the all-powerful and faithful God. You should also reverence Him by keeping His Word. This is the guarantee for your future breakthrough.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...” Isaiah 43:2a

RBT Passage: Numbers 19-21

“A God wise enough to create me and the world is enough to watch out for me.” – Philip Yancey

Saturday, February 16

Psalm 66:10-15

GOD'S GRACE FOR HARD TESTING

"For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver...we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance ..." Psalm 66:10, 12

Jim and Carolyn Murphy in their book *"An International Minister's Manual"* cited a certain minister who had invested years of his life in the Bible school and seminary of a denomination. One day, the elders took a decision to dismiss him, not for any misdemeanour in his life or ministry; but because he was too "Bible centred." They needed someone a little more flexible. The minister was thrown into confusion. It was a hard testing, but God vindicated him.

The psalmist in his thought reckons that it is God who is behind his trials. He understands that God is the One refining him by making him pass through fire and water, and causing men to ride over him. Time of distress is a testing period, but the psalmist sees God fulfilling His purpose through all these trials. He does not think God is evil, but that He makes the testing to fulfil His own purpose. God makes His grace available in such moments of hard testing. His grace is the unsolicited divine help through the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a person. With the supernatural grace of God, no testing can knock out a child of God. Are you passing through your own test? Turn to God for His unfailing grace and you will be victorious.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory..." Psalm 84:11

RBT Passage: Numbers 22-24

Grace is God's ability covering up your inability and disability. – **Moses Aransiola**

Sunday, February 17

Psalm 66:1-9, 16-20

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS MIGHTY WORKS

"Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf." Psalm 66:5

When Folliot Sandford Pierprint wrote the hymn '*For the beauty of the Earth*' at age 29, he was walking in the countryside on a beautiful spring day. He admired the ocean of green, the blue dome of heaven and "The winding Avon River cutting through the Flowery landscape." He gave expression to the awesome wonderful works of God so much that every verse of the hymn ended with a call of praise to God. The psalmist recollects how God delivered the Israelite at the Red sea, by turning the sea into dry land for His people to walk through. God rules over the universe by his power. His eyes are watching the entire nation of the world and no form of rebellion could rise up against Him no matter how much humans try.

There were two notable invitations in this passage. The psalmist invites us to "Come and see" (v.5) and to "come and listen" (v.16). That means God's mighty works can be seen and heard by those who fear him. Look around you today and praise God for the mighty works of preservation, protection, provision and restoration He is doing in your life. You are a mighty work in progress. Praise for that God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** He will not suffer thy feet to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Psalm 121:3

RBT Passage: Numbers 25-26

Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.- Coleridge

Monday, February 18

Deuteronomy 32:10-14

GOD SUSTAINS AND CARES FOR JACOB

“In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye.” Deuteronomy 32:10, NIV

The apple of the eye is the aperture in it, which allows rays of light to fall on the retina where the images of this are formed. Because it is very delicate, it is usually protected at all costs. Etymologically, the word apple used by Moses in describing God's care for Israel was translated from the Hebrew word, *ishon* which means “the little man of the eye.” Moses described how God took extraordinary care of the Israelites in the wilderness, even when they were undeserving. The wilderness was full of fiery serpents, scorpions, snakes and wild animals, yet God protected them.

The psalmist enumerated many ways by which God took care of them. He found Israel in a barren and howling waste; He shielded him, cared for him, and guarded him as the apple of his eye. He also led him, fed him, nourished him and made him to ride on the heights of the land (vv. 11-13). Each one of God's children including you is an apple of His eye. He will always protect you from being hurt or destroyed. Whatever you are passing through right now, just remember that God is committed to taking care of you. You can completely put your trust in Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “For this is what the Lord Almighty says:... for whoever touches you touches the apples of his eyes.” Zechariah 2:8

RBT Passage: Numbers 27-29

“Keep my commandments and live and my teaching as the apple of your eye.” –The Holy Bible

Tuesday, February 19

Psalm 121

TRUST GOD, NO NEED TO FEAR

"The Lord shall preserve the from all evil, he shall preserve the soul." Psalm 121:7

Psalm 121 is perhaps one of the most popular passages of the Bible. It has been referred to as the soldiers or travellers' psalm. It is a psalm that encourages us to put our confidence in God. Rather than look up for help from the hills or other creature that can expire or be removed, the Psalmist resolves to look to God for help. There is no help in heaven or the earth, but in God alone.

The psalmist believes that when God volunteers to help, all fears will cease. He enumerates a number of things God does as One who is greater than the hills and mountains, with their sheer sizes and contours. He will not allow our feet to be moved. He gives sure footing so that no one will slip or fall. God does not slumber or sleep. He is aware of every detail of your life. Even when it seems like He does not care, He is still there working things for your favour. When the devil attacks your faith with fear, reaffirm your faith in God by mediating on His word and speaking these words with faith. At the end of it all, you will see the hand of God in every situation that appears difficult and you will give glory to Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** For the Lord God will help you, therefore shall you not be confounded..." Isaiah 50:7

RBT Passage: Numbers 30-32

"You may trust the Lord for little, but you can never trust Him too much." -Anonymous

THE LORD WILL HELP YOU

"Do not be afraid...for I myself will help you," declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 4:14

The phrase "God is a Nigerian " was on the lips of every Nigerian, even non soccer enthusiasts following the brilliant performance of the U23 team during the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. The Argentines were leading 2-1 by the 74th minute of the finals. The whole world had concluded that the game was over. Even spectators walked out of the stadium in Georgia, concluding that the indomitable Argentines would win the cup. But then, the tide changed, thanks to the last minute goals by Daniel Amokachi and Emmanuel Amunike that brought the score line to 3-2 in favour of the unsung Nigeria players. We, in Nigeria, believed God helped our U23 team to defeat the dreaded soccer nation- Argentina.

God repeatedly urged his people not to be afraid or dismayed in this passage. About three times, God insisted that He would personally help "Little Israel." He referred to Israel as a worm, helpless, weak and very vulnerable to being destroyed but promised to act and help Israel against all odds because He had not forgotten his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That covenant, renewed and rebranded is extended to us as believers in Jesus Christ. Even at the eleventh hour, God will help you and will never allow you to be ashamed. Trust in Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen evil. Psalm 90:15

RBT Passage: Numbers 33-36

Come near to God. He is your friend. - **Bunjiro**

Thursday, February 21

Nahum 1:2-8

GOD OVERPOWERS ADVERSARIES

"The Lord is a jealous and avenging God...The Lord takes vengeance in his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies." Nahum 1:2

We may want to be curious about knowing "who is God's enemy"? God is no enemy to anyone simply because He created everyone and desires to relate lovingly with all his creatures. However, human beings decided to turn themselves to God's enemies by rejecting him and his ways. As Nahum declares God's intention for His enemies in his prophecy, one is apt to ask "Is God not overbearing?" The answer a resounding No! He created everyone and is entitled to exercise His authority over what He created.

As every inventor has complete patent over his invention, so does God over His creation. However, when God acts, He is just in His judgment toward all who oppose Him and His kingdom. Therefore, He is to be feared by His enemies because of four reasons: (1) He is a jealous God. (2) He takes revenge on His enemies. (3) He is full of wrath when His enemies become unrepentantly stubborn (4) He does not forget His anger at His enemies. In other words, no matter how long it takes, God's anger will come upon His enemies. Be a friend of God because His "... mercy is better than life (itself) (Psalm 63:3 GW). Reconcile with Him so you can continue to enjoy His constant love.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory..." Ps. 84:11.

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 1-2

"You may juggle human laws, you may fool with human courts, but there is a judgment to come, and from it there is no appeal." - Gifford

Friday, February 22

John 17:11-15

GOD'S PROTECTION THROUGH ONENESS

"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name...so that they may be one as we are one." John 17:11

It's often been said that it is easier to kill one snake that is moving alone than to confront a group of about 10 snakes moving together. That demonstrates the power of unity or oneness. After praying for Himself extensively, Jesus prayed for His disciples, focusing on two main issues: the protection and sanctification of the disciples. Jesus identified the source of their protection which is the power of the Father, *"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name..."* (v.11). He further stated the goal of the protection, *"...so that they may be one as we are one"* (17:11b). The goal of protecting believers is for their unity. Jesus desired that His followers will be one in purpose, goal and direction just as He is with the Father.

Furthermore, the nature of the protection is not removal from the world, but victory over the world. Many times, God does not prevent challenges or remove his children from difficult circumstances, rather, His protection do come to us in form of grace to endure and ability to overcome. Because followers of Jesus would certainly come under attack of Satan and his cohorts, He prayed earnestly for our protection, especially when we are united. Endeavour to maintain the unity of Spirit in your church or fellowship.

- **Birthday Blessing:** For I will give you words and wisdom that come of your adversaries will be able to resist or contract. Luke 21:15.

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 3-4

"Help thy brother's boat across, and lo! Thine own has reached the shore." – Anonymous

Saturday, February 23

Psalm 140:1-8

DELIVERANCE FROM VIOLENT PEOPLE

“Rescue me, LORD, from evildoer; protect me from the violent who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war everyday.” Psalm 140:1-2

The genocide attack of Adolf Hitler against the Jews is one of the most violent and cruel events of the 20th century. Though millions were killed in the holocaust, God eventually rescued the Jews from the Nazis. The nation of Israel still exists and remains strong today in spite of similar attacks. The violent, according to David in this passage, are evildoers and wicked people who plan evil and wage war daily. He cried to God for His mercy to rescue him, protect him and keep him safe. This is because he has experiential knowledge of Him as Sovereign LORD, my God, my deliverer who will not allow the desires and plans of the wicked to succeed. Though they spit poison as vipers and set snares and traps for him, God will be his shield and strong deliverer.

Are you passing through turbulent times stirred up by a difficult lecturer, supervisor, boss or political leader? You need to examine yourself, confess and forsake your sins; then ask for God's mercy and intervention. He is the God of all flesh; with Him nothing is impossible. He will truncate their wicked schemes. Seek to know more of God through daily study and meditation in His Word so that you can understand the victory that Christ has won for your sake.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel” Jeremiah 15:21

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 5-8

“The violent winds of suffering and trouble blow us into the Lord's protective hands.” Sadhu Sundar Singh

Sunday, February 24

Psalm 91:1-8, 11-16

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PROTECTION

“Because he loves me’, says the LORD, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.” Psalm 91:14

A Nigerian gospel minister once shared a testimony of his experience during an impending airplane crash. While everyone was panicking, he was calm because he was sure that God is in charge and would protect him. You too can have such confidence. The psalmist chronicles the benefits that those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High God; who know and trust Him personally as their refuge and fortress, will enjoy. These include deliverance from deadly pestilence, terror of the night, arrows of the day and plagues of the midday. The angels will guard them and keep them from stumbling. God also promised to rescue and protect those that love Him assuring them of long life and prosperity.

You can also be sure of God's unfailing protection in all aspects of your life. The condition is to dwell in His presence daily through personal meditations and prayers as well as fellowship with God's children. You need to know God personally and love Him genuinely - not serving Him for what you want to get from Him but for who He is. When you live according to His will, these promises of God's guidance, protection from sickness, death and all evils will become real and active.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 9-11

“The very gates of hell cannot make us stumble unless we choose to remove ourselves from His protection and power.” –Larry Libby

Monday, February 25

Proverbs 25:2-7a

WAIT TO ENTER THE KING'S PRESENCE

‘Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among great men...’ Proverbs 25:6-7a

Many people want to be in great position. Some of them do not understand that “the heights that great men attained were not reached in a night but while their colleagues were sleeping, they continued to toil all through the night.” Patience and diligence have helped many people to move from the least to the highest position in a company. Some professors of today who began their education from an unknown village can now rob minds with global scholars.

Today’s passage also affirms simplicity, patience and humility as virtues of great men, those who can stand before kings. The arrogant and wicked people are like dross that needs to be removed from the silver of leadership so that the throne can be established in righteousness. Kings are endowed by God to search out a matter, they prefer to identify potentials of greatness in people and invite them instead of those that exalt themselves to claim a place among great men. You need to wait patiently for your season of manifestation while you continually work diligently. Your gifts will make room for you. God exalts the humble but brings down the arrogant. Do not let your academic prowess get into your heads, embrace simplicity and integrity. Resist get-rich quick syndrome and trust in God at all times.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank” Prov. 20:29

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 12-15

“My chief duty is to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble” –Helen Keller

Tuesday, February 26

James 2:1-7

TREAT THE POOR AND RICH IMPARTIALLY

"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism." James 2:1

Discrimination is the bedrock of most of the disasters in our world today. Philip Yancey asserts that "whatever makes us feel superior to other people, whatever tempts us to convey a sense of superiority, that is the gravity of our sinful nature, not grace." In today's passage, believers are encouraged to avoid favouritism in their attitude and relationship with the rich and the poor. Giving attention and good seat to a rich man with fine clothes while neglecting the less privileged ones amounts to judging with evil thoughts.

While someone may be poor by this world's standard, he is rich in faith if he/she is a child of God. In this world of materialism, you need to have a correct value of people. It is not wealth, academic status or position that makes a person. Everyone should be respected as God's image whose status can improve or diminish later. Someone you despise today may be of help to you tomorrow. You should therefore honour believers as fellow brethren regardless of their wealth or status. Showing favouritism is an ungodly act, it amounts to injustice and hatred. Be just and fair to people whether you know them before or not.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favour to the learned..." Eccl 9:11

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 16-19

"In the time we have, it is surely our duty to do all the good we can to all the people we can in all the ways we can"

-William Barclay

Wednesday, February 27

Matthew 5:43-48

LOVE AND PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTOR

“... I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Matthew 5:44

Martin Luther King Jr., the great American civil rights leader said “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend”. He chose to forgive his oppressors who imprisoned and threatened him with death, bombed his house and jailed him 20 times. He said “hate multiplies hate...in a descending spiral of violence” and it is “just as injurious to the person who hates.” Jesus admonished His disciples to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors. He reiterated that children of God should live above ‘one good turn deserves another’ principle because sinners also love and do well to their own people. Hence, for children of God to be perfect as their heavenly Father, they must express agape love – loving their good neighbours as well as their enemies. They should imitate God who sends rain and sun on both good and evil people.

In this end time when death has become a common wish for supposed enemies, you need to remember this kingdom principle of love. Rather than hate those who persecute you, conquer their evil with acts of love rooted in forgiveness. Hating fellow human beings amounts to despising them as God’s creation; rather choose to pray for their repentance and see what God can make out of their lives. He is still in the business of turning lives around.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “...after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” I Peter 5:10

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 20-22

“Nothing breaks down barriers...more than when we treat people the way Jesus treated His enemies.” –Chip Ingram

Thursday, February 28

Ephesians 4:1-7

A LIFE WORTHY OF GOD'S CALL

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." Ephesians 4:1

An educated Christian gentleman demonstrated his faith in a newly launched European airline. The air hostess brought him a complimentary drink three times; he refused and politely responded that he does not drink alcohol. When the airline manager also persuaded him, he simply asked if the pilot can take the drink. The manager replied that he cannot because he is on duty. The gentleman also said "I am always on duty in order to protect my faith... I am 100% on duty."

The admonition of Paul to God's people at Ephesus emphasises the importance of living a life worthy of our calling as God's children. He describes the worthy life as one that is completely humble, gentle and patient, tolerant, united with the Holy Spirit and at peace with people. Though every Christian has different measures of grace, our lives should reflect genuine repentance, signifying one baptism, Christ-likeness of the one Lord, holiness of the one God and Father of all, and readiness for Christ's coming, our only hope. Are these virtues evident in your life? It is pathetic to see many professed Christians compromising their faith, indulging in secret sins, not being on 100% duty for Christ. Let others in your home, school and workplace see Jesus in you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married" Isaiah 62:4

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 23-25

"Questions of how to conduct oneself as a Christian must be answered by life itself- the life of the individual in his direct relationship to God." –**Elisabeth Elliot**

Friday, March 1

Luke 14:1-6

SERVING WITH LOVE ON THE SABBATH

Then he asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" Luke 14:5, NIV

Jerry Bridges said, "Only when we're thoroughly convinced that the Christian life is entirely of grace, are we able to serve God out of a grateful and loving heart." The lawyers and Pharisees in today's passage lacked this loving heart. Though they claimed to love God, by upholding the Sabbath, they lacked the compassion that comes with the love of God. To them, it does not matter what pain that man was going through, once their legalistic rules were upheld. Jesus revealed their hypocrisy by asking them that if their son or ox fell into a pit on the Sabbath, won't they pull it out? Jesus cannot be indifferent to human suffering; He healed the man with dropsy, and proved that love is what fulfils the law. By this act, Jesus opened the way to loving grace which was to replace the era of legalism that put unnecessary burden on people.

We cannot afford to be apathetic towards the needs around us. We are Jesus' hands today to set people free from the burden of sin and shame which traps those who are yet to experience His grace. Serving God could be seen as an obligation, but the best service – the one that pleases God – is one borne out of the love of God, extended to those who are in need.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 26-27

The only way you can serve God is by serving other people.

–Rick Warren

Saturday, March 2

Luke 14:15-24

SNUBBING THE KING'S INVITATION

"But they all alike began to make excuses...." Luke 14:18

Victor Kuglin's book *Snubbing God* describes the confusion that abounds in a world bent on rejecting God's order of things and fixated on doing things its own way. Kuglin believes that to live a rich and satisfying life, we must be willing to live according to God's design. Jesus' story of the great feast brings home the consequences of snubbing God. The guests had all agreed to attend the feast, but none showed up eventually. Though their excuses seem legitimate, it was to their loss that they chose those things over dining with the host. Rejecting the invitation this way was considered an insult to the host. The host later sent his servants to go into the streets and invite the rejected of the society – those who would not be invited normally.

The invitation to dine with God is extended to us each day, but aren't we too busy to have time for Him? 'Too-busy' is a syndrome of the modern world that makes many jettison fellowship with God. Perhaps because we thought we were created to hop from one activity to the other, filling up our lives with so much movement but little progress. When our busyness gets in the way of quality relationship with God, we are on our way to burning out and being sick in our spirit. Pastor Rick Warren says, "If you are too busy to have time for God, then you are [really] too busy."

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."* Psalm 32:8

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 28-29

If you are too busy to have time for God, then you are too busy. – Rick Warren

HUMILITY – THE WAY UP

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 14:11, NIV

Human management experts say every human being wears an invisible tag that reads, “Please make me feel important” and that to get someone to be favourably disposed to you, you must heed this sign. When we ignore this sign, people become resentful and angry. This shows that everyone loves to be noticed and treated as important. This need to feel important was what made the people of Jesus’ days choose exalted seats at occasions. Seat became a status symbol and everyone wanted to show how important they were by sitting on choice seats. Jesus responded to this attitude with a parable. Contrary to what the people thought, Jesus instructed that one who is invited to an event should not seek a special seat. This is a lesson in humility.

Against the belief that feeling important requires asserting oneself and seeking high status, Jesus is telling us that the way to get ahead is to take the place of less honour and status. The way up is down, and those who would be exalted are those who do not think too much of themselves. Apostle Paul enjoins us, “Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too” (Phil 2:3-4).

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favour to her; the appointed time has come- Psalm 102:13.

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 30-32

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.” – C. S. Lewis

Monday, March 4

Mark 4:10-20

VARYING RESPONSES TO THE WORD

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." Mark 4:20, NIV

Agriculturists affirm that one of the factors that contribute to a sustainable harvest is the quality of the soil. A soil that is too alkaline or too acidic will make the plant sick and hinder fruitfulness. Jesus' parable touches on four types of soil – heart – which received the seed of God's Word. The seed that fell by the way side could not take root at all because Satan came and took it away. The stony heart initially received the word with gladness but got offended at the word when persecution arose because the word has not gained root within. The word sown among thorns has the propensity to grow and blossom but it was choked up by the thorns.

The cares of this world, quest for riches and pleasure are thorns which overpower the seed of the Word in our hearts. Jesus then recommends that the kind of heart that will sustain God's Word to maturity and fruitfulness is that which is free of clutters just as a soil of good quality will aid a plant's growth. Apostle Paul enjoins us: *"Let the Word of Christ – the Message – have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives"* (Col 3:16). What clutters do you need to get rid of to make space for the Word of God to find root and bring multiple fruits in your life?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "... 'I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.'" Exodus 23:26

RBT Passage: Deuteronomy 33-34

"We cannot bear fruit without the water of God's Word."

–Anonymous

Tuesday, March 5

Mark 10:23-31

ENTERING THE KINGDOM

“..how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God.” Mark 10:24, NKJV

D. L. Moody said, “If you don’t enter the kingdom of heaven by God’s way, you cannot enter at all.” Jesus had just finished chatting with the rich young ruler who wished to become a member of God’s kingdom but cannot abide by Jesus’ standard of admission. Turning to His disciples, Jesus stated that it will be hard for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God (v. 24). Jesus stated the truth that those who have made an idol of riches and are consumed by a strange appetite for more are far from the kingdom and cannot enter it.

At the wake of Hurricane Harvey, the flood that wrecked many homes and properties across its path, Max Lucado said as he listened to survivors, he noticed that “no one laments a lost plasma television or submerged SUV. No one runs through the streets yelling, “My cordless drill is missing” or “My golf clubs have washed away.” If they mourn, it is for people lost. If they rejoice, it is for people found.” This is a reminder that your soul matters more than possessions. And your priority is not right if you have neglected preparing your soul for God’s kingdom to pursue fleeting riches. Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Luke 12:15

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Your beginning may seem humble, so prosperous will your future be.” Job 8:7

RBT Passage: Joshua 1-4

“The value of your soul is measured by its eternal quality.”

—Billy Graham

Wednesday, March 6

Matthew 10:34-39

CHOOSING BETWEEN CHRIST AND FAMILY

"Anyone who loves his father or mother...his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matthew 10:37, NIV

Nabeel Qureshi grew up knowing the love and honour of family. She had the right environment to grow healthy and strong as a devout Muslim. In his search for the truth about Allah, Nabeel found Jesus Christ, and this discovery brought him face-to-face with the reality that choosing Christ would mean losing the people he loved most in life. Accepting this reality was not easy, but the grip of this truth would not let him go. As he chronicled in his autobiography, *Seeking Allah-Finding Jesus*, being excommunicated from his loved ones and having no family at his wedding was agonising for him, but in it all, he said, "All suffering is worth it to follow Jesus. He is that amazing."

Every one of us would have to sacrifice one thing or the other to follow Jesus. This is what Jesus underscored when He stated that He had not come to send peace on earth but a sword. Anyone who loves family more than Jesus is not worthy of Him. Taking up our cross, willing to let go of whatever competes with Christ in our lives is the sacrifice we have to pay to gain all in the end. When the expectation of your loved ones contradicts the plan of God for your life, what would you do?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

RBT Passage: Joshua 5-7

"When situations arise and we have to choose between God or family members, there's really no choice. Our greatest love and commitment has to be to Christ." – Scott LaPierre

Thursday, March 7

John 12:20-26

THE FATHER HONOURS THOSE WHO FOLLOW

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." John 12:26

Following is a familiar terminology to those who use the social media. To follow someone on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter means to be interested in seeing their posts and content feed. But then you have to cautiously choose who to follow because following someone means you have access to all of their posts, whether healthy or toxic. And in case you change your mind about following someone, another click at the follow button will make you unfollow them and then stop seeing their posts on the platform.

But following Jesus is not something we do at our whims and undo anytime we feel like it. It is a thoughtful action that follows a conscious decision to serve Him at all times. Some Greeks came asking to see Jesus. And Jesus used the opportunity to tell a spiritual truth: that a seed that will bring forth fruit must first die and that those who will save their lives are those who are ready to lose it for the sake of God's kingdom. Following Jesus brings honour but those who will receive this honour are those who are willing to die to self so they can be alive in Christ. To follow Jesus means to yield ourselves to Him, allowing Him to mould us to His own taste. That is the secret to becoming honourable.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel..." Numbers 23:23a.

RBT Passage: Joshua 8-10

"To follow Jesus means to take up His dream and work for it." –Anonymous

Friday, March 8

Philippians 3:7-16

SUFFERING AND KNOWING CHRIST

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Philippians 3:10, NIV

In closing his autobiography, *Seeking Allah-Finding Jesus*, Nabeel Qureshi wrote: "I wish to appeal to those who are considering following Jesus, especially those who will sacrifice much by doing so. I will honestly say that my first year as a Christian was unimaginably difficult, without a doubt the most painful period of my life. Each and every day...I experienced depths of emotional pain I did not know possible. But...looking back on it eight years later; it was the most powerful time of my life. It shaped me, moulded me, changed me into a disciple of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was my comforter, His word was my sustenance, and I would not give up that time for anything."

Apostle Paul underscores the inevitability of suffering for those who want to gain Christ (v. 8). Paul states, without mincing words, that knowing Christ includes knowing His power of resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering (v. 10). The recipe has not changed for those who are willing to follow Christ today. Enduring hardship for Christ's sake helps us to know God better. His sustaining grace that we experience in times of difficulty draws us closer to Him. We find God to be true to what He says and after we have overcome, we can offer real help to those who are experiencing same.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." Romans 10:11

RBT Passage: Joshua 11-13

"I love when people that have been through hell walk out of the flames carrying buckets of water for those still consumed by the fire." –**Stephanie Sparkles**

Saturday, March 9

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

FAITHFUL WITNESS THROUGH SUFFERING

"...But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses." 2 Corinthians 6:4, KJV

Handel's "Halleluyah Chorus", composed many decades ago, is perhaps the most sung Christian piece in the world today. But is it not amazing to know that when Handel wrote "Halleluyah Chorus", his health and fortunes had reached an all-time low? His right side had become paralysed. He was heavily in debt and threatened with imprisonment. He was tempted to give up the fight. The odds seemed entirely too great. And it was then he composed his greatest work—*Messiah*.

Paul shares his personal struggle with suffering as a minister of the gospel. But in spite of his pains – troubles, hardships, distresses; beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights and hunger (vv. 4-5) – Paul affirmed that the standards of purity, understanding, patience, kindness, sincere love, truthful speech were not compromised (vv. 6-7). Most of all, Paul stated that even when he was sorrowful, he became a source of joy to others (v.10). Many of us forgo godly standards when times are hard and tell ourselves that if only our circumstances could change, then we would act right. But God wants us to live rightly even in terrible circumstances. When you find yourself amidst harsh or hostile people, you can still be a witness for Christ. Christ's life gave a perfect example that even in our sufferings, God's glory can be made known to others.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favour to her... Ps 102:13

RBT Passage: Joshua 14-17

"Even in the greatest afflictions, you can be a testimony of God's greatness." -XB

Sunday, March 10

Mark 1:16-20; Luke 14:25-33

COUNTING THE COST, ANSWERING THE CALL

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" Luke 14:28, NIV

The first question on the theory part of the Mathematics exam looked very familiar to Andre. Their teacher had solved it with them before. Andre quickly did it. But he did not see that one of the figures was 10^{06} ; he mistook it for 10^{06} . This gave him a different final answer. When the marked answer scripts were released, Andre could not believe he missed it. But then his teacher pointed to him that it was 10^{06} , not 10^{06} .

Mistakes can be costly and that is why Jesus warns that the decision to follow Him must not be a mistake or a miscalculation. He states the extreme commitment we must have if we are willing to follow Him. First, following Him requires loving Him above all things, even our lives. Second, following Him requires carrying a cross. This means giving up all that we have and embracing Christ completely. For the greater value of becoming fishers of men, Peter and others left their fishing business to follow Jesus completely. They must have counted the cost of their decision. Perhaps the greatest cost we have to pay in following Christ is in forsaking self – selfish ambitions, pursuit of personal glory – to pursue Christ and His glory alone. And experience has shown that those who leave all to follow Christ never regret it. Instead, in Christ, they become greater than they could ever be without Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** But I will see you again and you will rejoice and no-one will take away your joy. John 16:22

RBT Passage: Joshua 18-20

"Being one of Jesus' disciples isn't...for the "I don't want you to stretch me types." –Rick Howerton

Monday, March 11

Ephesians 2:1-10

TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST INTO NEW LIFE

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1, NKJV

Promotional ads for self-improvement products like diet, exercise or beauty programmes often use before-and-after pictures to prove their effectiveness. It is often amazing to see the great change that has taken place, considering the picture of the people before and after undergoing the prescribed regimen.

Apostle Paul also paints a before-and-after picture of believers in Christ. Before we met Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins, but in Christ, were quickened into righteousness (v. 1, 5). Before Christ came into our lives, we walked in disobedience, according to the course of this world (v.2), but in Christ all of that changed. We were not only raised to life; we were made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places. All of this took place, not by any effort of ours, but by the grace of God (vv. 8-9). Yet Paul cautioned that this grace is not for fun; we were given grace so that we might do good works which God had prepared for us to do (v.10). Can you try painting a before-and-after picture of your own life in Christ? What glaring transformation can you see? And in what areas do you need to trust Christ's ability more, so He could transform you into His own model for your life?

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will arise and show compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favour to her.... Ps 102:13

RBT Passage: Joshua 21-22

"Holiness consists of three things - separation from sin, dedication to God, transformation into Christ's image. You can't talk about the last, unless you have experienced the first." – James Aughey

Tuesday, March 12

Ezekiel 34:11-16

GOD SEEKS THE SCATTERED PEOPLE

"For thus says the Lord God: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out." Ezekiel 34:11-12, NKJV

You may have heard of Shrek, a renegade sheep that ran away to avoid being shorn. It lived in a cave for six years, while its owner kept looking for it. When Shrek was eventually found in 2004, it looked nothing like a sheep. The wool had covered him up; it was weighed down by the enormous wool that it could barely walk. Its eyes were covered up by the overgrown wool and its life was endangered by the terrible infection that festered under the wool.

Shrek's lost-but-found story reminds us of how God seeks His people who were in exile, downcast and without hope. God gave Ezekiel a message of hope for them. Though their situation was terrible, God has not forgotten them. He promised to bring them back to their own land, feed them with good pasture and cause them to lie down. He will bind their wounds and strengthen those that are sick. Perhaps your present situation makes you feel abandoned. Or you have strayed from God's presence and weighed down by the guilt of your many transgressions. Like Shrek, you may have lost all that identify you as God's child and you think your situation is beyond remedy. God's message of hope comes to you today. He is seeking to restore you to Himself. He wants to help you shed your burden of guilt and carry you in His arms. Will you let Him?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces..." Isaiah 25:8

RBT Passage: Joshua 23-24

"God goes to great effort to seek lost sinners and He greatly rejoices when they come to repentance." –Steven Cole

Wednesday, March 13

Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9

GOD'S COMPASSION FOR STRAYING PEOPLE

"How can I give you up, Ephraim...My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused." Hosea 11:8, NIV

Linda's heart was grieved as her son was brought into the principal's office, having been involved in a gang rape and was to be expelled from school. This was the third school in a row where she would have to face the shame of her son's misdemeanour. She looked at him, with tears streaming down her face. She remembered how she taught him to walk as a toddler; his innocence as he grew up, always asking her questions. But he seemed to have lost that tenderness and has grown so wild from strange influences.

Linda's grief is a far-cry from what God felt about His beloved Israel whom he loved so much. God demonstrated His love in raising someone to bring Israel out of the oppression of Egypt. But instead of reciprocating God's love, Israel grieved His heart by turning to graven images. But God's love for Israel remains and He will not give His people up for anything (v. 8). No one is beyond God's offer of forgiveness and there's no sin so grave that God cannot forgive. We only need to be willing to return to our Father just like the prodigal son. Perhaps you are afraid that you have strayed too far and beyond the reach of God's mercy. Even right now, His arms are open wide, ready to receive the penitent sinner. Are you willing to be restored to your Father?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "My people will live in peaceful dwelling-places, in secure homes...." Isaiah 32:18

RBT Passage: Judges 1-3

"God's mercy is fresh and new every morning."—Joyce Meyer

Thursday, March 14

Luke 3:12-13; 5:27-32

CALLING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32, NIV

In his book, *What's So Amazing about Grace*, Philip Yancey told about a wretched, homeless, sick prostitute who came to him. She was not only a prostitute; she also rented out her daughter to men for sex in order to get money to support her own drug habit. Hearing the sordid story, Philip Yancey felt like reporting the woman for child abuse. But then he asked if she had ever thought of going to a church for help. To this, the woman cried, *"Church! Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse."*

Levi felt worse by the way the people treated him due to his dirty job as a tax collector. But Jesus befriended Levi, though He did not gloss over his state as a sinner who needs repentance and a sick person who needs a doctor, just as John told the tax collectors who came to him earlier: "Don't collect any more than you are required to" (v.13). We all should learn from Christ's example. When we take a stand against sin, we are doing our work as Christ's representative. But then we need to be careful that we don't send away sinners who came to church because they have nowhere else to turn, by treating them with disdain. Rather, with love, we should entreat them, and invite them to the saving grace in Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings." Ps. 105:14

RBT Passage: Judges 4-5

No one is beyond the reach of God's mercy; don't despair any sinner. -XB

Friday, March 15

Luke 15:1-10

THE JOY OF FINDING LOST THINGS

"And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'" Luke 15:9, NIV

Recently, I mistakenly dropped my phone as I alighted from a taxi. I didn't realise it until I had to make a phone call. The pain in my heart showed on my face; one lady had to ask me if there was no problem. Of course, there was. As I began to think about my contacts and other personal stuffs on the phone, my husband showed up. The cab driver had called the last dialled number on my phone, (my husband's), and asked him to come get the phone. "That was a rare gesture," I said, as my heart swelled with joy. Anyone who has once lost something or someone can relate with Jesus' story of the lost sheep and coin. Jesus was responding to those who accused him of relating with tax collectors and sinners. He said His focus was to bring them to the fold and cause the angels to rejoice over them.

For the joy that will well up in the Father's heart, we must not give up on those who are lost and do not know exactly where they are going. Like Jesus, we should not shut out unbelievers from our relationship circle; nor get carried away as to lose the focus of relating with them. Our aim is to make the Father's heart glad and cause angels to rejoice as sinners come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." Proverbs 16:3

RBT Passage: Judges 6-8

"The most valuable thing on earth is the human soul; God invested so much into it and is happy when it is restored to Him." -XB

Saturday, March 16

Luke 15:25-32

EVERYTHING IS YOURS

“My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’” Luke 15:31, NIV

In his book, *The Gospel for Real Life*, Jerry Bridges tells of a slave who had an amicable relationship with his master. To express his appreciation to this slave, the master apportioned 50,000 dollars to him in his will, and deposited it in a bank. One day, the slave called the banker and asked, “Can I have fifty cents to buy a sack of cornmeal?” He was begging for fifty cents when he is entitled to 50,000 dollars. The older brother of the prodigal son is like this slave. He has a compensation mentality and feels he has received less than he deserves for his commitment to their father’s work. He fails to realise that he is entitled to so much more than the pittance he is asking for.

Whenever we look at another believer and think that we deserve to be blessed of God more than them (perhaps because we thought we are more committed to God), we are like this older brother. Such mentality only robs us of who we really are in God. As the father told the older brother, He is also telling us today: “Everything I have is yours.” Instead of comparing yourself with others in relation to God, take your rightful position in Him and claim what belongs to you without complaining about what others get or do not get.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again rejoice - Philippians 4:4

RBT Passage: Judges 9-10

“Prejudice distorts what it sees, deceives when it talks, and destroys when it acts.” –Anonymous

Sunday, March 17

Luke 15:11-24

JUST AS YOU ARE

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' Luke 15:18-19, NIV

An artist needed a man to pose as the prodigal son for him to paint. He met a beggar on the street and asked him to be the model, with a promise to pay him. The beggar accepted the offer and was asked to come to the artist's studio at an appointed time. At the said time, the beggar appeared, neatly shaven and all dressed up. "Who are you?" asked the artist. "I am the beggar," answered the man. "I thought I'd get cleaned up before I got painted." "No, I wanted you to come as you were. I have no use of you this way."

After the prodigal son came back to his senses, he did not put up a show. He faced the fact that in his present state, he was no longer worthy to be called the father's son (v. 19). He went back to his father just as he was, seeking forgiveness. God always wants us to come to Him as we are – no pretence, no make-up, no cover-up – acknowledging our need of Him. Perhaps you are not proud of who you are at the moment. God wants you to come as you are; He not only sees you for what you are now but is willing to make you that person He wants you to be.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. Isaiah 44:2

RBT Passage: Judges 11-13

"God takes us as we are and makes us more than we could ever imagine." – Neill Marriot

Monday, March 18

Exodus 22:1-3; Numbers 5:5-7

MAKING IT RIGHT

“He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged.”

Numbers 5:7, NIV

A woman accused her shop attendant of stealing. She claimed she kept a sum of money in a particular shelf in the shop and couldn't find it afterwards. She concluded it was the attendant who stole it. She invited passersby who shouted on the girl, beat her and tore her clothes. Later, that day (as she confessed to a friend), she found the money in another place in the shop. She asked, “How can I face her to tell her I was wrong?”

Fairness, equity and restitution are three principles found in today's text. One of the instructions God gave Moses for the Israelites is that anyone who wronged another must confess what he has done and make full restitution to the person. Apologising is not enough; the person must pay the injured party some money commensurate with the loss incurred. God considers sin against another person as sin against Him. Though we are not under the law, these principles are still relevant to us today. Whenever we hurt people, we should be willing and quick to apologise, then make things right. As a body of Christ, we can't be united to fight the devil and win victory if we refuse to settle offences and restore those who are hurting. To have peace in the Spirit, we must always seek to be right with God and others.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their land...” Isaiah 14:1

RBT Passage: Judges 14-16

“True spirituality is not evidenced in how much we know but in how quick we are in mending broken fences.” –Anonymous

Tuesday, March 19

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

AFTER YOU SAY 'I DO'

"You have declared this day that the Lord is your God and that you will walk in his ways ... And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people and that you are to keep all his commands." Deuteronomy 26:17-18, NIV

Exchanging marriage vows is a crucial part of the church wedding. The couple looks forward to this time because it is the part where they will express their love for each other and make promises to stick together 'for better for worse.' But experience has shown that saying the wedding vows is easy; keeping them is the tough job. Moses reiterated to the Israelites the implication of the vows they made before the Lord. Just like in a marriage contract, the Israelites avowed to keep the Lord's commandments, and the Lord also avowed to make them His peculiar people as long as they keep their vows.

Someone said that whenever there is a breach of contract between humans and God, always trace the breach to the human. By His nature, God does not lie; He always keeps His own part of the agreement. The decision to make Jesus the Lord of your life is like saying 'I do'; but saying is not enough; you must be ready to stay true to Him in all seasons. We must not be fair-weather Christians who only keep commitment when things go the way we wish. Even when times are hard and the environment does not encourage us to be faithful, we must keep our vows; for that is the secret of a lasting and blessed relationship with Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land...." Ps 37:34

RBT Passage: Judges 17-19

"The true follower of Christ will...say, "This is truth. God help me to walk in it, let come what may!" -A. W. Tozer

EXISTING OR LIVING?

"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God ... because that is why I was sent." Luke 4:43, NIV

Yogi Berra was a famous catcher for the New York Yankees, and Hank Aaron, the chief hitter for the Milwaukee Braves. Both of their teams were playing in the World Series. Yogi's intention was to distract the Milwaukee players so his team could have their way. As the game went on, he said to Aaron, "Hank, you are holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark." Aaron ignored Yogi initially but later came and said to him, "I didn't come up here to read."

Jesus left the synagogue for Simon's house, where he healed Simon's mother-in-law and others with diverse diseases; and then came to the desert. The people came to meet Him there, prodding Him to continue staying with them. But Jesus knew His purpose and no circumstance or achievement could derail Him. He said assuredly that His purpose was to preach the good news (v. 43). Discovering purpose is crucial to meaningful living. Without a sense of purpose, we would just be occupying space without actually living. Living begins when we come to know Christ and identify our purpose in Him. In pursuing purpose, we shed off distractions and every weight that can entangle us. Have you found purpose in Christ? Have you found something you wish to die for? Myles Munroe said, "The greatest tragedy in life is not death, but a life without purpose."

- **Birthday Blessing:** "In that day they will say, surely this is our God; we trust in Him..." Isa. 25: 9

RBT Passage: Judges 20-21

"When purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable."

—Myles Munroe

Thursday, March 21

Luke 18:15-17

CHILDLIKE OR CHILDISH?

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Luke 18:16, NIV

The innocence, amazement and trust of children always makes one imagine their kind of heart. A child has the tendency to listen, trust and believe absolutely. Little wonder Jesus told His disciples that whosoever will not receive the kingdom of God as a child will not enter it. The disciples would have thought that Jesus was not interested in little children, and so would not allow them to see Jesus. But Jesus called the children to Himself, telling the disciples that the kingdom of God belongs to those who will be like children. Here Jesus was talking about childlike faith that depends totally on God, trusts Him absolutely even when things do not add up.

But childlike faith is not childish. Jesus was not saying we should emulate childish behaviours and refuse to grow up in our Christian journey. C.S Lewis said, "Christ wants a child's heart, but a grown-up's head. He wants us to be simple, single-minded, affectionate, and teachable, as good children are; but He also wants every bit of intelligence we have to be alert at its job, and in first-class fighting trim." Apostle Paul put it this way (1 Corinthians 14:20), "Do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature."

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawn-" Isaiah 9:2

RBT Passage: Ruth 1-4

In malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

-The Holy Bible

Friday, March 22

Luke 18:18-30

INHERITING ETERNAL LIFE: ON WHOSE TERMS?

[Jesus] said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Luke 18:22, NIV

The story of the rich young ruler is worthy of our attention, seeing it is recorded in the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This man had all that identify one as an achiever in the world. He was young, rich, and a ruler. To add a feather to his cap, he came to Jesus, asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. He must have understood, perhaps having heard Jesus' teachings, that eternal life is real. But he missed it because he thought he could gain heaven by his own terms.

Like this rich young ruler, many today love to identify with the kingdom of God, but on their own terms. They cannot go through the demanding process of discipleship but they would love to be called Christians. They do not want to lose their worldly ambience, friends and influences, yet they want to be identified with Jesus. But the hard truth is that we have to come to God on His own terms, not ours. The rich young ruler walked away, sorrowful because the sacrifice Jesus demanded of him was too big to pay. What demands of Jesus upon your life have you been finding difficult to honour? What things would you have to let go today to become Jesus' true disciple here on earth and to reign with Him in eternity?

Birthday Blessing: "Say to those with fearful hearts, Be strong, do not fear; your God will come-" Isaiah 35:4

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 1-3

"The path to greatness is self-sacrifice for the good of others." –Yemi Osinbajo

Saturday, March 23

Luke 18:35-43

WHEN JESUS PASSES BY

"They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' He called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" Luke 18:37-38,
NIV

When a certain French queen travelled through her country, her aides were given orders that no people in sadness or in trouble – blind, lame, or suffering— should be allowed anywhere along the way; to keep from the sight of the gentlewoman anything that might cause her pain. So, when a poor woman came to the road hoping to ask her for something to feed her and her daughter, else they die of hunger, she was whisked away even before she got to the queen.

But the blind man in today's text would not allow people to hinder him from reaching Jesus. Though he couldn't physically see, his mind was wide open and he was sensitive to seize the moment which he knew may never come again. He knew Jesus so well to trace Him to His lineage, but he did not lose sight of Jesus' power to deliver him. Bartimaeus' physical blindness could be a metaphor for spiritual blindness. And as the man did, only those who acknowledge their state and their need of a Saviour, and cry unto Him would be delivered from darkness to light. As it was for the blind man, we all have series of opportunities each day, but it takes those who are sensitive to identify when God's door is open to seize the opportunity to their blessing.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...He will cause to come down for you, the rain, the former rain, the latter rain..." Joel 2:23

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel. 4-7 *"There is a place in God's sun for the youth 'farthest down' who has the vision, determination, and the courage to reach it."* –**Mary Bethure**

Sunday, March 24

Luke 19:1-10

MEETING THE 'UNDESIRABLE'

"When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." Luke 19:5, NIV

The first Sunday Onome went to church, she created some kind of stir. She was wearing a tank top on a pair of jeggings that looked too tight for her, with bathroom slippers. Her hair was unkempt and uncovered. She noticed everyone shifted their gaze to her as she wobbled into a seat close to the door. But then a lady, whom she later identified as Tara, came to sit beside her, trying to chat with her. Onome looked worn and sick, tired of her life as a street girl. She later became friends with Tara who led her to Christ.

Not too many of us are like Tara, especially when someone 'undesirable' shows up in church. In the same way, the people of Jesus' days could not fathom how Jesus could associate with a man of bad reputation like Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was an enemy of the community because he extorted money from the people on behalf of the Roman government. That Jesus could easily spot Zacchaeus in the midst of the crowd reveals Jesus' concern for those who are lost, even in their undesirable state. What adjustments do you need to make in your life to give room for those who make you uncomfortable or are undesirable but needs to be touched with Jesus' loving grace?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you..." Isaiah 52:12

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 8-12

"If you want to be like Jesus, then love the unlovable, forgive the unworthy and do good to those who can't repay you." -Anonymous

Monday, March 25

Exodus 18:1-12

SOMETHING WORTH SHARING

“Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done...for Israel's sake and ...how the Lord had saved them.”

Exodus 18:8

Karin Krachova had never heard the gospel, having grown up under communism. One day in 1995, however, she overheard some Christian students at her university describe how God had protected them and their families during the Communist years. As Karin listened, she began to wonder if there really might be a God. Months later, through her friendship with these students, Karin became a Christian herself.

After hearing what the Lord had done for Moses and the people of Israel, Jethro took Moses' wife and two children to reunite with Moses. Moses then seized the opportunity to tell Jethro more of the good deeds of the Lord to him and Israel. His report covers both the period of hardship and how the Lord delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians with a mighty hand. Jethro couldn't hold back his joy; he rejoiced for the miracles, and thereafter responded to God's goodness in worship, offering sacrifices to the God of Israel. What do you consider the most interesting gist you will like to share with family and friends, at a reunion or a get-together? Every opportunity we have to interact with people should be maximised to tell of God's goodness and deliverance in our lives. The gospel is worth sharing and telling others of the loving deeds of the God we serve is one way of sharing it.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “...whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake-” Isa. 54:15

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 13-14

The gospel message is dependable and worth sharing. –XB

Tuesday, March 26

Deuteronomy 8:1-11

REMEMBER AND BE THANKFUL

"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart." Deuteronomy 8:2

Forgetfulness, science affirms, comes with old age. People tend to have memory issues as they advance in years. But in reality, not only aged people forget things; even young people do, sometimes. Forgetfulness could become a cause for concern when it begins to have colossal impact on our lives. Moses admonished the Israelites to avoid the dangers of forgetfulness, as they were getting ready to enter the Promised Land. They should remember the God of their weary years; remember how they suffered hunger; how God humbled them and how they went many years with a set of clothes and sandals which did not wear out. The antidote to forgetfulness is to remember the good deeds of God and be thankful. Being thankful would cause them to keep His commandments, walk in His ways and fear Him.

When things are going well for us, it is easy to begin to feel independent of God. In times of prosperity, we may forget the true source of blessing or even assume that our success is a result of our own efforts. That is why we need to continually pray that God will forever keep us on the path, so we will not stray from where we met Him; that He would help us to stand true to our confessions when we first met Jesus. And to remain thankful to Him, walking in His ways and doing His will.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercy of David-" Isaiah 55:3

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 15-16

"May I never forget on my best day that I need God as desperately as I did on my worst day." -**Anonymous**

BEHOLDING HIS GLORY

"Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him." Luke 9:32, NIV

Two men usually met on Saturday at their church to pray together. One day, the church's sexton saw them come out of the room where they were praying and said there was something radiant about their faces. Peter, James and John had such experience when they followed Jesus to a mountain to pray. There, they saw and heard who Jesus really was. The glory of the transfigured Christ was so powerful that Peter wished that they would not leave the scene. Later in his letter, Peter (2 Peter 1:16-18) wrote confidently, *"We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty... when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"*

How can we behold Christ's glory today? Paul gives us a clue: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians. 3:18). When we come aside, away from the frustrations and confusions of this world, in fellowship with the Master, we experience His glory and we are transformed to change the world around us.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory-" Isaiah 60:19

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 17-18

"The glory of God is a human being fully alive; and to be alive consists in beholding God's glory." -Irenaeus of Lyons

EARNING APPROVAL

"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" Matthew 3:17, NIV

An online survey reports how posting selfie before, during and after every activity has become a norm for many young people. The resulting likes, thumbs-ups and other ratings then turn into an obsession about approval, which is wreaking havoc on their self-image. The survey called 'Children, Teens, Media, and Body Image' found that many teens who are active online fret about how they're perceived, and that girls are particularly vulnerable. God's approval preceded the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. As Jesus came out of the water after His baptism, the Spirit of God descended on Him as a dove, and the Father affirmed that He is well pleased with Him. This is one of the scenes that confirmed Jesus' oneness with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Seeking approval is a natural human tendency and many of us spend the most part of our lives trying to get others to validate our actions. This is not wrong in itself but where we look for affirmation matters. Getting God's approval is the greatest thing that can happen to anyone in life. And the first step in achieving that is by accepting Christ. People's validations are often coloured by their subjective judgment of things. But God who knows everything is the One we should seek validations from. Tired of trying to please people every now and then? Get God's approval today and everything else will be fine.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you...." Isa. 46:4

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 19-21

"You may be rejected by some, but if you are accepted by One, you have all you need." –Alex Sanfilippo

Friday, March 29

Matthew 4:1-11

FIGHTING TEMPTATION

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

John Milton's classic poem '*Paradise Lost*' tells the story of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve. The sequel, '*Paradise Regained*', featured Christ and His temptation by Satan in the wilderness. Milton's view is that because Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan's temptation, humanity lost the first Paradise but that Jesus' victory over the devil's temptation in the wilderness ushers in the restoration of what has been lost. That Jesus was led into the desert to be tempted of the devil (v.1) is an indication that temptation is inevitable for us. Satan tempted Jesus in three areas of human need: food, personal glory and power. But Jesus would not give in to the devil because He knows His authority is greater than that of the devil.

Each day, we are faced with the reality of our numerous needs (physiological, emotional) and we have to decide how we want to meet these needs: whether by godly means or by ungodly scheming. But like Jesus did, we must always stand, knowing that compromising God's word means succumbing to the devil. God's Word gives us a true picture of who we are; when we know this, we are equipped to fight temptation and come out victorious, just like Jesus.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds." Isa 3:10.

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 22-24

"The nearer to heaven in hopes, the farther from earth in desires." – William Gurnall

Saturday, March 30

Matthew 4:23-25

MEETING NEEDS WITH THE GOSPEL

...And people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed...and he healed them. Matthew 4:24, NIV

Day in day out, we hear of people who are suffering. In our neighborhoods, work places, and in other places where we meet people, we face the reality of unending human needs. Our resources are limited and we are often frustrated as to how much we can do. What we fail to realise however is that the gospel has all it takes to meet varying human needs. Jesus demonstrated this in the neighbourhood of Galilee. Today's text records how Jesus moved round Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel and healing all manner of diseases. As a result, His fame spread throughout and many others brought their sick to be healed by Him. The natural response is that a great multitude followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond Jordan.

The gospel has the power to provide answers to the enormous problems plaguing our world today. Just like Jesus did, today's believers should also seek opportunities to meet the varying human needs with the power of the gospel. By meeting people's physical, emotional and spiritual needs, we prove that the gospel is not some abstract concept and that the God of the Bible feels the pain that people pass through and He is willing to bear their burdens as they come to Him in salvation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Thou shall also be a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" Isaiah 62: 3.

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 25-27

The gospel is God's provision for all human needs. –XB

A NEW JOB

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19, NIV

Ever experienced the feeling of getting a new job? The feeling is usually great especially when it is something you love to do. Can you imagine what the experience was for Peter, Andrew, James and John when Jesus came to call them to leave their much-loved job as fishermen to join Him in His business of catching people? It was a new job but I don't think Peter and his fellow felt excited about it – perhaps because they were being moved from a familiar terrain to an unfamiliar one. Yet, they followed Jesus. They must have weighed their options and consider the fact that though this new job isn't so much a familiar terrain, the one employing them knows what is best for them.

How are you finding your own occupation? Are you excited or bemused about it – perhaps for the pay, the satisfaction or any other thing that is your experience at the moment? Whatever job we do, Jesus expects us to consider making others His disciples our topmost priority. Just as Jesus called Peter and others, His call is extended to each of His children today to be His fishermen, who not only catch fish for money or survival; but whose goal is to catch men for Him, making them His disciples.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly and suffereth not their cattle to decrease-” Psalm 107:38.

RBT Passage: 1 Samuel 28-31

It is not great men who change the world, but weak men in the hands of a great God. –Brother Yun

Monday, April 1

Jeremiah 1:4-10

JEREMIAH, PROPHET TO THE NATIONS

“See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.” Jeremiah 1:10

It was Rick Warren who once said, “While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God. God’s purpose took into account human error, and even sin.” This is true of Jeremiah as reflected in our passage. God made him realise that before he was conceived by his parents, God already designated him to be a prophet to the nations and his main assignment is to remove that which is not of God and at the same time plant God’s righteousness among the nations.

Just as Jeremiah was called of God to serve the nations, you also carry a destiny to serve your generation. You were born for a specific assignment which must be discovered and pursued. Everyone who has ever lived an impactful and meaningful life first of all made a discovery of his life purpose. Jesus was 12 when He started living in His purpose. David and Joseph were 17 as at the time they entered into their journey of purpose, and Samuel was just a little boy. Contemporary history is also full of men who became world changers. Consider Martin Luther King Jr. who fought against racial discrimination in America. Just as all these men fulfilled their destinies, you are also meant to be an answer to a particular problem.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree; they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon” Ps 92:12

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 1-3

“The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder – a waif, a nothing, a no man.” – Thomas Carlyle

Tuesday, April 2

Acts 9:10-19

ANANIAS WELCOMES AND BAPTIZES SAUL

"The Lord said to him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.'" Acts 9:11, NIV

Every believer is made for mission. The word mission comes from the Latin word for "sending." It means being a Christian includes being sent into the world as a representative of Jesus Christ. Ananias, in our passage for today, was sensitive enough to know where God needed him. Saul had been a major threat to the Church, persecuting anyone that identified with Christ. He was on his way to Damascus on the same mission when he encountered Jesus and became blind. But God needed to use Saul for great exploits among the Gentiles and so he needed someone to pray for him to restore his sight (Acts 9:15). Ananias was available for this assignment though not without reservation because of what he had heard about Saul (Acts 9:13). Nevertheless, he obeyed the Lord (Acts 9:17).

In the same way, you are to be on mission for the Lord. God wants you to have both a ministry in the Body of Christ and a mission in the world. Your ministry is your service to believers, and your mission is your service to unbelievers. Remember, we are to follow after the footsteps of Jesus. So, it is our responsibility as believers to seek for the poor, the blind, and the prisoners and extend the love and mercy of God to them.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion" *Psalms 84:7*.

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 4-7

"Unless you assume a God, the question of Life's purpose is meaningless" – Bertrand Russell

PAUL CALLED BY A VISION

"After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." Acts 16:10

Charles H. Gabriel composed "Send the Light," one of the popular Baptist hymns. One of the stanzas reads: We have heard the Macedonian call today, "Send the light! Send the light!" And a golden offering at the cross we lay, Send the light! Send the light!" This hymn obviously was based on the story in our passage for today. The Macedonians are a good picture of the suffering and pain many around us are passing through. It took Paul a vision of the night to discern the need to take the gospel of peace and freedom to them. The Bible described the man of Macedonia as "standing and begging" (Acts 16:9). This is the situation of many people around us today. They are thirsty and hungry for God. They want their vacuum filled.

Through Paul's efforts, Macedonia became the first part of Europe that received the gospel. It was also through Paul's ministry that a slave girl from that region received deliverance from the spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18). There is a "Macedonia" waiting for your attention (Ecclesiastes 4:1; Romans 8:19-21). So, the question is, where will you go for God? On what course do you want to pour your life as drink offering? Have you been able to locate a Macedonia and what will be your response?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken" Ps. 16:8.

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 8-11

"God doesn't play dice" – Albert Einstein

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

"Calling the twelve to him, he began to send out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirit." Mark 6:7

A man was giving out gospel tracts on a steamer. One gentleman whom he approached accepted a tract graciously but said, "I haven't much faith in that kind of work." The Christian worker replied, "It was through a gospel tract given to me twenty years ago that I was converted." Asking for particulars, the gentleman discovered that it was he who had given him the tract! He had ceased to do this because he saw so few results from his efforts. He added, "But by the grace of God I shall start again." We have all been called to witness to the saving grace in Christ Jesus. The disciples demonstrated this as outlined in our passage today. God has given you a life message to share. When you became a believer, you also became God's messenger. God want to speak to the world through you as he did through the disciples.

Are you committed to the great commission? Remember, a great commitment to the great commission and the great commandment will make you a great Christian. You have a story you can share with people around you. According to Rick Warren, your life message is in four parts: your testimony; your life lessons; your godly passions; and the Good News. Now, reflect on your personal story and think of whom the Lord wants you to share it with today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I, the Lord...will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles" Isaiah 42:6a

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 12-13

"A friend – a true friend – is the first person who comes in when the whole world has gone out" – **Anonymous**

Friday, April 5

Matthew 9:35-38

A GREAT HARVEST BUT FEW WORKERS

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." Mat. 9:37

A man travelling along a dark road one stormy night met a man who said to him in a hesitant manner, "I think maybe the bridge is out. At least I heard something to that effect." The traveller was not impressed and decided to proceed. A little farther on a man came rushing out of the dark and said, "Stop! Don't go any farther. The bridge is out!" So passionately convincing were his tones that the traveller turned back, and his life was saved. That is how we are to witness, with passion and conviction. In today's passage, Jesus looked at the people with compassion because they were like sheep without shepherd.

The Church today could be described as fast asleep in Zion while the devil is ravaging the land and perpetuating it with every act of unrighteousness. The church, unconsciously, has subtly substitute *evangelism* with merrymaking. We have been deceived that we have done enough and that this is the time of rest, whereas this is the time of great harvest for the church of Jesus. The commission Jesus gave to the church was very clear and simple. Unfortunately, this commission has been misunderstood and wrongly executed by the Church. Until the Church understands the thrust of the Great Commission and passionately commit to its fulfilment, there will continue to be perversions in our land.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you" Isaiah 43:2

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 14-16

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are"

- Anais Nin

Saturday, April 6

Matthew 10:16-25

HANDLING AND SURVIVING PERSECUTION

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

Matthew 10:16, NIV

A young Baptist undergraduate with other Christians fell into the hands of Boko Haram sect. They asked them to alight from the vehicle and identify themselves by their religion. Those who are Christians were separated to one side and were asked to renounce their faith otherwise they would be beheaded. While few consented, this young Baptist with another Deeper Life pastor refused to deny their faith. They were subsequently beheaded and others were released. In our passage for today, Jesus warned upfront that believers will be persecuted as a result of identifying with Christ. The early followers of Jesus knew what it means to suffer for Christ as a result of sharing the gospel with people.

Are you going through a measure of persecution at the moment as a result of your faith in Jesus? Is the suffering becoming unbearable for you? You need to hold on to the profession of your faith knowing that Jesus Himself went through the same suffering while on earth. It is vital that you stay focused on God's plan, not your pain or problem. That is how Jesus endured the pain of the cross, and we are urged to follow His example. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy that comes with it. So, you too should hold on to Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light" Psalm 18:2

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 17-19

"It is the fire of suffering that brings forth the gold of godliness" – **Madame Guyon**

Sunday, April 7

Matthew 10:1-15

THE TWELVE CHOSEN AND COMMISSIONED

“As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’” Matthew 10:7

I love the way Rick Warren distinguishes between a *world-class* Christian and a *worldly* Christian. Worldly Christians look to God primarily for personal fulfilment. They are saved, but self-centred. They love to attend concerts and enrichment seminars, but you will never find them at a mission conference. In contrast, *world-class* Christians know they were saved to serve and made for a mission. They are eager to receive a personal assignment and excited about the privilege of being used by God. One way to become a *world-class* Christian is to be enlisted in the Great Commission. This is exactly what Jesus did for the disciples as we see in today's passage. He wanted them to make the Great Commission their mission. He commissioned them with authority to share the greatest message on earth. Today, their names are known globally.

God is inviting you also to participate in the most significant message in history. The Great Commission should be your mission. Are you actively involved in sharing the great news of the kingdom of God? There are several ways you can do this: by shifting from self-centred thinking to people-centred thinking and by shifting from local thinking to global thinking. The essence of the endowment of the Holy Spirit is for evangelism and missions. Will you allow God to work and walk through you today?

- **Birthday Blessing:** *“The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins”* Isaiah 51:3

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 20-22

“A Christian without affliction is only like a soldier on parade.” – Felix Neff

Monday, April 8

Exodus 12:1-14

THE ORIGIN OF PASSOVER CELEBRATION

"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generation to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance." Exodus 12:14

A king once gave a ring to his favorite, and said to him, "I know that at the council tomorrow a charge of heresy will be brought against you; but, when you come in, answer them if you will, but you need be in no fear; if you find yourself brought to desperation, simply show them the ring, and they will go no further."

The Passover ordinance was instituted in the Old Testament at the eve of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. It symbolises their permanent deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Subsequently, God instructed them to keep this feast in memorial throughout their generations (Exodus 12:14). With this, the feast of Passover became one of the three feasts (Pentecost and Tabernacles being the other two) the Israelites observed every year which necessitated their trip to Jerusalem three times a year. Later in the New Testament Jesus partook of the Passover feast and this was very significant; it was to give meaning to the Old Testament shadow of this experience. In other words, Jesus is our Passover Lamb – God's final substitute for human degradation. Jesus came to deliver us from every form of oppression, therefore do not allow the devil to oppress you in any form. Fix your gaze on your Passover Lamb that has taken away your sins.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away"* Nahum 1:13

RBT Passage: 2 Samuel 23-24

"One of God's richest blessings is His peace that can never be disturbed." – **F.E. Marsh**

Tuesday, April 9

Luke 16: 19-31

CARE FOR THE POOR

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried." Luke 16:22, NIV

A little boy, sitting next to a lady in church, noticed that she had nothing for the collection plate. As the collector approached, the little fellow seemed greatly disturbed because his seatmate had nothing to give. When the steward got within a few pews' distance he handed over his silver piece to the lady, as he whispered in her ear: "Take this, and I'll get under the seat till he goes by." Such sensitive souls as this boy are exceedingly rare. The story told by Jesus about Lazarus and the Rich Man, as captured in today's passage, graphically illustrates this profound truth about showing care to the less privileged.

The rich man spent his life without any consideration for God. He did not give regard to the needy around him either. By implication, he was not a good steward of God's blessings in his life and ended up in torment. Lazarus, a very poor man, lived perpetually at the rich man's gate in hunger. . Eventually Lazarus died in this state. But the good thing is that he was carried by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. People may seem poor in material things but rich in their relationship with God. As believers we should never look down on anyone or treat the poor with contempt. Learn to honour everyone and care especially for the poor around you today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you."* Genesis 12:2

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 1-2

"Life doesn't consist in an abundance of possession."

– The Holy Bible

Wednesday, April 10

John 12:1-8

MARY ANOINTS JESUS' BODY FOR BURIAL

"Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume, she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair." John 12:3a

A missionary society was deeply impressed by the courageous devotion of David Livingstone who worked single-handedly for God in Africa. The society wrote to Livingstone: "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to send other men to join you." Livingstone replied, "If you have men who will come only if there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all." Such is a life that was completely poured out for God. Mary, as reflected in today's passage, followed the same path of dire hard devotion to Christ by her symbolic act of pouring the expensive perfume on Jesus. The perfume was estimated to worth 300 denarii, equivalent to a year's wages. That may well have represented her life savings. But she decided to "waste" it on Jesus as Judas insinuated.

What is your level of devotion to Christ? There is always something beautiful and fragrant about what we do out of love. No act performed out of a mere sense of duty, or out of obligation, can fill the air with that kind of fragrance. You must understand that your life is like a liquid and will be poured on something someday. Will you allow Jesus to fill the remaining empty spaces in your heart with His love today?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment" Job 36:11.

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 3-5

"All that is not eternal is eternally useless." – C.S. Lewis

Thursday, April 11

John 11:47-53

ONE MUST DIE FOR THE NATION

"You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish." John 11:50

A bee was drawn into the open window of a car travelling down the road. The bee was upset, and so was a boy in the car, who had previously suffered a severe reaction from a bee sting. But before things got out of hand, the boy's father caught the bee in his hand and tossed it back out the window. Then he pulled the car over to comfort his son. The boy, however, was now desperately worried that his father would die from the bee sting. "Oh, no," said the father, showing him that his hand was only slightly swollen. "The sting won't hurt me like it would you, so I took the sting for you." And that is just what Jesus did for us: He took the sting of death for us. That was the prophecy of Caiaphas, the high priest, about Jesus as reflected in today's passage (John 11:51).

There are still many today who reject this wonderful offer of God's forgiveness through Jesus, though some through ignorance. That is why you and I must be ready to tell others that a saviour has died for their sins. "And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14c). Are there people around you that must know that Jesus has died for him? What do you want to do about it today?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Worship the Lord your God and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take sickness away from among you" Exodus 23:25.

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 6-7

"Calvary has open the gateway to God's asset."

–Rick Joyner

Friday, April 12

Matthew 26: 14-16

JUDAS NEGOTIATES THE HANDOVER OF JESUS

"From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over." Matthew 26:16, NIV

Do you know the guy named Gehazi? What do you think he has in common with Judas? Gehazi was a disciple of the prophet Elisha just as Judas was a disciple of Jesus. Gehazi fell to the trap of the love of money which made him to collect the gifts his master had rejected. Gehazi became leprous as a result of this action and lost his place in the prophetic heritage. His story was captured in 2 Kings 5:19-27. Judas obviously followed the same path as Gehazi when he betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver! The Bible had warned that believers should be careful about the subtle deception of riches (Matthew 13:32).

The love of money is the root of all evil. Believers must prioritise godliness and contentment because it always leads to great gain. When these two virtues are not in place in believers' heart, it is easy to deny and displace Christ in the heart. Is your devotion to Christ and His course still intact? Are you not pursuing wealth and riches at the expense of your commitment to Christ? Are you not denying Christ in your conduct on the daily basis? Learn from Judas; he lost his place in the apostolic heritage. Renew your commitment to Christ today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Those who trusts in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever" Psalm 125: 1.

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 8-9

"When you live in light of eternity, your values change."

-Gbile Akanni

Saturday, April 13

Matthew 26: 17-29

JESUS CELEBRATES THE LAST PASSOVER MEAL

"I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine...until ...I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" Matthew 26:29

It has been established that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. In other words, the reality and the significance of the Passover feast instituted in the Old Testament are found in Jesus. In today's passage, Jesus observed the Passover meal with His disciples for the last time. Just as the blood of bull provided the Israelites deliverance from the onslaught in Egypt, Jesus made the disciples realized that His blood represented the new covenant God is making with the human race that would provide for forgiveness of sins: *"This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"* (V. 28). By implication, Jesus summed up the significance of His death.

What is the significance of this Last Supper Jesus had with the disciples for us in this dispensation? It means His death is God's guarantee that new promises to mankind have gone into effect. Through the death of Christ forgiveness of sins is made available to all mankind. And his resurrection is the guarantee that Jesus will come again, to escort us to our place in His Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). This should excite us and ignite our hope as we observe our pilgrimage on this side of eternity. We are victorious by the blood of Jesus Christ!

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him"* Rom 8:28

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 10-12

"The art of being thankful keeps your countenance in good place and your energy alluring." – **Lavaille Lavette**

Sunday, April 14

Matthew 26: 1-13

JESUS DEFENDS THE WOMAN'S BEAUTIFUL ACT

"When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. 'Why this waste? They asked'" Matthew 26:8, NIV

"When you are disposed to criticize a friend, Just remember, the beginning's not the end; When within this urge you find, These three questions bring to mind: Is it TRUE? Is it NEEDFUL? Is it KIND?" This short poem illustrates the lesson in today's passage. Jesus was approaching the last days of His ministry and as the high Jewish council plotted to arrest Him, Judas muting the idea of betraying him, suddenly an unnamed woman slipped into the house with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus. The disciples were indignant about her act and considered it a waste. Jesus, instead of criticising her, saw her act as kind and needful, calling it a beautiful thing.

Do not be quick to pass judgment on someone else's action. There may be deeper reason(s) for doing it. For this woman, she had expressed her highest love and devotion to Jesus which only Jesus could discern. We can get caught up in our plans, in our dreams and so many religious stuffs that we will be less concerned with what is paramount to the Master, which is our worship and love. How much we need to pause, set aside our projects and wait quietly to sense Christ's mood, and pour out our treasures of worship on Him rather than sit in judgment on those who are expressing such.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord bestows favor and honor" Ps 84:11.*

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 13-15

"I thank God for my handicaps, for, through them, I have found myself, my work, and my God." – Hellen Keller

Monday, April 15

John 11:17-27

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

"Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and life. The one who believes in me, even though they die" John 11:26, NIV

A Muslim and a Christian were discussing their religions and had agreed that both Mohammed and Christ were prophets. Where, then, lay the difference? The Christian illustrated it this way: "I came to a crossroads and I saw a dead man and a living man. Which one did I ask for directions?" The response came quickly, "The living one, of course." "Why, then," asked his friend, "Do you send me to Mohammed who is dead, instead of Christ who is alive?"

In today's passage, Mary and Martha had lost hope about their brother, Lazarus, who had died for four days. But Jesus came to the scene to reassure them that their brother would come back to life. The reason is because, Jesus had power over death. This is the basic difference between Christ and every other religious leader. All the others came into the world, lived, and died—but none of them lived again. The resurrection of Christ was the one event that persuaded His disciples that He was Christ, God's Son. Are you also living under the fear of death or your life is been threatened by one sickness or the other? Or is there any situation that is going out of control for you? Let your faith rise now because the Christ in you has power over all situations and circumstances.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds"* Isaiah 3:10

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 16-18

"Everything that happens to you has spiritual significance."

– Rick Warren

Tuesday, April 16

Matthew 27:3-10

JUDAS RETURNS MONEY, HANGS HIMSELF

"When Judas...saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders" Matthew 27:3, NIV

Have you ever been betrayed by someone or have you betrayed someone in the past? Can you relate with the pain that comes with betrayal? Judas' action was a clear example of betrayal. He was an appointed disciple and a follower of Jesus but he sold his conscience for the momentary gain of thirty silver coins. When the Romans wanted to capture Jesus, he was found a ready tool for the ungodly assignment. He identified Jesus by a kiss for a monetary reward. Unfortunately, he could not get the satisfaction he desired from that ungodly venture. He was pricked in the heart and had to return the money but never truly repented. He eventually hung himself.

There are different levels of betrayal today: we see wives betraying husbands; children betraying parents; colleagues at work betraying each other; business associates stabbing each other in the back; and even church members betraying one another all because of money. The truth is that betrayal will never give true satisfaction. Are you breaking trust and confidence of another person because of money or other things? You must understand that money won't make you rich; true riches come from being godly and contented with the little you have. Judas lost his apostolic calling and position because of greed. Allow God's love to grow deep in your heart.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Keep your lives from the love of money and be content with what you have" Heb 13:5*

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 19-20

"The love of money is the root of all evil." – Apostle Paul

JESUS CRUCIFIED

"When they had crucified him, they divided up his cloths by casting lots" Matthew 27:35, NIV

In a small village stood a chapel upon whose arc was inscribed the words, "we preach Christ crucified." For years godly men preached there and presented a crucified Saviour as the only means of salvation. But as those generation of godly preachers passed, there arose a generation who considered the cross and its message "the gospel of the shambles", and so changed the inscription to "we preach Christ." Today's passage presents the dramatic story of how Jesus was crucified. His crucifixion was one of the three vital components that make up our redemption story (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). His death on the cross was necessary for the restoration of all we lost at the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

The death of Jesus was a watershed in human history. Through His death we were cut off from our ugly past of disease, dis-harmony, dis-appointment, dis-comfort, discouragement, dis-ability, dis-location and all other "catabolic emotions", using the words of Gerald Rowland. However, to enjoy the fullness of what His death brought for humanity, there is need to receive Him as Lord and Saviour. Have you made Christ the Lord of your life or you are still despising Him like the religious leaders of His days? Will you like to submit to His lordship today so that you can enjoy the fullness of the redemption package?

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Praise be to the God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ" Ephesians 1:3*

RBT Passage: 1 Kings 21-22

"The reason for His cross is for the restoration of human dignity." – Myles Munroe

Thursday, April 18

Matthew 27:62-66

GUARDS SECURE THE TOMB

“Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how”

Matthew 27: 65

A community was concerned about the incessant visit of robbers into their area. On several occasions in broad daylight while everyone would have gone out, their houses would be burgled. So, they decided to engage security guards to watch over the community while everybody is away. Unfortunately, this effort did not yield the desired result because robbers still came around to perpetuate the same thing. This time around they broke into the community chairman's house from the back and carted away valuables while the guards were outside the same building talking. This shows that ultimate security belongs to God.

Today's passage reveals the desperate efforts the Jewish leaders made to prevent the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus had made it clear while He was alive that He would rise the third day. They did not want this to happen so as to invalidate the prophecy of the Scriptures. To this effect, Pilate gave them the permission and so the tomb was made secured with a seal (Matthew. 27:66). Unfortunately, this could not prevent the resurrection from taking place because the word of God could not be chained (2 Timothy. 2:9). Are you feeling like you have come to a dead end in your life, academic and career? The good news for you today is that it cannot be over with Jesus.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it?”* (Isaiah 43:19)

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 1-3

“For no word from God will ever fail.” – The Bible

Friday, April 19

John 20:11-18

MARY MEETS JESUS OUTSIDE THE TOMB

“Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: I have seen the Lord! John 20:18

Timothy was an undergraduate in a particular year in the 90s in one of the Nigerian universities. He was admitted at the age of 16, but he was not matured enough to cope with the pressures of university and so he was always looking forward to his elder sister's visit. On this particular weekend, his sister was delayed in coming, so Timothy had to stay at the bus station for several hours waiting expectantly. At a point when it appeared the sister would not be coming, he started crying profusely that many passing by could not believe he was an undergraduate. Obviously, Timothy was longing for affection.

Today's passage x-rays the depth of affection Mary Magdalene had for Jesus. She had experienced a miraculous intervention from Jesus when she got delivered from demonic possession. She was also one of the women who provided for Jesus from their substances for His public ministry. Even in death, she still demonstrated her passion for the Lord so much that while other disciples went away to their homes, she stood outside the tomb weeping, hoping to see the resurrected Lord. How is your love for Jesus? Are you expectant of his second coming? Are you always ready to identify with his death and resurrection in the public? Renew your commitment for the Lord today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May the GOD of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 4-5

“God works where there's an attitude of faith.”

– Joel Osteen

Saturday, April 20

Revelation 20:1-6

REIGNING TRIUMPHANT WITH CHRIST

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power... and shall reign with Him a thousand years" Rev 20: 6

Rick Warren once remarked that life is a *trust*, life is a *test* and life is a *temporary assignment*. This suggests that as Christians we must cultivate the pilgrim mentality of detachment and traveller's utilitarian philosophy concerning the things of this world. In other words, we must live with eternity in view with the hope of reigning with Christ because our sojourn here is temporary. A time comes when the saints will experience resurrection and stand before God to receive their reward. This is the thrust of today's passage which describes the joy the saints would experience with Christ particularly those who endured till the end.

The issue of eternity is not obscured in the Bible. The Bible teaches that this life is preparation for the next. Life on earth is just a dress rehearsal before the real production. To make the most of life therefore, demands that the vision and value of eternity is kept continually in mind. One of such visions is the joy of reigning with Christ on the last day. Are you waiting expectantly for the blessed appearance of our great God and saviour who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21)? Are you already losing hope in Christ because of the temporary suffering you are going through? Remember the exhortation of Paul in Romans 8:18.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God"* Romans 8:28

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 6-8

"Surely God would not have created...man to exist only for a day...man was made for immortality." – **Abraham Lincoln**

Sunday, April 21

Matthew 28:1-15

"MEET ME IN GALILEE!"

"Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me"

Matthew 28:10, NKJV

A story was told of a man who died somewhere in the southwest and left an uncompleted building. Surprisingly, after two years some men who claimed they were living with this man in Kano State came to the village and said the man had asked them to help him complete the building. The villagers were taken aback explaining to the visitors that the man had died two years before. They were shocked and decided to return to Kano to unravel this mystery. Unfortunately, on getting home, the man had vacated the residence.

Today's passage helps us to understand that Jesus' resurrection was validated with undeniable proofs. The Jews of that day had a belief that the soul of the departed hovers over the tomb for several days after death. If Jesus meets the disciples in Galilee, then there would be no suspicion that the post-resurrection appearances were of this kind. Also, it is to invalidate the claims of the guards that His body was stolen (Matthew 28:11-13). Obviously, there are still many today who consider the biblical story of resurrection as a myth. What is your own position? Do you have a witness of the risen Christ in you? Can you hold your conviction against all manner of contemporary philosophies going around? May the Lord shine His light in your heart!

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Those who trusts in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever" Psalm 125:1.*

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 9-10

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. – **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

PLACE OF RENEWAL

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways"

Isaiah 2:2, NIV

Have you heard the word "*ecclesia*" before? It actually means the assembly of the called out ones. In its strict sense, it means a political assembly of citizens of ancient Greek states. So, *ecclesia* is a political or diplomatic word which describes a group of people with a diplomatic or governmental backing. This means the Church could be referred to as a diplomatic centre of God's kingdom on earth; the Church is God's embassy on earth. In our passage for today, Isaiah saw a vision of the pivotal place and role the Church of God would occupy in the last day. He saw that men would stream to the Church to seek instructions from the God of heaven.

Through the Church, God wants His will, counsel, culture, and influence to be made known so much that the kingdom of this world would eventually become the Kingdom of our God and of His Son. He wants His knowledge to fill the earth as waters cover the sea. For this to happen, God designed His own leadership concept that will produce leaders over His church, which will understand His mind and express the same to His people, such that his people would be empowered to exercise Kingdom dominion on earth. Are you committed to your local church? Do you seek God sincerely in your church or you go elsewhere for help?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar in Lebanon"
Psalm 92:12

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 11-13

"Service is the pathway to real significance." –Anonymous

Tuesday, April 23 1 Cor 12:12-13; Colossians 3:12-17

BODY BUILDING FOR BAPTISED BELIEVERS

“For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” 1 Corinthians 12:13

C.S. Lewis once wrote an essay on church membership, reminding us that the word *membership* is of Christian origin, but it has been taken over by the world and emptied of all its original meaning. Today, most people associate the term membership with paying dues, meaningless rituals, silly rules, handshakes, and having your name on some dusty roll. Paul however, insists that being a member of the Church meant becoming a vital organ of a living body and baptism is an important symbolic representation of such.

A church is a place to belong where you are connected to other believers. Your place in the body of Christ is very significant and God wants you to maximize your place in it. A church family provides you platform for growth and a place to learn how to get along with other believers. As a participating member you learn to care about others and share the experiences of others. That is why Paul admonishes that each of us should strive to be filled with God’s Word so that we can encourage other believers from the overflow of God’s resources in us (Colossian 3:16). Are you maximising your place in the body of Christ? Do you value other members of the body of Christ? Let today mark the beginning of a fresh commitment to your local church.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” Isaiah 40:29.

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 14-16

“The church will outlive this universe, and so will your role in it.” – Rick Warren

Wednesday, April 24

Acts 16:11-15

LYDIA AND HOUSEHOLD BAPTISED

"One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia...She was a worshiper of God."

Acts 16:14, NIV

Yesterday, we explored the significance of belonging to the body of Christ. We concluded that each of us is formed to belong to God's family. In school, you were part of a student body. Elected political leaders form legislative bodies. Now, you are a part of a significant part of God's body. When God calls the Church "the body of Christ," He has a human body in mind where every part is interconnected and interdependent. In today's passage, we see Lydia and her household incorporated into the body of Christ through baptism after responding to the message of salvation preached by Paul (Acts 16:14). This means that those to be baptised must have first experienced a new birth.

It is also noteworthy that Lydia immediately showed hospitality. She persuaded Paul and the team members to consider staying in her house (Acts 16:15). She showed an example of how believers should serve the body of Christ. It is important for every Christian to know that in heaven, we are going to serve God forever. Right now, we can prepare for that eternal service by practicing it on earth. Have you experienced a genuine salvation? If so, are you demonstrating it by genuinely serving the body of Christ? Is your home open for use by the Lord? Think on these things today and make a fresh commitment.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins"* Isa 51:3

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 17-18

"You will never know what you are good at until you try"

- Zig Ziglar

JAILER AND HOUSEHOLD BAPTISED

"Then immediately he and all his households were baptized" Acts 16:33, NIV

The gospel remains the power of God for the salvation of mankind according to Romans 1:16. Today's passage shows us how Paul and Silas refused to be deterred by the chains on their hands and legs from sharing the gospel in the dark dungeon of the prison. Through this singular act, God's message of salvation came to the jailer. Seeing the miraculous intervention of God in breaking loose the shackles on Paul's legs and hands, he requested, *'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'* Paul gave him the condition for salvation: *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31). The jailer did not only believe, he brought his entire household to salvation and they were all baptised.

Baptism is the open declaration of the internal experience of salvation; it is a way of declaring to the public that we are no longer serving the world; that we have shifted allegiance to a new Master, Jesus Christ. There are several people who are yet to identify with Jesus through the process of baptism. The church must give opportunity for such people to do that. We must visit prisons, hotels and hospitals with the purpose of sharing the gospel of peace. This is one of the ways of helping people to share the joy of salvation as the jailer did (Acts 16:34).

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"It is God who arms with strength and keep my way secure" Psalm 18:32*

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 19-21

"Character is never built in a classroom; it is built in the circumstances of life." – **Anonymous**

REACHING NEW PEOPLE

“One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent” Acts 18:9, NIV

The commission Jesus gave to the Church was very clear and simple: *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations (that is, of all ethnic groups)...” (Matthew 28:19 Paraphrased)*. Unfortunately, this commission has been misunderstood and wrongly executed by the Church. The Church has unconsciously conceded some “lands” to the devil and ignorantly confined believers to the four walls of the church, while our society continues to grow in ungodliness and all forms of misdemeanour. Until the Church understands the thrust of the great commission and passionately commit itself to its fulfilment, there will continue to be perversions in our land.

Today's passage shows us how Paul committed himself to the spread of the gospel even when he was opposed. He stayed in Corinth for one year, six months preaching and teaching God's Word. The thrust of the Great Commission is the transformation of nations. Anything short of this is complete aberration and perversion of God's purpose for the Church. The implication of this is that the Church's ministries must influence the society. God expect the Church to preserve the society from decay and at the same time set the pace for godly values; the Church is to give directions for others to follow in good things. What will be your own contribution in expanding the kingdom here on earth? Have you located your own mission field?

- **Birthday Blessing:** *“That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season” Ps 1:3*

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 22-23

“There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to fishing. You must know what you are fishing for.” – John Piper

Saturday, April 27

Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

MATTHIAS CHOSEN TO REPLACE JUDAS

"Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles" Acts 1:26, NIV

It's a popular saying that "No one is indispensable." We studied two weeks ago how Judas lost his apostolic position because of his love for money. He traded his anointing and calling for thirty pieces of silver when he betrayed his Master, Jesus. He was meant to be part of the twelve disciples earlier chosen by Jesus to propagate the gospel around the world after His ascension; but he lost this great calling and ended his life in disgrace. Today's passage explains how his noble position was replaced with Matthias. It is important to know that Matthias had also been a consistent follower of the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:21).

Today's lesson teaches us to cherish whatever God has committed to our hands and be faithful in its discharge. Judas preferred worldly gains to godliness and so he lost his place to Matthias who remained tenacious in his walk with God. It also reminds us that we should not lobby for position in the body of Christ; when the right time comes and we are found worthy we shall be called upon for higher service. Are you faithful in the assignment God has committed into your hands? Are you not taking the grace of God in vain? Remember that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous, you surround them with your favor as with a shield" Psalm 5:12*

RBT Passage: 2 Kings 24-25

"Jesus came that we might receive the full right of sons."

- Myles Munroe

Sunday, April 28

Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-8

DISCIPLES CALLED AND COMMISSIONED

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19

Rick Warren once remarked: *A Great Commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a Great Church.*" The great commandment is to love the Lord with all of our soul, mind and heart as well as our neighbours, while the Great Commission is to go to the entire world to win souls for Jesus. The disciples were faithful to this calling in their days; they preached the gospel right from Jerusalem to Samaria and to every part of their own world. They made disciples and planted vibrant churches. They demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit in spreading the gospel as well as healing the sick and raising the dead.

We must emulate the early disciples of Jesus. We must lift up our eyes and see the field already white for harvest. Every society is made up of seven spheres: spiritual, social, business, education, sport, entertainment, and education; these are the *"fields"* the Church must make her relevance felt and as much as possible set the pace and take the lead in all of them. As a disciple of Jesus, have you identified your own field of harvest? In what way do you want to deploy your gift and talent in spreading the gospel of the kingdom?

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly"* Psalm 1:1a.

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 1-2

"You were saved to serve." – Anonymous

GOD-GIVEN TASK FOR WORKERS

"I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live" (Ecclesiastes 3:12)

Matthew Henry said, "It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our final day." This means there is more to life than just here and now. In today's passage, King Solomon poses a question: *"what do workers gain from their toil?"* His immediate response was this: *"I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live"* (v 12). But he quickly added that, *"God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity and a time to judge every deed"* (v 17). This implies that to make the most of your life, you must keep the vision of eternity continually in your mind and the value of it in your heart.

Are you living in the light of eternity? Are you making your life count for God? Do you know that God keeps the record of each of your daily activities and that you will account for it on the Day of Judgment? You can begin to be more thoughtful about the things you do beginning from today. The reason being that one day your heart will stop beating. That will be the end of your body and your time on earth, but it will not be the end of you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed"* Psalm 20:4.

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 3-4

"Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning."

– William A. Ward

Tuesday, April 30

John 10:11-18

THE SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11, NIV

All through the Old Testament we find shepherd: Abel, Abraham, Moses, and David are some prominent ones that come readily to mind. God, knowing that people were familiar with shepherding and sheep and seeing that their survival was dependent on these animals, used shepherd/sheep as an understandable illustration for communicating His truth. Jesus made an affirmative statement in today's passage that He is a good shepherd. What made Jesus to qualify as a Good Shepherd? Typically, a shepherd does three major things for the sheep: he provides food for the sheep, protects the sheep against wolves (and if need be die for the sheep in the process), and he guides the sheep in the right path. Obviously, Jesus fulfils and performs these three roles as reflected in today's passage.

There is no doubt that human beings are in need of the three things mentioned above. The good news is that Jesus is available to provide them all. If you have secured a relationship with Him through a new birth process, then you are qualified to enjoy all these because you are His sheep. If you have not entered into a relationship with Him, then you are one of the sheep outside the fold that must be brought in so that you can also have access to the green pasture. You can do that today!

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing"* Psalm 23:1

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 5-6

"He who is afraid to ask is ashamed of learning."

– Danish Proverb

Wednesday, May 1

Romans 7:7-12

THE VALUE OF THE LAW

“So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.” Romans 7:12, NIV

Imagine living in a country without a law. No regulations; drivers can park their vehicles anywhere, drive without any form of caution, and on any side of the road. Teachers, nurses, engineer, police, doctors are free to get to work anytime they wish and do as they like, or not show up at all. By the way, will there even be any professional in such a country? I doubt; unless they are trained in another country. Even if any of these professionals exist, what a chaotic, uncertain, disastrous and unsafe country that will be. Likewise, without the law, everyone will remain in their mess without knowing it. There can be no spiritual discernment.

The Law was given to create the awareness of things that are sinful; things that are not acceptable to God. However, it also created the consciousness of sin and this leads to death. Therefore, the death sentence due to sin, should prompt everyone who wants to live to seek Jesus, the Source of life. In John 11:25 Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.” By Faith in Christ, we have the power to walk blameless before God and exchange death for eternal life. Abide in Christ so that you can live peacefully with God and man.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You shall have great peace, and nothing shall make you stumble. Psalm 119:165

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 7-9

Don't ever try arguing with the Devil. He is better at arguing than you are, having had thousands of years to practice.

– Rick Warren

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

"So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24 (NIV)

A young girl after sweeping the room, went to the window shade and hastily drew it down, saying, "It makes the room so dusty to have the sunshine coming in." She foolishly imagined that it was the sunshine that made the dust whereas it only revealed it.

Like the young lady, many of us often fail to realize that the Law, like the sunshine, reveals the filths in us. It doesn't create them. The Law is like an eye opener to our depraved state. This should set everyone in search for help. The revelation of the only begotten Son of God is the only help that we have got. Every mediator prior to the revelation of Christ Jesus was unable to bring deliverance. We were all held under the burden of our sins. The only source of liberation is faith in Jesus Christ. By accepting Christ as our Lord and master, we have the garment of sin removed and we get clothed with the nature of Christ. This only comes when we put our faith in Him (Jesus Christ). This is regardless of gender or race – for we are all one in Christ Jesus. Have you surrendered your life to Him? You will be free from the burden of sin if you do.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will remove from you scorn and contempt. Psalm 119: 22

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 10-12

"When life gets too hard to stand, kneel." – Anonymous

Friday, May 3

Romans 3: 1-8

GOD IS FAITHFUL AND FAIR

*"What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar."*Romans 3:3-4a, NIV

A young man who presented himself as a candidate for baptism was asked by one of the deacons when he found Christ as his Savior. "I didn't find Him; He found me," was the reply. That's absolutely correct. God is constantly seeking the wandering sinner, confronting him with the cross of Christ at every turn.

The response of this young man aptly recognizes God's fairness and faithfulness in seeking for the lost. Today's passage places emphasis on the faithfulness and righteousness of God irrespective of man's action. The sinfulness of man cannot reduce the righteousness or faithfulness of God, in fact, man's weakness makes God's strength more evident. It doesn't matter what our states are when God finds us. Whether a church member, morally fitting, depraved, wicked, Muslim etc, it really does not matter to God. He is and can use everything for the advancement of His kingdom and for your blessing to achieve His purpose in your life. All He needs is for you to accept His invitation. It is not your effort but His – yours is to respond. Indeed there is nothing we can do to add to our righteousness. Our path is to just follow our master and Lord Jesus Christ and believe everything He has said concerning us because everyman can be a liar, but God will always be true. Will you follow Him?

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will rescue you from oppression and violence. Proverb 72:14

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 13-16

"The giant in front of you is never bigger than the God inside of you." – **Anonymous**

Saturday, May 4

Romans 3:9–20

JESUS BRINGS TRUE JUSTICE

"All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Romans 3:12, NIV

Richard Nixon famously resigned from office in August 1974 amid accusations of malfeasance related to the Watergate scandal. But while there was a possibility that Nixon could have been prosecuted and even jailed, he was granted a full pardon by new President Gerald Ford only weeks after stepping down. Ford's offer of clemency came before Nixon had officially been charged with any misdeeds, and covered all federal crimes the former president had "committed or may have committed or taken part in" during his terms in office.

We were all guilty under the law and no one could be declared righteous. We were under the sentence of death. Our sins including neglecting our Maker, failure to consistently do good, deceit (lying), speaking hurtful words, bitterness, cursing, cheating, stealing, being violent, bloodshed, destroying others, hopelessness and lack of trust in God. Under the law, anyone guilty of one of these is guilty of all. But Christ intervened for all those who come to Him and cleave to Him. He took away our condemnation, our death and all the sins we have and would ever commit. He bought our pardon and freedom by His own blood and declared us righteous before the Father. The best we can do for ourselves is to accept His true justice that sets us free. Have you given your life completely to Him?

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD GOD will give justice for you. Luke 18:7

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 17-19

"Faith does not eliminate questions but faith knows where to take them." — Elisabeth Elliot

Sunday, May 5

Romans 3: 21–31

ALL CALLED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile." Romans 3:22, NIV

An unbeliever once ridiculed the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by saying, "If Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, why is it that there are so many unbelievers?" The Christian to whom he was speaking stopped a very dirty little boy who was passing by and turning to the unbeliever said, "Can you blame soap and water for the filth of this boy?" It was available to all, but only those who accept it experience its regenerating power.

Just like this little boy, everyone is guilty of sin and has been condemned to death, but God sacrificed Jesus Christ as atonement for the sin of everyone who will accept Him through faith. This generous act of God made salvation available for everyone, but only those that believe will be given access to this package. Every provision for your righteousness has been made by God, you need nothing but continued faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is able to save everyone who accepts God's provision in Him. This is regardless of tribal or cultural background and family lineage, circumcision or uncircumcision, Jew or Gentile. Christ's sacrifice is a complete package and it does not need the help of any man for salvation. Accept His atoning blood and follow His path as you know Him in His words.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy. Job 8:21

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 20-23

"Without a heart transformed by the grace of Christ, we just continue to manage internal and external darkness."

—Matt Chandler

Monday, May 6

John 5:19–24

BELIEVERS IN JESUS HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" John 5:24, NIV

Two young men were talking about the cost of following Jesus. One of them said, "I cannot tell you all that the Lord Jesus is to me, or what He has done for me. I do wish you would enlist in His army." "I'm thinking about it," answered the other young man, "but it means giving up several things—in fact, I am counting the cost." A Christian officer, passing by, heard the last remark, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the young soldier said, "Young man, you talk of counting the cost of following Christ, but have you ever counted the cost of not following Him?"

It is impossible to cross from death to life without following Jesus Christ. Many people hesitate to begin the journey with Christ because of what they think Christ will take from them without thinking of what He will give to them. We are reminded today that all judgments have been committed to Christ and so, no one can escape Jesus. Only those who believe in Christ and obey His Words will have eternal life. Therefore, where you will spend your eternity depends on whether you hear and believe in Him or not. If you do not have a relationship with Him you can begin today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will grant peace in your land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. Leviticus 26:6

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 24-26

"Grace isn't just forgiveness, it is forgiveness fueled by surrender." —Amy E. Spiegel

Tuesday, May 7

Galatians 4:1-7

SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN OUR HEARTS

"Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba Father.'"

Galatians 4:6, NIV

Benjamin West, the great painter, speaking of Gilbert Stuart, a brother artist famed for his beautiful colouring, used to say to his pupils, "It's no use to steal Stuart's colours; if you want to paint as he does, you must steal his eyes."

When we are baffled in our efforts to live as Christ lived, the record of His life, however wonderful it is, will not enable us to be like Him. What we need is His heart and His nature. Humans lost the nature and presence of God after falling for Satan's deceit in the Garden of Eden. This made it difficult for man to relate with God because God relates with us through His Spirit in us. That is why Jesus said, God is Spirit and those who will worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us access into the presence of God and also bears witness in our hearts that we are children of God. Only divinity within us can express divinity without. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot know Him as God. No Christian can truly grow to maturity unless he/she is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. To manifest the nature of God, every believer must therefore seek to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. Isaiah 61:7

RBT Passage: 1 Chronicles 27-29

"God created it. Jesus died for it. The Spirit lives in it. I'd better take care of it." – Rick Warren

Wednesday, May 8

1 Corinthians 15:12-28

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

"For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either." 1 Corinthians 15:16, NIV

A servant who had received a silver cup from his master accidentally dropped it into a vat of acid. The servant was dumbfounded when he saw the whole cup disappear. He immediately went to a fellow servant and told him that the silver cup was lost forever. "It can't be recovered. You can't even see it." The master, an educated man, came on the scene. He infused salt water into the acid and precipitated the silver from the solution. Then by melting it and hammering the metal, he restored the cup to its original shape.

Many still find it difficult to come to terms with the veracity of the hope of resurrection today. To such people, Paul aptly refers to the evidence of resurrection within and around them. The forsaking of old nature and putting on the nature of Christ should guarantee every believer that he/she will be resurrected with Christ. Disputing the validity of resurrection is to equate God to ourselves in knowledge, power and wisdom or to doubt the existence of God entirely. That Christ is raised from the dead to glory is an assurance that those who believe to the end will also be raised into glory. Be assured that the power that raised Christ from the dead is able to give life to you and everything that is yours if you will only believe.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will speak of the LORD statutes before kings and will not be put to shame. Psalm 119:46

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 1-4

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." — John Piper

Thursday, May 9

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

SEEING OTHERS THROUGH CHRIST

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

Dr Guthrie, attending a school gathering in a slum area, followed a speaker who had referred to poor neglected children as "the scum of society." This roused the indignation of Dr. Guthrie. Taking a clean sheet of paper and holding it up, he said, "Yes, this was the scum of society once, only filthy rags, but they can be cleansed and made into spotless white paper on which you may write the name of God." So it is with a believer in Christ.

Two hallmarks of those in Christ which is lacking outside Christ are forgiveness of their sins and clothing with a new nature. The problem of the world and the Church today is that too many are not in Christ Jesus. The only way to transform our world is to bring and nurture everyone who has not known Christ, not only to come to Him but to also abide in Him. However, this cannot be achieved unless everyone who claim to be a Christian live like Christ in conduct, conversation, purity, love and righteousness. You are called to be an ambassador of Christ. Are you in Him? How have you been representing Christ? Be Christ image today and always.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Your joy will be complete. John 15:11

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 5-7

"Don't shine so others can see you, shine so that through you others can see Him." – **Anonymous**

EAGER LONGING

*"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship...."*Romans 8: 23, NIV

A servant whose master and mistress were away was uncertain when they would return. A friend visited her and feeling rather tired went in to rest. When she got up she saw that the servant had gone to all kinds of trouble to lay the table for tea as if her master and mistress were coming home that hour. She questioned the servant whether the master and mistress were coming home that day, but her friend answered, "I have not heard, but as the time is uncertain, I always have everything ready each day." What a lesson this is for Christians—to have everything ready every day and every hour of the day.

Paul described the glory that will attend our victory. To make the occasion grand, God has put every other creation in subjection, and so they are waiting with eager expectation of our revelation. It will be an occasion for all creation to be liberated from decay. For them, it is a time of eager expectation. For us, it is a time of adoption and redemption of our bodies from everything that destroys. Our eager longing should therefore be characterized by preparedness at all times to meet Him when He comes or call. How prepared are you?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land" Isaiah 1:19.

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 8-11

"The only way by which we can grow nearer and nearer to our Lord is by steadfastly keeping beside Him."

—Alexander Maclaren

Saturday, May 11

Romans 8:26-30

SUSTAINED AND LED BY THE SPIRIT

*"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."*Romans 8:26, NIV

Imagine a glove without a hand in it, what can it do? Nothing! But when human hand is in it, the glove can do many things. True, it is not the *glove*, but human hand in the glove that acts. Picture the Christian as a glove and the Holy Spirit in us, as the hand who does the work.

We are created for a purpose, but the flesh made us weak for this purpose. Every child of God therefore needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit to achieve his or her purpose. The Holy Spirit gives strength and helps the Christian to pray effectively and correctly according to God's will. He helps us to be moulded into Christ's image. He guarantees our justification and glorification. We must therefore, recognize His role in our lives in such a way that we do not grieve Him but commune with and trust Him. The power of the Holy Spirit is made manifest in our lives when we yield ourselves to Him. Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to live a victorious Christian life. Make a practice of receiving from the Holy Spirit for your daily living and you will find yourself fulfilling your purpose in life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will make you very fruitful; HE will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. Genesis 17:6

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 12-16

"Your mind is a powerful thing. When you fill it with positive thoughts, your life will start to change." –Anonymous

Sunday, May 12

Romans 8:1-14

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST JESUS

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1, NIV

When we consider the issue of condemnation, the story that easily comes to mind is that of the prostitute that was brought to Jesus for judgement. It is true that she has violated the Law of Moses but it is also true that she was willing to trust Jesus. She was not ashamed to be judged by Jesus. Seeing this level of trust and openness, Jesus chose not to condemn her.

Either of two laws is operational in the life of every individual; the law of the Spirit in those who are in Christ Jesus or the law of the sin and death in those without Christ. The law of sin and death is powerless; it only reflects sin but cannot take away sin. The law of the Spirit helps the believer to live above sin, in that Jesus Christ was sacrificed to condemn both sin and flesh to meet God's requirement of righteousness and life. To live without condemnation is to accept the perfect work Christ has done on our behalf and stay faithful to Him. Those who are in Christ give attention to what is pleasing to God but those without Christ can't. Do you indulge in self-gratification? If you still indulge in the deeds of the flesh, you need Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth.....Isaiah 54:4

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 17-20

"We need not look to others for recognition and praise; we can take heart that God knows when we are faithful in serving Him." —Leslie Koh

Monday, May 13

Romans 9:1- 5, 14-17

THE HERITAGE KEEPERS

".... Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises." Romans 9:4, NIV

Getting up from bed after a night of rest, ability to walk around, sit, talk, eat and enjoy many other health benefits are not often valued when everything is fine with us. We simply take those things for granted because we have them. We become too familiar with them that we don't seem to value them until we lose one or more of them.

Many of us born into Christian families have become too familiar with the things of God that we often don't pay close attention to our heritage in God. For people in this kind of state, Apostle Paul expresses great sorrow and great anguish of heart when he considered the benefits such people were throwing away; adoption as sons, divine glory, the law, worshiping God in the temple and the promises. The mercy and compassion of God are always available to anyone who will draw from them regardless of the past. If you value your heritage of knowing Christ and being members of God's family, you will preserve your salvation by doing things that bring pleasure to God and care about the salvation of those who are backsliding by reminding them of the heritage they have in Christ. We must constantly remind ourselves of the gifts we have in Christ and the need to keep these gifts in every way possible.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. Job 5:21

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 21-24

"Being made in His image we have within us the capacity to know Him." – A. W. Tozer

A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES

"For this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." Acts 13:47, NIV

An old sculptor had among other pieces of work in his shop the model of a beautiful cathedral. It was covered with dust for years, and nobody admired it, although it was an exact model of a fine cathedral. One day the attendant placed a light inside the model, and its gleam shone through the beautiful stained-glass windows. Then all stopped to admire its beauty. The change that was brought by the light within was marvellous.

Every believer in Christ must shine the light of God for the world to appreciate His love and come to Jesus Christ. Who would have known that Gentiles will receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ with such enthusiasm? Or who would have imagined the kind of resistance put up by the Jews towards the Gospel. The role of obedience in determining the prosperity of our Gospel message was seen in the response of the Jews and Gentiles to the message of Apostle Paul. Every Christian has a duty to reveal the beauty of Christ to those who have not recognized Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. The task may be challenging, in fact, opposition may come from unexpected quarters, but your obedience will be rewarded. Start today by taking the Gospel message to someone who has not known Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy... Isaiah 60:5a

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 25-28

"You will only be great if you devote your life and effort to serving others." — Yemi Osinbajo

LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

"And in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority." Colossians 2:10, NIV

A young woman asked me to tell her in a few words how she could know if she was really a Christian. I said: "If you are a Christian you are not afraid of the light because you live in it. You no longer run after sin, though it may run after you. When you belong to Christ, you will find it difficult to sin; but when you belong to Satan you will find it easy. You belong to the one whom you truly long to please."

Paul exemplified a life in Christ Jesus through concern for the welfare and spiritual development of other believers, including people he has never met. He encouraged and promoted love among brethren. Every Christian must avoid being deceived by fine-sounding argument – something very common nowadays. Believers must be rooted in faith and discipline in Christ Jesus. It is not sufficient to just know Jesus Christ, every believer must remain and grow in Him. Life in Christ must be characterized by overflowing thankfulness for the abundant provision which is in Christ. Believers are warned against being controlled by traditions, cultures or material forces of this world, rather than the Word of God. What recent changes have the Word of God brought into your life?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Acts 10:4

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 29-31

"The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoe, but by making good shoes because God is interested in good craftsmanship." – **Martin Luther**

Thursday, May 16

Acts 20:17-24, 32

TESTIMONY OF GOD'S GRACE

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" Acts 20:32, NIV

A traveller describing an ancient volcano which he visited, tells of a cuplike hollow on the mountain summit full of lush vegetation, and that, where the fierce heat had once burned, lay a still, clear pool of water, looking up like an eye to the beautiful heavens above. How many a man, who before conversion was a fiery death-dealing volcano of sin, has by the grace of Jesus become gentle and beautiful, reflecting in his measure the heavenly peace and loveliness.

The leaders of the Ephesian Church were called to recollection of Paul's life; his humble service, his tears and the severe opposition he faced. Despite the hazards, he did not hesitate to preach the Word of God to them publicly and privately. He understood the power in the Word God. Little wonder, amidst uncertainty of ever being able to see the leaders again, he left them in the hand of God and the Word of God's grace because that was what saw him through the persecution of the Jews. He knew that only the Grace of God could build them up and give them inheritance among the saints. Paul was able to testify about God's grace because he had enjoyed it. You too can enjoy God's grace if you are committed to your God given task.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land." Isaiah 1:19

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 32-34

"God's grace is immeasurable, His mercy inexhaustible, His peace in expressible." —**Bill Crowder**

Friday, May 17

Romans 11:1-10

ISRAEL'S REJECTION NOT FINAL

"I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin." Romans 11: 1, NIV

A great artist was once asked, "What's the best picture you've ever painted?" "The next one," he replied confidently. But another artist was heard to lament, "Too bad I failed," though he was at the very height of his glory. "Why do you say that?" asked a friend of his in astonishment. "Because I've lost any hope of improvement," he said. He was right; the person who has stopped hoping has truly failed.

The gate of salvation is always open for those who will take advantage of it. Salvation cannot be attained by work, because no work can attain its requirement. One must depend on God to meet the requirement. That is called grace. God has not rejected anyone and will not reject anyone who turns to Him for salvation through Jesus Christ. The choice is however that of humans to make. Have you been rebellious in time past? Your rejection is not final, the masterpiece in you is yet to be made, and God is waiting for its making. Because God is hopeful, you must also not give up on the salvation of anyone. Is there anyone whose salvation you are foreclosing? Prayerfully minister to the person today and see what God will do. Israel's rejection is not final neither is yours!

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will look on you with favour and make you fruitful.... Leviticus 26:9

RBT Passage: 2 Chronicles 35-36

"Good ideas do not bring success, good hard-work does. To release your true potential, you must be willing to work."

—Myles Munroe

Saturday, May 18

Romans 11:25-36

ALL PEOPLES SAVED BY FAITH

"....As it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.'" Romans 11:26

A poor, uneducated old woman was once met by a skeptic. "Well, you are one of the saints, are you? What sort of folks are they? What do you know about religion?" "Well, well," replied the old woman, "you know, sir, I'm no scholar, so can't say much for the meaning of it; I only know I am 'saved by grace' and that's enough to make me happy here, and I expect to go to heaven by and by." "Oh, that's all, is it? But, what does being saved feel like?" The Spirit-taught woman answered, "Just as if the Lord stood in my shoes, and I stood in His."

Paul wrote to the Romans not to allow pride becloud their sense of God's mercy in their salvation. Through the persecution of the Church, the Gospel and the fellowship was brought to the Gentiles in God's mercy. Mercy shall be extended to Israel also, on account of covenant faith. This way the will of God that no sinner should perish is being fulfilled among all. God's purpose is that anyone who turns to Him in faith through Jesus Christ should be saved. Have you harnessed the gift of salvation through faith in Christ? Be the reason the Gospel of Christ is reaching someone today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will put a new song in your mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Psalm 40:3

RBT Passage: Ezra 1-4

"True faith means holding nothing back, it means putting every hope in God's fidelity to His promises." –Francis Chan

SALVATION OF THE GENTILES

*"Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."*Romans 11:22, NIV

During the time when slave trade was still practiced in some parts of Southern America, a handsome young man was up for sale. The bids kept rising. Finally, an Englishman gained possession. The young slave began to chide him, "Ha, you buy a slave when slavery has already been abolished in England." The purchaser, however, said, "I have bought you to set you free." The young slave, overcome with emotion, replied, "I will be your willing slave forever.

God's salvation is all inclusive. Everyone (Jew or Gentiles) who heed the call must yield themselves to God and forsake their sins. The passage today is a call on Gentiles to always live with the consciousness that God's kindness got for us the salvation that we have. This understanding should evoke in us humility, compassion and steadfast faith, without which we risk being cut off from God's grace. God is ready and will save anyone who does not persist in unbelief. He makes us holy only when we abide in Him. Though strangers that were grafted in, we will be made holy and will enjoy the kindness of God if we remain in His love. It does not matter how our lives have been before now, all that matters is our willingness to give our life to Christ for a complete transformation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will fulfill your desires, hear your cry and save you. Psalm 145:19

RBT Passage: Ezra 5-7

"People to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just a matter of word too."—**William Faulkner**

Monday, May 20

Proverbs 3:1-12

TRUST AND HONOUR GOD

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" Proverbs 3:5, NIV

A father asked his son to carry a letter from their camp to the village. He pointed out a trail which the lad had never gone through before. "All right, Dad, but I don't see how that path will ever reach the town," said the boy. "Do you see the trail as far as the big tree down there?" asked the father. "Oh, yes, I see that far." "Well, when you get there by the tree, you'll see the trail a little farther ahead, and so on until you get within sight of the houses of the village."

Like the little boy, we want see how God's direction will take us to our destination before embarking. Today's text shows five ways we should honour God and their benefits: 1) Keeping the word of God in our hearts results in long life, peace and prosperity; 2) Love and faithfulness to God brings favour and good name; 3) Trust in God guarantees His direction to an honest path; 4) The fear of the Lord and shunning evil brings good health; 5) Honoring God with our wealth brings greater wealth. Failure to trust and honour God will, among other things, deprive us of these blessings. How much trust you have in the Lord is determined by how much you honour him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will strengthen you and help you; He will uphold you with His righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

RBT Passage: Ezra 8-10

"There are times when holding to our master's robe is all that we can do. It is all that He wants us to do."—Os Hilman

THE GIFT OF LOVE

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."

1 Corinthians 13: 2, NIV

Have you ever seen a tailor place a piece of absorbent paper over a spot of grease and press down on it with a hot iron? Why does he do it? The heat melts the grease, and the paper absorbs it. Real love absorbs the spots in the lives of others, making them feel the warmth of our own hearts for them. A careful consideration of the characteristics of love as enumerated in vs 4 - 7, reveals that love is embodiment of God's nature. Without love, all other spiritual gifts cannot achieve their purpose and revealing Christ Jesus to the unsaved, and nurturing the body of Christ will be almost impossible.

Every believer must exhibit the gift of love to fulfil divine purpose. Apostle Paul states clearly that love is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud, not easily angered, not self-seeking, keeps no record of wrongs, does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. Love always protects, hopes, trusts and perseveres. Honestly assess yourself in the light of these character traits and determine whether you truly love as much as you should. Strive to love more by stripping yourself of every unwholesome nature and prayerfully imbibe those natures that are consistent with love.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...He will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs for you. Isaiah 41:18

RBT Passage: Nehemiah 1-3

"It is not love to let others have what we cannot keep."

— Beecher

LIFESTYLE OF CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Luke 6: 27-28, NIV

A United States President asked a certain General a question about another officer. Overhearing his reply which praised the officer, a friend approached him afterwards and said, "General, do you know that the man of whom you spoke is one of your most bitter enemies and misses no opportunity to malign you?" "Yes," replied the officer, "but the President asked my opinion of him; he did not ask for his opinion of me."

One of the most difficult Scriptures to accept in light of our contemporary experiences is where we read today. But we have no choice. It is a command for anyone who cares to listen to Jesus Christ. We must love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. As believers you are not to make an enemy out of anyone regardless of the harm they may be doing to you. We must be kind to people who are wicked to us. Showing love to them is not the same as indulging them. We must do things that will help them spiritually and seek their ultimate good. A carnal person cannot accept or obey this command from Jesus. The only way out is to be spiritually minded, always walking in the Spirit and desiring to do what God says above our own will.

- **Birthday Blessing:** In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear.... Isaiah 54:14

RBT Passage: Nehemiah 4-7

"When we are abandoned to God, He works through us all the time." —Oswald Chambers

SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT

"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it"

Psalm 34:14, NIV

When I was an undergraduate student, a Christian roommate who loved to pray around 2.00 am daily would wake up and pray loudly in a manner that disturbs his other two roommates. One of them, after praying about the situation, called this fellow's attention to the disturbance. Instead of feeling hurt and offended, he apologized. After that time, he either leaves the room for a corner outside the room or prays silently. What might have developed into grudges became an evidence of good will instead.

God wants us to live in peace with others and so we must do our best to ensure that peace reigns where ever we are found. A child of God, in addition to this, must keep his/her tongue from evil and lying. These other virtues show that seeking peace is as important as seeking holiness. None must be compromised for the other. Whenever there is tension between holiness and peace, we have to resort to God in prayer. Controlling our tongues is central to living peaceably with others. Deceit and lying or any form of evil must never be found with us. Are you guilty of lying or evil speaking? Turn a new leaf today and ask for forgiveness.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

RBT Passage: Nehemiah 8-10

"The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice peace and brotherhood." —**Martin Luther King Jr.**

Friday, May 24

Romans 12:9-15

GENUINE LOVE FOR EACH OTHER

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." Romans 12:9, NIV

A young man spent an entire evening telling a girl how much he loved her. He said that he could not live without her; that he would go to the ends of the earth for her; yes, go through fire for her, or die for her. When asked by the lady whether he would come the following evening, he said, "I'll see you tomorrow night if it doesn't rain." How often we say we love God yet deny it by our actions.

Often time, we love only in words, however, love must also be in action. Sincere love will hate evil, cling to what is good, honour others above self and serve the Lord. True love comes with hope, patience and faithfulness in prayer for the one you love. It shows understanding and is not discriminatory. True love will make us share what we have with others and provide help for those who are in need. Does the love you have for others and for God pass the test of virtues listed in the Rom 12: 9-15? If not, talk to God about those things that are lacking and begin to make amends today. Christ will only give the crown of life to those who love Him in deed and in truth.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Isaiah 60:5b

RBT Passage: Nehemiah 11-13

"To love someone means to see him as God intended him."

—Fyodor Dostoevsky

Saturday, May, 25

Romans 12:16-21

LIVING TOGETHER IN HARMONY

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position." Romans 12:16, NIV

One of the most difficult things for humans to do is live together in peace. This is because humans are different from one another and it takes great patience and understanding to live with another people with a completely different character and attitude. The enemy of harmonious living is more of character-based than religious. Pride has been identified as one of the character errors capable of bringing disunity in any human society. It is characterized by the tendency to think highly of oneself. Apostle Paul called it "being unwilling to associate with people of low position." Living a harmonious life involves exercising both spiritual and social prudence in the way we see ourselves and deal with others.

The message today is that we must work to remove pride and every other thing that separates us and cling to the sincere love that binds us together. Apostle Paul appealed that we must not be vengeful because vengeance belongs to God. Forgiving people in advance will help you to forgive them anytime. Is there anything in you that hinders you from living in harmony with others? Is there any relationship you need to mend? Do not hesitate to do the needful because your obligation as a Christian is to follow peace with all men.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The Lord satisfies your desire with good things, your days are declared blessed! Ps 103:5

RBT Passage: Esther 1-5

"We are all equal in the fact that we are all different. We are harmonious in the reality that we are all held to this earth by the same gravity." —Joybell C.

A LIVING SACRIFICE

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your Spiritual act of worship" Romans 12:1, NIV

Henry Blackaby in his classic discipleship material, *Experiencing God*, says "When you believe that nothing significant can happen through you, you have said more about your belief in God than you have said about yourself." In the Old Testament people presented sacrifice. The Scripture records that people go to the presence of God with various gift items such as money and other belongings. This is done to appreciate God for forgiving their sins and blessing them.

Our text today is a special plea towards building a more robust relationship with God who desires that we give Him our hearts before our material gifts. We cannot fool the Omniscient God. Our gifts may be considered a 'dead sacrifice' if our lives are not soothing to God. The offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice represents the totality of our lives, plans and activities. It is the best act of worship we can give unto God today. Whatever you consider too big to offer to God may not increase and you may not get the better of it. I urge you to be real with your Creator today as you surrender everything to Him.

- Birthday Blessing: The favour of the Lord rests upon you; He will prosper you in every ways. Psalm 90:17

RBT Passage: Esther 6-10

"The Highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them." —John F. Kennedy

Monday, May, 27

Deuteronomy 16:1-8

THE PASSOVER CELEBRATION

"Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the Lord your God..." Deuteronomy 16:1, NIV

The experience of October 1 1960 will never be forgotten in the history of Nigeria. It was the day Nigeria gained independence from British rule which was characterized by all forms of inhumane treatments. Celebration broke out throughout the nation; both the young and old thanked God in various ways at their various places of worship. There was also lots of eating and drinking to mark this event and the day was declared a work-free day, as it is still being practiced today to commemorate the event.

The Israelites were commanded to observe three annual feasts: The feast of Passover and unleavened bread, the feast of Weeks and the feast of the Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17). The feast of Passover is done to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt and to remind them of how God in His infinite mercy saved them from the hand of Pharaoh, the king that did not know Joseph (Exodus 1:8). How soon do we forget God after we have received the blessings we long prayed for? The Passover celebration is a moment to count your blessings, reflect and appreciate God for all He has done for you. Do not let your current unpleasant experience stop you from thanking God for what He has done in the time past.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The Lord will cause everyday events to favour you and tables shall be turned in your favour. Esther 9:1

RBT Passage: Job 1-4

"If you don't appreciate God for where you are, you may not get to the next level." —Gbenga Matthew

Tuesday, May, 28

Mark 11:1-10

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

“Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Mark 11:9

In the early 90s, Queen Elizabeth of England was given a national honour as she visited Nigeria. The school children in Lagos State at this time observed a day holiday to welcome the beautiful Queen to Nigeria. They were given customized vests and were mostly assembled in strategic places between the Muritala Mohammed International Airport and the Government house in Ikeja just to welcome Queen Elizabeth.

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is commonly referred to as “The Triumphal Entry”. This suggests a king returning triumphantly to his capital city after a war. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem may be more appropriately called “Royal Entry” as He came as a king of peace, “gentle and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast burden” (Mt.21:25; Zch 9:9). At once, war and turbulence vanished as everyone gathered to welcome the Prince of Peace into Jerusalem. God is set to take a triumphal ride into that particular situation of your life today; all He demands of you is to just make Him feel welcomed. I pray, today, that the peace of the Lord will take over that challenge that struggles with your progress, health, success and breakthroughs in the name of Jesus. Please make Jesus feel welcomed and appreciate His presence in your life always.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Remember, O LORD, your compassion and unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past. Psalm 25:6

RBT Passage: Job 5-8

You cannot expect victory and plan for defeat. —**Joel Osteen**

Wednesday, May, 29

Mark 14:12-16

PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER MEAL

“He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” Mark 14:15

I got stranded sometimes in 2015 on my way to Jos, in the Northern part of Nigeria. I approached a Baptist family within the area and all I needed to do was to reveal my identity as a son of a Baptist clergy and immediately was accommodated. The hospitality I received that night was as though they had been expecting me prior to that time.

The feast of Passover has been an annual event among the Jews from the time of Moses. God commanded the children of Israel to take the meal to reflect on the goodness of God to them; how he delivered them from the hands of Pharaoh. Pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem were expected to observe the feast within the city, and hence the disciples wanted to know where to make the preparations. Jesus arguably demonstrated His omniscience as He asked the disciples to approach the owner of a particular house for the place that has been readily prepared for Him and His disciples to take the Passover meal. The man made his house available and ready for Jesus. There is no better room Jesus wants to stay to wine and dine today than our hearts. How available is your heart to host Jesus today?

- **Birthday Blessings:** The Lord is commanding a great fruitfulness in your studies and the works of your hands. You will not suffer reproach anymore. Ezekiel 36:30

RBT Passage: Job 9-12

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. —Jesus Christ

Thursday, May, 30

Jeremiah 31:31-34

THE HEART-CENTRED NEW COVENANT

... "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Jeremiah 31:33, NIV

Reverend Sam Adeyemi once said "if there is a New York then there is a presupposition that an Old York once existed". Recently, Nigerians began to clamour for a restructuring which will affect her constitution and is believed would bring about a "New Nigeria". It is quite unfortunate that the leaders are not ready to pay the price for this change at the moment. Good changes can be very costly but at the end it is highly rewarding.

One of the differences between the Old and the New covenant is how God is presented and seen by the people. In the Old, God is seen more like a "Boss", fiery and fearful One, while the New covenant presents a loving and caring "Father" who desires that people gets closer to Him. This New covenant will be inscribed on the heart of the people and it will endure. It will bring profound changes and will never obliterate the promises of God. A more fascinating benefit of the new covenant is that, it will strengthen our fellowship bonding with God. Do you desire to know God and enjoy a more interesting fellowship with Him? This will happen when you surrender your life totally to Him and allow His Word to find a place in your life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** As you look up unto God today may you find Him and you will never be disappointed. Psalm 121:1-2

RBT Passage: Job 13-16

"Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely."

—Dieter Uchtdorf

Friday, May, 31

Luke 22:14-23

THE LORD'S SUPPER SHARED WITH DISCIPLES

"When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table" Luke 22:14

Sharing a meal together as family is a very important part of family relationship that a lot of people value even when they are not together. Mealtime for some is a routine while other people only have it on special occasions. It serves as a time of bonding and it helps families connect with one another. It can also be a moment of reflection on daily activities and a place to unburden the heart. Mealtime also helps the decision-making of the family because everyone gets to contribute.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance being observed as a symbol to commemorate the ultimate price Jesus paid for the redemption of sins. In our text today, Jesus reclined at the table with His disciples to eat the Passover meal; there He also instituted the new ordinance, The Lord's supper. It was to serve as a reminder to the disciples about His body and blood given for them. The words and deeds of Jesus that night plunged the disciples into gloom as He started by expressing how eagerly He had wanted to eat the meal with them. This event marked a new beginning in the lives of the disciples. God is set to begin afresh with you also if you will eagerly take His offer of salvation. The fellowship meal is for the disciples alone, so get enlisted too.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Today, I declare an escape for you from every fowler's snare in the name of Jesus! Psalm 124:7

RBT Passage: Job 17-20

How deeply do we stand obliged to Christ- who has redeemed us from hell? —Thomas Watson

Saturday, June 1

John 13:1-9

CLEAN FEET, CLEAN HEARTS

"Unless I wash you, you have no part in me" John 13:8b

When a remote village was attacked by a deadly disease, the village's small medical team needed volunteers who could help. However, the volunteers who could join were only those had previously been infected with the disease and had been successfully treated because they were the ones who would have built stronger immunity to the disease. Like a deadly disease, our hearts have been stained by sin so when at His last supper Jesus wrapped a towel around his waist and took a basin, like a slave would, and washed His disciples' feet, He was offering His life to cleanse us from all sin.

However, unless like Peter, you let go of all your objections and yield yourself to Christ for this cleansing, the abundant life that Christ wants to give you, remains on hold. When you do this, you become fit to help those around you struggling with sinful lives. In all, we live in world infested with sin and can be tempted to partake of it even when we have been cleansed of our sins. Let us always remember that we have been washed by the blood of Jesus and say no to every temptation by God's grace. Peradventure, you have gotten stained, run into the cleansing hands of our loving saviour, He has promised to make you clean again.

- **Birthday Blessing:** He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Psalm 34:6

RBT Passage: Job 21-24

Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet. —Thomas Walton

Sunday, June 2

Mark 14:17-24; Heb 8:6-7, 10-12

JESUS INSTITUTES THE NEW COVENANT

"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many, he said to them" Mark 14:24

Tech companies allow their buyers to trade their old phones for new ones by paying a token for the new ones. This is because there is always something fascinating about the new. Far more superior than phones, Jesus brought a new deal in our spiritual walk with God. The Israelites in their relationship with God were seeking to please God by keeping external rules and offering animal sacrifices.

Rather than bringing us a upgraded model, God sent Jesus His son who came and brought a perfect deal by dying on the cross. Unlike in the old version where we would struggle and rely on other people to know God, the Spirit of God who lives in our heart teaches us and gives us the power to live as God wants. You receive this new deal when you trade your self-righteous efforts for God's love and Spirit by simply asking Christ into your heart through faith. You have God's promise to make you His people (Heb.8:10). From then, the Holy Spirit works in your heart to love and obey God's Word, makes you attractive character wise, leads you to join other believers in fellowship and gives you boldness to talk to others about Christ. As a believer, are you excelling in all these packages of the new deal?

- **Birthday Blessing:** For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

RBT Passage: Job 25-30

No better deal in life and beyond than Christ. —Anonymous

Monday, June 3

Mark 14:26-31

TURMOIL AT LAST SUPPER

"The son of man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man!" Mark 14:21

One popular Baptist hymn entitled "Rescue the Perishing" talks about how much Jesus wishes that every sinner be rescued. During the time of Jesus, people gather together to celebrate the Passover. It was the least place to think about betrayal not to talk of mentioning it. Jesus' intention was not to ruin the dinner but to help the person nursing this idea to have a change of heart. It was meant to be a way of escape out of his temptation. He was only seeking to offer a last chance for repentance. He is always interested in reaching out to lost souls because that was the purpose of His death and resurrection.

Even today, Jesus is constantly seeking our attention to help us uproot sinful destructive thoughts before they become actions (Jam 1:15). He throws His loving arms for us to grasp so we may escape temptation. Dear friend, that rebuke, that timely sermon from the pastor, that encouragement could be God's firm hands sent for your rescue. Take hold of it by repenting in prayer of any known sin so that you also can enjoy the grace to live a life well pleasing to God and become an agent of rescue for others.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this. Psalm 37:4-6

RBT Passage: Job 31-34

When you are in God's will, no one else other than God can decide your fate. —Anonymous

Tuesday, June 4

Mark 14:32-42

JESUS PRAYS WHILE HIS DISCIPLES SLEEP

'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them 'stay here and keep watch.' Mark 14:34

The position that adversity finds us determines what will follow afterwards. While prosperity is sought after and worked for, adversity shows up uninvited, whether we are ready or not. The darkest moment of Jesus' life met Him praying. Before the enemy appeared with clubs and knives, Jesus fired the first shot in prayer that completely set the course of events in His favour.

Though He was beaten down with sorrows, He found strength to pray and utter words in prayer. Many times, despair dries up our prayer life, but this need not be for God is ready to take hold of our faintest and shortest plea. It is worth noting that Jesus made prayer a habit in the normal things of life so when the abnormal showed up, He was not just up to it, he was more than it (Mark 1:35). Sometimes young people think older people need prayer more and should engage in it more. They also hope to 'take cover' in their parents' prayer life, but your place of prayer remains a vacuum until you actually show up (I Thess. 5:17). God is longing and waiting to fellowship with you and to give you power to give the devil a knock out. Turn on the prayer button today and experience victory on all sides.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, just as you are progressing spiritually. 3rd John 1:2

RBT Passage: Job 35-38

Peace does not lie in asking God to give me other circumstances, peace lies in finding God in these circumstances. —John Ortherg

Wednesday, June 5

Mark 14:43-50

JESUS BETRAYED AND ARRESTED

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve appeared. With him, was a crowd armed with swords and clubs... Mark 14:43

Most cultures have nothing but harsh descriptions of those who betray others. The act itself has been called “backstabbing”. The idea of stabbing show how gruesome the act is and how it cuts hurtfully through the soul of its victim. Jesus has the story of the worst kind of betrayal to share. An inner circle disciple who had followed Him everywhere and whom He trusted with the purse of His ministry, identified Him with a kiss for His enemies, after a wonderful dinner.

Maybe as you read this, the image of someone who betrayed you, has already shown up in your mind and tears are already welling up your eyes. Let Jesus help you, He has been through it. If you have issues with trusting people, remember that all that happened to Him was for you to be healed. Give Him your pains and let Him soothe them with His pierced hands and offer you the grace to forgive. Are you under the guilt for having betrayed a close person? God can offer you forgiveness and release you from your guilt when you confess to Him and ask Him to heal your heart. He will also guide you on seeking the forgiveness of the person whom you have hurt. Trust me, Jesus knows a lot about betrayal. Much more, He can offer help like no other.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ‘The Lord your God is with you, the mighty warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you...’ Zephaniah 3:17

RBT Passage: Job 39-42

We are secured, not because we hold tightly to God, but because He holds tightly to us. —R.C. Sproul

Thursday, June 6

Mark 15:16-24

JESUS CRUCIFIED BEFORE FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

"And they crucified him." Mark 15:24a

At the funeral service of Pa Otimiri, his family shared how they have been comforted by the age and the way, their father had died. Pa Otimiri had died in his sleep surrounded by his loved ones at a full ripe age. Many of us would like to live long and pass on peacefully. Jesus' death however was nothing near this. He was cut off young in life, just in His early thirties, died in a violent way, mocked by His enemies and abandoned by His friends.

There are many things about Christ's suffering and death that we may recoil from. But two things are certain. One, Jesus' suffering was God's will for His life and was not because of any fault of His (Isa 53:10). Two, Jesus suffered in our place. Some people may accept the first truth but reject the second truth. Nevertheless the suffering meted on Christ was our due because we had rebelled against God (Isa 53:4-5). Out of His love, God sent His Son to receive the wrath due us and restore us back unto Him. Christ has not demanded anything in exchange for this. What remains is for you to gratefully accept Christ as your Lord and saviour and live your life daily to please Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** 'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, I will protect him, for he acknowledge my name. he will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him...' Psalm 91:14

RBT Passage: Psalms 1-8

God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could learn in no other way.

—C.S. Lewis

Friday, June 7

Mark 15:27-32

TWO CRIMINALS CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS

"They crucified two rebels with, one on the right and one on the left." Mark 15:27

One of the things Joseph hated about telling others about himself is where he lives. Everybody knows that that part of the city is the hotbed of crime and any young person from there was viewed with suspicion. It was not enough that Jesus had to die, crucifying Him with criminals was a way of branding Him as one. In fact Jesus' cross stood in between two hardened criminals and many passersby could not tell the difference between Him and these criminals.

Indeed Jesus, God's Son lived among sinners all His life and even in His death, He was identified with them. But this did not stop Jesus from being glorified with God. Do you live in a neighbourhood known for vice or have you come from a family that has a bad reputation and are often misjudged for this? Maybe very few members of your church really live as Christians. Don't lose heart. Follow Christ's example, though He was treated as a criminal, and suffered for our wrongdoing, He continued to minister to those that life brought His way (I Pet.4:19). You can also do the same. Let your light continue to shine no matter how thick the darkness is, then through you someone may know the light of Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. Ps 91:11

RBT Passage: Psalms 9-17

The Christian's light shines brightest in the thickest darkness. —Anonymous

Saturday, June 8

Mark15: 40-47

FAITHFUL WOMEN

Some women were watching from a distance...in Galilee these women followed him and cared for his needs.

Mark 15:40-41

A TV station in the USA reported the story of a couple saved by their brave dog, Shana. When the Fertigs brought a sick puppy, they never could have thought that seven years later, this puppy would save their lives. On this day, Shana went in search of her owners only to find them, trapped by fallen trees in a deadly snowstorm. The dog dug a tunnel that reached their house under the trees and practically dragged her owners home. Near the cross were a group of women who were of a kindred spirit with Christ. Before now, Jesus had transformed these women's lives by his loving words when they sat his feet. Despite the humiliation Jesus went through, they stood by Christ till the very end.

Though Christ is not physically alive again, the world is still crucifying Him by her rejection of His death and its hatred for the people who want to follow Him. Thus, today Christ still needs faithful disciples like the women at the cross. These are people who would appreciate Him for saving them from their sins and who would stand as His friends when troubles come their ways. These friends are never ashamed to be identified with Christ before their unbelieving classmates and neighbours and can proudly tell others that they are friends of Jesus. Oh that we will be faithful to Christ, our Christian brethren and the Church!

- **Birthday Blessing:** No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. Joshua 1:5

RBT Passage: Psalms 18-21

Faithfulness to Christ is never out of fashion. —Anonymous

Sunday, June 9

Mark 15:6-15, 25-26, 33-39

NEW COVENANT SEALED WITH JESUS' BLOOD

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed her last. Mark 15:37

Films of people using blood to promise one another everlasting friendship and love abound and confessions of some cultists also reveal this. They see their blood as symbols of their lives which they offer to the other person or persons. Apart from the blood of Christ shed as sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, blood covenant with anyone or an idol comes from the devil and lands us in slavery and bondage. Christ did away with the old covenant that commanded the use of animal blood to seek God's forgiveness. His death serves as the ultimate and only sacrifice for sins.

He has opened a new way to approach God that does not require the use of animal blood since He has sealed the new way with His blood once and for all (Heb. 9:14). If you are in a covenant of blood or you know a person who has entered one, the incomparable blood of Christ can nullify it, only if you or the person, can accept Jesus' sacrificial death and appropriate the freedom in the blood of Christ. If you are in Christ, stand in the liberty that Christ has given you and refuse to be entangled by acts of evil regardless of life challenges. Shalom.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The God of Peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Rom. 16:20

RBT Passage: Psalms 22-27

The Blood of Jesus speaks perfect peace. —Anonymous

Monday, June 10

Exodus 24:3-8

THE PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY

*They responded 'We will do everything the Lord has said;
we will obey' Exodus 24:3*

To become citizens, foreign residents undergo an oath taking ceremony usually administered by a judge, in which they promise allegiance to their host countries. During such ceremonies, there is also the promise to obey all laws of that particular country as it is expected that they would be law abiding citizens. For instance, foreigners living in the United Kingdom pledge allegiance to the reigning monarch of England. When Moses read the laws God had given him to the people of Israel, they responded with a resounding 'Yes, we will obey.' By this, Israel became formally God's country, God's law was her constitution and they (the people) became the citizens of God's nation.

As believers, we have promised our allegiance to Christ who has revealed God to us fully and much more He has reconciled us back to God by His blood. We are citizens of God's kingdom, set apart from the world to show God's glory. Christ has not handed you external rules to keep but has given you the Holy Spirit who imparts God's nature in you and enables us to say 'yes' to God's will. (1Pet. 1:3) What a blessing! No more holding back. Even now surrender to Christ in all areas of your life. Like the people, you by the Spirit can say 'Yes' to God's will and way.

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion" Psalm 20:2*

RBT Passage: Psalms 28-33

The man who has God for His treasure has all things in one.

—A.W. Tozer

Tuesday, June 11

Leviticus 16:11-19

AARON PERFORMS THE ATONING SIN SACRIFICE

...having made atonement for himself, his household and whole community of Israel then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD...Lev.16:17b-18a

The Israelites of old had a day marked in their calendar "The Day of Atonement." The idea of atoning is making amends or compensating for their sins against God. At that time, the entire sins of the nation were atoned for through the blood of bulls and goats. Aaron slaughtered a bull for himself and a goat for the leaders and the whole community and this was required yearly. No one was so righteous to be exempted

Indeed even now, sin is not a simple issue and there are no small sins as some people think. Cover-ups do not work with sins for God sees it. Moreover, no good work merits God's righteousness. Like the Israelites of old, each of us still stands in need of God's forgiveness however, it is no longer through animals offered by any priest, but Christ the High Priest, chosen by God, has made propitiation for the sins of the whole world. There is nothing else to do about sin but to give it to Christ and exchange it for His forgiveness. There are young people and even older ones who are seeking for ways to be rid of their sins. As a believer, you have experienced the forgiveness of God, therefore help others to also enjoy this provision today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will never leave you nor forsake you. Joshua 1:5b

RBT Passage: Psalms 34-37

Sin stains all; Christ's blood cleanses all who ask.

—Anonymous

REDEEMED AND PURIFIED

"...and Saviour Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself, a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

Titus 2:13b-14

A broad smile appeared on Rufus' wrinkled face as Atiba, the refiner handed him a piece of shining precious metal. His mind went back to when his last son had thrown out that metal then it was a rough piece of stone yet to be refined and how luckily he found it after paying the waste management agency to dig through the town dump site. In a way, every Christian's experience is like that of the precious metal.

Once we were individually sold to sin due to our disobedience then Christ came, brought back by His own blood and purified us of all our sins. Now as a child of God, you are refined and are God's change agent in this world, so you are expected to say 'No' to all forms of evil. In this new life, there is no place for gambling, sexual immorality, gossips, wild living, indecent fashion that carry other young people away (Gal. 2:20). The struggle you are having with a particular sin is a mark that the grace of God in your life would not let you to live in sin so don't quit the fight. Keep saying 'No' no matter how many times. This is all because the grace of God that has appeared has saved and cleansed you (v 11) so it is perfectly okay to share your testimony.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. Genesis 12:2b

RBT Passage: Psalms 38-42

What you can't go through God will help you to fly over.

—Woodrow Kroll

Thursday, June 13

Hebrew 10:19-25

ENTERING THE SANCTUARY BY JESUS' BLOOD

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, Heb 10:19, NIV

Junior and his friends were excited that their friend gave them invites to the cinema to watch a new movie. On the d day, they gracefully joined the short queue of special guests ready to go into the theatre. Seeing the crowd of those without tickets, they felt really proud to have been invited. However, when it was finally their turn to be checked in, they discovered that their invites had not been signed. They had to awkwardly turn away to avoid a bigger embarrassment. What a pity! Their friend had forgotten to append his signature.

In life, you really do need certain persons to get into some places. On a far more important level, you need the person of Christ to have access to God (Rom.5:1). Do you sense 'a no entry' sign between you and God? The good news is that the access has been made and you only need to walk through it by believing Christ as your Lord and Saviour. With this access, you can approach God boldly as your loving Father and enjoy His presence all day along (Heb.4:16). Let this truth fill your heart with joy regardless of the kind of human access you are being denied right now. Trust your heavenly Father to make a way.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The Lord will make you the head and not the tail. Deuteronomy 28:13

RBT Passage: Psalms 43-49

God's Access Card has Christ's name boldly written on it.

—Anonymous

THE TIME HAS COME

"This is an illustration for the present time." Heb 9:9a

Members of a community were overjoyed because some months before, what was where their newly completed multipurpose building is, was a tent that could only take a small gathering of the people. The tabernacle God gave Moses to build was, a magnificent tent placed at the centre of the Israelite community in the wilderness. It was a meeting place with God and a physical reminder of God's presence and provision for their spiritual needs. As wonderful and satisfying as the tabernacle was, God intended it to last only for a while and to serve as a physical illustration of what Christ will spiritually be to those who will come to God through Him.

Since Christ came we all, not just the Israelites, have Him as our sufficiency, both spiritually and physically. Indeed you have all you need for life and godliness once He is at centre of your life. Are you still holding on to a physical worship item, thinking that you can only experience God through it? Christ has met every need of yours, so you do not need to hang on any physical item to authenticate your relationship with God. Simply accept His finished work on the cross and sit at His table through reading and meditating on His Word and prayer. Your soul then shall continually rejoice in His bountiful provision.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Do not be afraid: you will not be disgraced. Do not fear you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth. Isaiah 54:4

RBT Passage: Psalms 50-55

The Soul that has Christ has His sufficiency. —Anonymous

Saturday, June 15

Heb 9:23-28

CHRIST, THE FINAL SACRIFICE FOR SIN

"So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people..." Hebrews 9:28, NIV

Doing certain thing as routines is one of the things learnt early in life. For instance, there are nights children may love to crawl up their bed but parents would not allow them to miss the bathing routine. The people of Israel and priests kept a routine of making sacrifices and offerings to God, as commanded in the law of Moses as a way of "servicing" their relationship with God. The problem of sin was not fixed but was simply carried forward. God's plan was to completely remove the barrier of sin between Him and those who want to seek Him anywhere. For this reason, He sent Jesus to come as a perfect Priest to offer not the blood of animals but His own blood and thereby putting an end to sin.

His sacrifice fixed the problem of sin permanently, making perfect everyone who desires a relationship with God through Him (Heb. 9:12). God does not recognize shortcuts of fasting, giving and doing good work, which bypass Christ's final sacrifice. What remains is the everlasting judgment for those who reject Christ, God's own solution for sin once they die. Have you accepted the timeless sacrifice of Christ? God loves you so key into His love by opening your heart to Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will be blessed when you come in and when you go out. Deut.28:6

RBT Passage: Psalms 56-61

"No more Condemnation for those in Christ."

—The Holy Bible

Sunday, June 16

Hebrews 9: 11-22

CHRIST, MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

"...Christ is the Mediator of a new Covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance..."

Hebrews 9:15

In life, governments can amend laws to favour certain people so as to grant them freedom. Presidents, Governors, and Chief Judges may grant some inmates liberty from prison in order to start a new life but they cannot lay down their lives. Lawyers can plead on behalf of their clients but it is a paid job and they may even lose the case. The client would be back to cell and the old life continues.

Jesus Christ offered Himself as atonement for our sins and thus became the Mediator between God and man. He paved way for the new covenant which has been completely ratified and the blessings secured to us. The new covenant has rendered all other sacrifices needless. It has established a new relationship between God and whosoever believes in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, such will also receive the promise of an eternal inheritance {v.15}. Beloved, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Believe Him and become a member of God's family. If you are already a member of God's family, make sure you walk worthy of your calling. Your life must attest to the fact that you have a relationship with God through Christ. Let your life point others to Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Yet in the towns...that are deserted...there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness.... Jeremiah 33:10, NIV

RBT Passage: Psalms 62-68

"The most agreeable thing in life is worthy accomplishment." –Edgar Rowe

Monday, June 17

1 John 5:6-12

JESUS CHRIST: THE SOURCE OF LIFE

"Whoever has the Son, has life, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." 1 John 5:12

One of God's greatest miracle and blessings is the miracle of conception and delivery. God, in His infinite wisdom, decides to hide a life inside another life. This makes every birth to become a reminder that man is the masterpiece of God's creation. When you consider the beauty of the human life, you will be left with no doubt about the beauty of the divine life God has made available through His Son Jesus Christ. God made the woman a link to the human life, the same way He made Christ the link of the divine life. The Spirit, the water and the blood harmoniously agreed and bear testimony that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world {v.7}. God has given us a beautiful life purchased and treasured up in Jesus Christ, who has all the springs and the fullness of it {v.11}. It is important to note that whoever has the Son, Jesus, living and reigning in Him by faith, has life. He, who does not have Him, has no part in Him. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, Jesus the Christ. A new life begins in you the moment you believe in Him. A life without Jesus Christ is open to life hazards and crisis. Make Him your source of life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones...." Isaiah 58:11.

RBT Passage: Psalms 69-72

"No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar." –Abraham Lincoln

Tuesday, June 18

1 Peter 3:8-12

PURSUE UNITY IN THE CHURCH

“Finally all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” 1 Peter 3:8

A local Baptist Church, in which almost all members had close relationship had some crises that almost broke their bound. Many people had intervened in the matter, without much success. Some youths of the church sought God's intervention through fasting and prayer. During an emergency Church-in-conference, the matter was resolved and peace returned to the church.

Crises are inevitable among people and the Church is not an exception. The Word of God enjoins us to live peaceably with all men {v. 11}. This is to be done in season and out of season. Christians irrespective of class or status must ensure unity in the body of Christ. Christians should be patient; Be like-minded; Be compassionate; Not revengeful; Humble and, Keep one's tongue from evil and deceitful speeches. These will promote peace in the church. There must be mutual understanding and respect for people's opinions. Issues should be resolved quickly and amicably between and among members. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God {Mathew 5:9}. Are you a peace maker? Make sure you restore that strained relationship with your Maker, friends, and fellowship members. God's intention for the Church to be united is non-negotiable.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you.... Isa 60:5

RBT Passage: Psalms 73-77

“The bamboo which bends is stronger than the oak which resists.” –Japanese Proverb

Wednesday, June 19

Ephesians 2:11-22

ALL PEOPLES UNITED IN CHRIST

But now in Christ Jesus, you...have been brought near through the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:12-13

Francis lost his poor parents in a motor accident on their way to visit a family friend in the hospital. Mr. Abraham, his late father's friend, was rich and well educated. Though from a different tribe, Mr. Abraham was so passionate about Francis well being. He took steps and gave the boy a new status. He adopted Francis and introduced him to his entire family as a full member of the family.

There was enmity between God and man – whether Jews or Gentiles, which Jesus Christ came to end. Paul proclaimed the way of salvation to be through Christ alone. Remembering our past lives outside Christ, our present lives in Christ should humble us and increase our love towards others for a united God's family. We should do everything within our power to make everyone around us feel the unconditional love of Christ through us. Every converted sinner should be free in the Church. There should not be any discrimination or segregation. All believers of the Gospel should be united in Christ by faith, grow together unto a holy temple of God and dwell in Him till eternity. We have been adopted into God's family. His blood qualifies us to be members of God's family. Therefore, be an agent of unity.

- **Birthday Blessing:** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their head.... Isaiah 35: 10.

RBT Passage: Psalms 78-80

“Raised voices lower esteem. Hot tempers cool friendships. Loose tongues stretch truth. Swelled heads shrink influence. Sharp words dull respect.” –William A. Ward

Thursday, June 20

Colossians 1:15-20

CHRIST, THE IMAGE OF GOD

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Colossians 1:15

Francis Chan told the following story about a man named Vaughn who radiated the love of Christ to everyone around him so much so that one of his co-worker said, "I kept thinking, *If Jesus was on earth, I think this is what it would feel like to walk with him.* He just loved everyone he ran into, and he would tell them about God. People were just drawn to his love and affection. The day I spent with Vaughn was the closest thing I've ever experienced to walking with Jesus."

Christ is the true image of God in every way. He is the express image of God, so that in Jesus, you see all that are in God. In the same way, God desires that all that are in Christ will be in every believer. Just as Christ reflects God, He wants believers to reflect Christ, so that at the end we will all have the same nature and image of God. He wants us to treat everyone around us like Christ will do so that everyone around us will have a touch of God's love through us. As a child of God, you must represent your Father adequately in whatever you say or do. Are you a true mirror of Christ? Let others see Jesus in you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. Leviticus 26:6

RBT Passage: Psalms 81-88

Jesus is not to us as Christmas is to the world, here today and gone tomorrow."—Rick Mylander

Friday, June 21

Colossians 1: 24-29

A PURPOSE-DRIVEN MINISTRY

He (Christ) is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. -Colossians 1:28

Everyone must discover the purpose of living. Billy Graham, a world renowned preacher, was known for his undiluted message of salvation. After his death, the crusade he held in Chicago in 1971 was broadcast. He preached Jesus Christ with great passion for the lost souls and in depth of the Spirit of God. He won many souls to Christ with his ministry. Apostle Paul was a steward and builder, a diligent and committed preacher of the Gospel who suffered for the good of the Church.

Paul encouraged and taught the people with all wisdom in private and public places. He warned them about what were wrong and taught them the right things. He did all for the purpose of presenting everyone perfectly mature in Christ. With Christ in us, we have hope for a glorious future. He also emphasise the fact that Jesus Christ alone should be our message. Leaders should endeavour to lead the Church to see Christ only. They should remember that the congregation they are leading was bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Believers also should learn to accommodate one another as we are one in Christ and also learn glorify God in all our achievements. Do you know what you are living for? Is what you do motivated by God's purpose? Discover you ministry and work passionately towards it.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; will make your name great... Gen 12:2-3

RBT Passage: Psalms 89-94

"You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves." –Abraham Lincoln

Saturday, June 22

Colossians 2:16-23

MAINTAIN YOUR UNION WITH CHRIST

Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or with regards to a religious festival, a new Moon celebration or a Sabbath day” Colossians 2:16

Relationships that will last long and stand the test of time must be guided with certain rules that are clear to both parties involved in the relationship. In a situation where one of the parties involved misinterpret the rules such relationship cannot last. God gave clear instructions on what His relationship with His children should look like. He wants us to relate with Him through the person of Jesus Christ. But Paul discovered that some believers have taken outward appearance and ceremonial cleansing as the most important aspect of their worship to God. In as much as those things are not wrong, it should be noted that those are not the things that sustain our relationship with God. Christ is the foundation of every relationship with God and only He can sustain that relationship.

Paul wants us to experience spiritual reality as we experience Christ. He didn't want us to just appear holy but to be holy in character and in relationship with Him. The gospel teaches us to worship in Spirit and in truth, not by ritual observances. It is the highest dishonour to Christ for any believer to subject himself or herself to human ordinances contrary to the liberty of the gospel. Let us trust Christ to live out His life in us as we obey His Word.

- **Birthday Blessing:** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. Isaiah 43:2

RBT Passage: Psalms 95-103

“If you make a great deal of Christ, He will make a great deal of you....” —R.A. Torrey

Sunday, June 23

Colossians 2:1-15

BE UNITED WITH CHRIST AND ONE ANOTHER

“My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ”. Colossians 2:2

An old man was on his sick bed but sad that his children were not united. He knew that, development and progress can only thrive in the atmosphere of peace and unity. He pleaded for unity among them as a request for a prolonged life for him and their mother. The children reconciled and the family lived the rest of their lives in joy and peace.

It is expected of all believers in Jesus Christ to walk, rooted and built up in Him as we have received Him {v. 6&7}. God bought Christians as His people and by His grace He enables them to die to sin, and live in righteousness and unity. Paul showed us that every believer is an individual participant and recipient of the divine grace. All followers of Christ should think, pray and show concern for one another about the prosperity of our souls. We should see that other brethren have a clear and distinct knowledge of the truth of the Gospel. How do you use your gifts to promote unity where God plants you? A good knowledge of who Christ is makes us agents of peace to our world. Please, promote unity in your family, office, church and the society.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...I will preserve You and give You for a covenant to the people, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages; Isaiah 49:8

RBT Passage: Psalms 104-106

“Promises may get friends, but it is performance that keeps them.” –Owen Felltham

LIVING AMONG WRONGDOERS

I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. Psalm 57:4

We all enjoy listening to tales of victory of those that have scaled through one hurdle or another. Talking about it sounds sweet and inviting, but when one considers the cost of living a righteous life, especially in the midst of wantonness one will discover that it is not as easy as it sounds.

David was surrounded with enemies that were so fierce and furious. Though he was disturbed because he did nothing to warrant such ill will, he humbly professed his trust in God with boldness. He supported himself with sincere dedication, devotion and entire satisfaction in God. His firm faith in God subdued his enemies' boasting. At times, we may be surrounded by those who hate, gossip and criticize us unjustly, we must have our confidence in God's love and faithfulness. Our dependence on God will save us from self-pity or revenge. Are you accused wrongly, insulted and embarrassed for no just cause? Seek God with devout affection and trust Him. His hand will accomplish your desire and the Scripture will be fulfilled. He knows how to vindicate you in His own way. Relax, God is in control.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "You shall laugh at destruction and famine, and you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth". Job 5:22

RBT Passage: Psalms 107-111

"For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth." –The Holy Bible

Tuesday, June 25

1 John 4:7-21

PERFECT GOD'S LOVE AMONG YOU

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11

One evening, a couple was strolling along their street. The wife asked the husband, do you love me? The husband responded, "I love you". She asked again, and the husband responded accordingly. After about three minutes, she asked her husband, can you die for my love for you? The man said, "my love goes beyond feeling. Death cannot destroy it".

Love is of God. The spirit of God is the spirit of love. Whoever loves knows God. God's nature, essence, will and works are primarily love. Believers should be imitators if Christ and love those He loves. The general love of God through Jesus Christ to the world should induce a universal love among mankind. Jesus gave His life as a demonstration of unconditional love. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love; he lives in our hearts and makes us more and more like Christ. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. It is our duty to perfect God's love by loving ourselves as Jesus loves us. Love must not be hypocritical but voluntary and unconditional irrespective of race, colour or nationality. Let there be love shared among us.

- **Birthday Blessing:** There is surely a future hope for you and your hope shall not be cut short. Proverbs 23:18

RBT Passage: Psalms 112-118

"Love is the basic need of human nature, for without it, life is disrupted emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically." –Karl Menninger

Wednesday, June 26

Luke 6:17-23

GREAT REWARDS TO COME

Blessed are you when people hate you,...exclude you...insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man, Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.... Luke 6: 22-23

A Moslem lady became converted, joined the Church and removed her *hijab* (head covering for Moslem ladies or women). Her father, a Moslem Cleric, sent her out of the house because what she did was a taboo in Islam. Attempts were made on her life and she decided not to change her name. Some brethren in the Lord took up her responsibilities and sponsored her education. What a reward!

Jesus told the disciples who left all and followed Him that; the kingdom of God belongs to them; they would be filled and experience no thirst; and they shall laugh and reap in joy. Jesus acknowledged the ill will of the world upon the saints but assured them of blessings and great rewards. Those who look beyond the worldly material and seek God's kingdom would not only have great reward in heaven, but "rejoice in that day and leap for joy."

We should not depend on our fat bank account or well-stocked assets as the reward. Bear and triumph in all you are passing through. A great reward awaits you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Genesis 12:3

RBT Passage: Psalm 119

"But seek ye first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these will be given to you as well."

-- The Holy Bible

Thursday, June 27

Mark 3:7-12

APOSTLES CHOSEN FOR MINISTRY

“Jesus went up...and...appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. Mark 3:13-15

A campus fellowship was to choose their officers for the next academic session. The members were sensitized and were prepared for the exercise. Considering the enormity of the assignment, many decided to turn down the offer thinking that taking up the assignment will jeopardize their academic pursuit. But, during the induction, the message that was preached made it clear that God does not call the qualified, but qualifies and equips the called.

God will not do anything without a purpose. Jesus called the twelve disciples, so that, they 1.) might be with Him, 2.) may be sent to preach, and 3.) to drive out demons. These men were saddled with the responsibilities of being partners in the ministry of reaching more people for the kingdom. Jesus was consistent with the assignment and the purpose for which he came to the world. He remained focused and knew the right tool(s) needed for the job. Have you discovered the purpose of your living? Do you have the blueprint so that you will not run aimlessly? It is not too late; you can begin from now so that as you go out in all of your assignments, you will remain focused. If you are a child of God, you have been commissioned to be a solution to the problem of your generation. You are saved to serve!

- **Birthday Blessings:** And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it... Isa 30:21

RBT Passage: Psalms 120-133

I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everyone to tell me the truth—even though it costs him his job. –Samuel Goldwyn

DO NOT JUDGE

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

Mr. Andrew, a disciplinarian, had four girls and a boy. Whenever there was trouble in the house, the parents assumed that the boy always used his masculine prowess against his elder sisters. This assumption made the father beat the boy mercilessly one day after a rift, without any verification. The mother came later to claim being responsible for the quarrel and not the boy. If Mr. Andrew had been patient enough, he would not have judged wrongly.

Jesus stressed that those things, which you accuse other people of may be found in your life. Therefore, Christians are enjoined not to judge or condemn anyone. To help at pulling the mote out of our brother's eye is good but we must begin by reforming ourselves. We must be blameless, and harmless and without rebuke {Luke 6:41, 42}. A forgiving spirit demonstrates that a person has received God's forgiveness. We are to be compassionate, and treat others generously and graciously. Jesus Christ is the Judge of the world.

- **Birthday Blessings:** Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

RBT Passage: Psalms 134-140

"Don't carry a grudge. While you're carrying the grudge the other guy's out dancing." –Buddy Hackett

Saturday, June 29

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

A LIFE PLEASING TO GOD

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 1 Thessalonians 4:3

In a world full of different kind of wickedness living a life that is pleasing to God seems almost impossible. Everywhere you turn there are all kinds of evil calling your attention. It takes complete dependence on the leadership of the Holy Spirit to walk blameless before God. Holy living in all areas of our lives is most pleasing to the Holy God and this should be the aim of every Christian. In pleasing God, we should abstain from all uncleanness in whatever state we find ourselves.

The law of God forbids all impurity and violating it means despising God. God expects us to desist from any immoral act and be sanctified. Being overcome by temptation can have disastrous results. Besides the physical consequences, there are also spiritual consequences. When we make pleasing God our utmost priority, our lives will win the respect of others. Unbelievers will see us and they will be able to identify that indeed we have been with the Lord. God wants our lives to be a good testimony for unbelievers, therefore, we should do everything within our capacity to please God. What are those things you are struggling with? Pray to God for strength to stand for Him, even in the face of temptation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. Isaiah 45:2

RBT Passage: Psalms 141-150

"If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land." –The Holy Bible

Sunday, June 30

Matthew 5:1-12

RIGHT ATTITUDES FOR BLESSED LIVING

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me....." Matthew 5:11-12

If you assign numerals to the twenty-six English alphabets and equate each corresponding number to the word, "ATTITUDE", you will get one hundred (100). This suggests the importance of attitude in one's life. Jesus' message begins with the true meaning of being blessed which is referred to as, 'beatitude'. Each beatitude tells how to be *blessed*. 'Blessed' means more than happiness. The Scripture talks about: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are being persecuted for righteousness (v.3-10).

People with these attributes are the fortunate and enviable people in God's kingdom. To Jesus, 'blessed' means the experience of hope and joy, independent of outward circumstances. To find hope and joy, the deepest form of happiness, follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Jesus said that God's kingdom is organized differently from worldly kingdoms. In the kingdom of heaven, worldly wealth, power and authority are irrelevant. Kingdom people seek godly blessings with kingdom attitudes. Are your attitudes that of the world or a reflection of the humility and self-sacrifice of Jesus? There are blessings in positive attitude and perseverance.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..." Joel 2:25

RBT Passage: Proverbs 1-3

"The Promised Land always lies on the other side of a wilderness." –Havelock Ellis

Monday, July 1

Colossians 4:1-6

LIVING WISELY

"Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity." Colossians 4:5, NIV

Two passengers arrived at the bus station at a time when there was only one space left. The younger man utilised the opportunity to respect the elderly as he yielded the space to him and took space in the next bus. Unknown to the young man, the man was actually going to be the chairman of the panel for the job interview he was rushing to attend. At the interview, the chairman praised the young man for demonstrating a good blend of intelligence and wisdom even in his dealings with strangers and gave him the job.

Having charged the masters to treat their slaves with fairness, Apostle Paul encouraged the Colossians to be devoted to prayer, not only for themselves but also for the ministers. He then charged them to demonstrate wisdom in the way they act towards outsiders stressing the need for them to appropriately utilise every opportunity as they speak with grace. If you are to be judged in the light of this passage, how well would you fare in terms of fair dealing, devotion to prayers for self and others, wisdom in treating strangers nicely and gracious in speech? If you were that young man, would you have lost the job because of your rude response to the unknown chairman? Live wisely and speak with grace at every opportunity.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding. Proverbs 3:13

RBT Passage: Proverbs 4-7

"The art of peaceful living comes down to living compassionately and wisely." — **Allan Lokos**

A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you...a light for the Gentiles". Isaiah 42:6, NIV

Lighthouses are built along dangerous coastlines to aid navigation as they emit light from different systems of lamps and lenses. Today's passage presents the servant of the Lord as an agent of light who brings justice and peace to the world. He shuns violence, unfaithfulness and discouragement as He brings justice to the world and His teachings bring hope to people.

It also talks about God's promises to His chosen, in the person of Christ and everyone that believes in Him. God is still in the business of upholding those He has chosen to be a covenant to the people and a light to the nations. Can God depend on you to give illumination to the world around you? Can you serve as a lighthouse to aid people's navigation along dangerous zones of life? You need to remain perpetually connected to God to serve this purpose. God wants to use you to open blind eyes, free the captives and release those who sit in darkness. You can only serve this purpose well when you allow God to uphold you and allow His Spirit to dwell in you. Many are groping in darkness around you. Rise up to the occasion, go light your world as you stay connected to God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. Isaiah 60:1

RBT Passage: Proverbs 8-11

"Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone's life. Be the light that helps others see; it is what gives life its deepest significance." — Roy T. Bennett

Wednesday, July 3

Hebrew 10:1-10

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE FOR ALL

"...we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Hebrew 10:10, NIV

At the end of his first year in school, James was so glad he topped his class. However, it wasn't long before the excitement waned off as he got overwhelmed with thoughts of how he struggled to pay his fee in three instalments. He became worried as to whether or not he would drop out of school as a result of lack of funds for the subsequent years. Just then, the H.O.D shook his hand, congratulated him on his brilliant performance and announced to him that a philanthropist had paid his way through the university. James' joy knew no bounds.

Comparing old covenant sacrifices with the sacrifice of Christ, the inadequacies of the former are glaring as they had to be done over and again. Thus, they became an annual reminder of sin. But when Christ came, He offered the sacrifice once and for all atoning even for the sins of those who are yet unborn. Like James, your sins have been atoned for; Christ has paid your way through to redemption. You only need to tap into the resources of grace as available in Christ's sacrifice for all. Come to Jesus today and let His sufferings bring your salvation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance. Psalms 33:12

RBT Passage: Proverbs 12-14

"Christ's wounds are thy healing, His agonies thy repose, His conflicts thy conquest, His groans thy songs, His pains thine ease, His shame thy glory, His death thy life, His sufferings thy salvation." — **Matthew Henry**

LIVING HUMBLY

"...those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted". Matthew 23:12

A man was compelled to go to the church very early one morning. On arrival, he met a beautiful lady in old clothes cleaning the church. He felt sorry for her and thought that God had led him to the church to help change her level. So, he insisted on giving her some money and offered to give her a ride when she was done with her assignment. The lady politely refused both offers but the man pressed on. He walked her out of the church only to discover the lady owned a BMW X6 2017 which made his car look like a wheelbarrow. The man then discovered that God had actually led him to the church to learn humility. If a woman of such status could offer to clean God's house, he has no reason to be proud.

In today's passage, Jesus warned against hypocrisy, eye-service, and self-conceit. Contrary to the human tendencies toward pride, Jesus taught His disciples the beauty of servant-leadership and humility that leads to divine exaltation. Do you often feel you are not noticed or duly celebrated? Do you flaunt whatever you think you are endowed with to gain attention? Then, you must cry to God for help and rise above the desires of the flesh. Live humbly and watch God exalt you in due course.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. Psalms 32:8

RBT Passage: Proverbs 15-17

"Sense shines with a double luster when it is set in humility. An able yet humble man is a jewel worth a kingdom."

— William Penn

Friday, July 5

Luke 6:1-11

APPLYING THE LAW IN NEW WAYS

"Then Jesus said to them, I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Luke 6:9, NIV

Legalistic religion promotes strict adherence to the letters of the law without necessarily paying attention to the spirit of the law. This was the position of the Pharisees in today's passage. They appeared to be so concerned about the fulfilment of the law of the Sabbath meanwhile their motive was wrong; they only wanted to use the occasion to accuse Jesus (verse 7). Knowing their intention, Jesus went ahead to heal the man with the shrivelled hand. He then challenged their interpretation of the law of the Sabbath by asking them whether it is lawful to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it on the Sabbath. To this, they had no response.

Do you protect the law out of your love for God or as sheer legalism which is aimed at pulling others down? It's amazing how the Pharisees who claimed to be upholding the law did not notice that their intention to pull Jesus down also means the breaking of the law. Obey the commandments of God from a pure heart, not from any intention of judging others or running them down.

- **Birthday Blessing:** If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment. Luke 36:11

RBT Passage: Proverbs 18-20

"They that have delight in the Sabbath of God, shall find delight in the God of the Sabbath." — **John Wells**

Saturday, July 6

Romans 7:24-8:4

DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death". Romans 8:1-2, NIV

Mother taught Fola and Folu to always tell her the truth no matter the circumstances. One day, Folu met Fola where he was trying to bury Mother's favourite chinaware that got broken in his hand. Folu threatened to report to their mother except he agreed to do his unpleasant chores for him as a reward for keeping his secret. Fola continued to be enslaved by Folu until he decided to open up to Mother one day. His confession brought him freedom from the yoke of Folu's slavery and from a guilty conscience.

In this passage, Paul lamented his wretchedness in being bound to the flesh that is subject to death. But he saw a ray of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ who delivered him. He then concluded that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ because they have been delivered from the law of sin and death. What sin are you indulging in for which the devil has enslaved you hitherto? Come out clean before God; embrace Christ's offer of deliverance from the law of sin and death. Allow the Spirit of God to liberate you as you embrace deliverance in Christ and continue to live a life without condemnation.

- **Birthday Blessing:** For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Rom 6:14

RBT Passage: Proverbs 21-23

"When the yoke is broken, the burden is removed."

— Lailah Gifty Akita

Sunday, July 7

Matthew 5:13-20

INTERPLAY OF SALT, LIGHT, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven". Matthew 5:20

For the influence of salt to be felt in food, the salt must come in contact with the food item. In the same vein, light's impact is more significant in the face of darkness. This is instructive for Christian living. The decadence in the world is not a threat to our Christian influence; rather, it gives our influence the necessary prominence. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus used the salt and light metaphors to illustrate the roles of His followers in this perverse generation. He also warned against inefficiency, wrong positioning and withdrawal that can result in loss of influence. Jesus charged His disciples not to play 'holier than thou' like the Pharisees and the Scribes who were known for pseudo-righteousness.

Do you lead a withdrawn life because you think you are holier than everyone around you and you don't want to become polluted by them? Then, you may have to repent and trust God for your righteousness to surpass that of the Pharisees and the Scribes. In the face of decadence, pause and think about the expectation of God over you as the salt and the light in that context. Tap into divine resources and influence your world for a positive change towards kingdom advancement.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. Isaiah 43:2

RBT Passage: Proverbs 24-26

"We are a debtor to every man to give him the gospel in the same measure in which we have received it." – P. F. Bresee

Monday, July 8

Deuteronomy 17:8-11

OBEY JUDICIAL RULINGS AT ONCE

Be careful to do everything they instruct you to do.

Deuteronomy 17:10b, NIV

The judiciary, those who serve as judge over people, have been invested with the final authority to declare the fate of people in the court of law. They base their judgement on the constitution of the nation or the constitution of the area within their jurisdiction. Therefore, it is expected that those who come before the judges are to accept and act in accordance with their final decision.

From the passage, God chose judges to handle conflicts among the children of Israel while the priests were to handle difficult cases. He also instructed the Israelites to act promptly and in accordance with the decision of the priests and judges as the final verdict (vs. 9-10). The Church today has elders who work with the church pastors to resolve conflicts in the church. It is important that churches should have spirit-filled persons who can handle conflicts without bias and with the fear of God. The admonition from today's passage is to recognise and be ready to obey the final decision of such council, believing their decision is based on God's Word and led by the Holy Spirit. We should also strive to resolve conflicts among people around us because God has also given every believer the ministry of reconciliation. Are there unresolved conflicts around you? Do something about it today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

RBT Passage: Proverbs 27-29

"The law is not meant to destroy us. But our disobedience leads to our own destruction." — Lailah Gifty Akita

HANDLING TEMPTATION

It is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into fire. Mark 9:47b

Haratio R. Palmer wrote "Yield not to Temptation" one of the most popular Baptist hymns to remind believers of the need to take their stand even in difficult situation. The first stanza talks about how striving to win one battle helps in gathering confidence to win another. It grieves God's heart when people fall into sin because every act of sin has its consequence. In the passage, Jesus denounced anyone who causes any of the little ones to fall into sin. His assertion that it is better to lose a part of one's body than to lose the kingdom of God shows that we must flee sin at all cost. God is not interested in His children losing their body parts, but He wants us to let go of anything that will lead us to sin.

No matter the temptation that comes our way, God's expectation is for Christians never to yield. He wants you to deny yourself of whatever will lead you to sin, no matter how important it may be. This may be friends, offers, worldly things, receiving help from corrupt sources and lots more. Tell God about your struggles with sin and ask Him to help you overcome temptations in order to remain holy and pure till He comes.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12

RBT Passage: Proverbs 30-31

"The safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft...without milestones, without signposts." – **C. S. Lewis**

Wednesday, July 10

Leviticus 19: 11-18

LIVING WITH THE NEIGHBOURS

...but love your neighbour as yourself. Leviticus 19:18b, NIV

The world is full of evil; people live for themselves and work toward destroying the image of others, not minding the consequences of their action. Deeds of kindness are so scarce and rare that any act of kindness seems so remarkable. The question now is will the world continue to live with this cruel and inhuman lifestyle? How can one make a difference?

The Israelites received a command from God not to steal, lie, deceive, defraud, curse, pervert justice, show favouritism, hate in their heart, or do anything evil against their neighbour. God also instructed them to love their neighbour as themselves. Jesus Christ gave this same command in Matthew 22:39, meaning that God wants us to love our neighbours and live peaceably with everyone around us. Love, apparently, is the antidote to conquer wickedness. With love you can make a difference by adding value to the lives of people around you and modelling Christ like character for them to emulate. Some people may prove difficult to relate with, especially unbelievers, but according to today's study, God wants us to love regardless.

- **Birthday Blessing:** And God will meet all your needs according to his riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

RBT Passage: Ecclesiastes 1-4

"The good neighbour looks beyond the external accidents and discerns their inner qualities that make all men human, and therefore brothers." **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

LIVING WITH BELIEVERS

And we urge you brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Mrs Martins is a rash and impatient woman. She attends church religiously, but snubs other church members and picks offence when people comment about her attitude. However, her turning point came when she encountered a friendly woman at her office who modelled the Christian virtues of love, kindness, tolerance and patience. God used that woman to explain to her how important it is to relate well with other believers wherever one is.

Paul instructs the church in Thessaloniki to respect those who work among them and live peaceably with each other. He also urges them to avoid idleness, encourage the timid, help one another and be kind to one another. They are also to make joy, prayer and thanksgiving a lifestyle. As members of God's family, believers should live together peacefully, and help one another in every way possible. Do you have a rift with any believer around you? Make every effort to settle it amicably today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May God give you heaven's dew and earth riches-an abundance of grain and of new wine. Genesis 27:28

RBT Passage: Ecclesiastes 5-8

"Believe that every human feels pleasure in doing good to another." **Thomas Jefferson**

Friday, July 12

Mark 10:2-9

THE UNBREAKABLE MARITAL VOW

"Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Mark 10:9, NIV

Marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman which God instituted. The woman was made out of man as his suitable helper and companion (Genesis 2:18). But after mankind fell into sin things fell apart, and people started modifying God's law to suit their purpose. One of such modification is the permission of separation in marriage.

The Pharisees, in the passage, appear to believe so much in the Law of Moses but used the law to fulfil their selfish desires. They assert that the Law of Moses permits them to divorce their wives, but Jesus led them back to God's original plan when He instituted marriage. He made them understand that God intends the man and the woman to become one flesh, without giving room for separation. Jesus Christ pointed out that Moses gave them that approval because of the hardness of their heart. Any Christian who wants to enter into marriage must understand that marriage vows are unbreakable no matter the challenges. Marriage is a serious issue. Pray very well for God's leading before entering into marriage and when you are sure you are in God's will, commit your union into God's hand for its success and sustenance.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. Psalm 20:4

RBT Passage: Ecclesiastes 9-12

"Your marriage vows are most important in those moments when they are most difficult to keep." –Davewillis.org

Saturday, July 13

Matthew 5:33-37

LET YES BE YES; NO, NO

Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No,' No' anything beyond this comes from the evil one. Matthew 5:37, NIV

Swearing and making of oaths have become a common practice in our world today. There are times people will not believe what others tell them unless they swear or enter into an oath in order to hold them bound by their words. We often hear people say, "Can you swear that you are telling the truth?" This may be generally accepted but it is against biblical teachings and should not be practiced by believers whose lives are based on biblical principles.

In our passage, Jesus took the people through what they already know in the law about keeping the oaths they make. But He went a step further by commanding them not to swear at all – whether by heaven, earth or Jerusalem. They are to simply let their yes be yes and no, no. A Christian should always be known for his or her truthfulness and honesty. We should not wait until we are placed on oath before we say the truth, whole truth and nothing but the truth. Our words should always be our bound.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with your spirit. Amen. Philippians 4:23

RBT Passage: Song of Solomon 1-4

"It is not the oath that makes us believe the man, but the man the oath." –**Aeschylus**

Sunday, July 14

Matthew 5:21-32

COMMIT TO LOVE EACH OTHER

Leave you gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:24 NIV

The lyrics of a popular song on love say “Love one another, for love is of God. And he who loveth is born of God and knows God. But he who loveth not does not know God.” Love is a term that several scholars have found difficult to define or find a synonym for. Loving someone is beyond emotional feelings; it is rooted in selfless sacrifice and acts of kindness.

The Israelites have learnt from the Ten Commandment not to murder but Jesus went further to state that anyone who is angry with his brother or uses any word of contempt for his brother will be judged and anyone who calls someone a fool will be in danger of hell. He also admonished them to settle matters quickly with their adversaries and avoid going to court. Adultery of any sort and divorce were to be avoided because they are sins before God. Learn to weigh the effect of your actions before embarking on them because the Lord will punish all evil deeds. Let love be your song every day, everywhere and at all times.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Grace and peace to you from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:2

RBT Passage: Song of Solomon 5-8

“Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they worth it.” –**Thomas Merton**

Monday, July 15

Leviticus 24:16-22

RESTRAIN YOUR ANGER

If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. Leviticus 24:17

One fateful day, Tolulope had just finished frying plantain in the kitchen, when her brothers came into the kitchen and took one of the fried plantain. In anger, she poured the hot oil she had used to fry on his face. Though, her brother was taken to the hospital and he recovered, the initial wound became a permanent scar on his face.

Anger can make us to take regrettable actions. In anger, some people take the life of another person or animal, or disfiguring their body parts. These are costly actions that cannot be reversed. In the Old Testament God wanted the people to realise the gravity of such actions and to value human life, so He commanded that those who kill or disfigure others should be repaid in their coin. God also commanded that those who blaspheme should be stoned to death. Though the forgiving love of God forbids the believer from getting revenge, the moral truths from this passage remains valid in our time. We must not let anger lead us into taking human life, hurting others, or destroying other people's properties. Learn to restrain your anger today, do not let it lead you to making an irreparable mistake.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. Genesis 12:2

RBT Passage: Isaiah 1-3

"For every minute you remain angry, you give up sixty seconds of peace of mind." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

FILLED WITH GRACE

"But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke." Acts 6:10, NIV

A little Christian girl name Ruth had a passion for martyrdom. She grew up in China, where her parents were missionaries. She used to pray every night that the Lord will make her a martyr before she clocked twenty-one. Rosa, her sister always thought of how horrid her prayer point was. Every night whenever Ruth prayed, Rosa would say, "Lord, don't listen to her."

While we do not have to pray for martyrdom like Ruth, we should however, desire to imitate the boldness of those who have given their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, left us an example of a godly, courageous witness. Notice how he is described in verse 5, *"...Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit."* And in verse 8 we read more, *"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people."* Though Stephen was an ordinary man, he made himself totally available to God. When God by His Spirit fills a person, he or she becomes powerful in His hands. He or she receives God's wisdom and strength that is supernatural. You and I can begin to experience the same anointing that Stephen had, if we will, like him, surrender ourselves into God's hand for His use.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Gen 12:2-3

RBT Passage: Isaiah 4-8

Godly character is the basis for courageous witness for Jesus Christ, no matter what the results. -Steven J. Cole

Wednesday, July 17

Matthew 6:1-6

TRANSFORMED GIVING AND PRAYING

"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Matt 6:3, NIV

A company in America wanted shoppers to pay attention to them, so they advertised to give free fabulous prizes to a randomly chosen winner but the person must follow the rule of the game. If a participant fails to meet the qualifications, then the company may disqualify such individual.

In God's 'company', there are transformational prizes, far more fabulous than has ever been offered by any organization. These prizes will be given freely to people who obey the rules of the kingdom. In the gospel of Matthew chapter 6, Jesus is challenging us not to make noise with our charitable acts or prayer. Rather, we should be quiet about it in obedience to the Lord. We must understand that prayer and giving that truly touches the heart of God and changes the world comes from a heart that is passionately dependent on God. Alms giving and prayers are a great privilege and responsibility for all believers. The opportunities God has given to us should not become a weapon for oppressing others. Rather, it should be a means of pointing people to Christ. What are those things God has blessed you with? The only way to appreciate God for those things is by blessing others through them. Make a conscious effort to bless someone around you today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all... I Samuel 30:8

RBT Passage: Isaiah 9-11

Authentic Prayer and Alms giving is practiced in private not performed in public. - Michael Carino

Thursday, July 18

Lamentations 3:25-33

THE LORD HONOURS PATIENCE

It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Lamentations 3:26

A five year old girl asked her mum how long it would be before her family will move into their new house. Since six weeks is hard for a five year old to grasp, she took her to a wall calendar and showed her how long until moving day. After then, each day, as she marks off calendar squares one by one, she could see how long before the waiting is over.

Waiting is hard work and, at times, can even test our faith. It is especially difficult when there are no guarantees that our waiting will ever end in this lifetime. Scripture offers plenty of examples of saints who never got weary of waiting for God. They are God's people who chose not to do things in their own way. God's goodness is promised to those who wait patiently for Him! The Lord honours patience, no matter how long. Regardless of how hopeless things appear to us, even when it seems to cost us everything. "God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to His power at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). When we wait for Him, we will never be disappointed. What are those areas that God is requesting your patience? Know that God does everything for a reason and He will surely fulfil His promises in your life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** : "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds."
Isaiah 3:10

RBT Passage: Isaiah 12-14

"To us, waiting is wasting. To God waiting is working."

– Loure Giglio

Friday, July 19

Romans 13:1-10

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:10

A young lady took a woman off a street where she was wounded. She cleaned and dressed her sores but the woman kept insulting the young lady. Finally, the woman asked the young lady, why did you do this? Not everyone behaves like you. Who taught you? The young lady replied, "My God taught me." The woman said she wanted to know her God. The young lady kissed her on the forehead and said, "You already know my God. My God is called love."

Love is an incredible thing. The amazing thing about it is what Paul said this love we extend to one another fulfils and summarizes the rest of the law. All of these commandments hinge on how we treat others. If we love then we will not murder, steal and covet our neighbour's things. Love was initiated by God for man's redemption. Because of God's great love for us, God sent Jesus into humanity to rescue mankind from the power of darkness and bring us into fellowship with Him. In the same way, as believers, we ought to love one another, so that we can prove to the world that we belong to God indeed. Our love for one another shows that we belong to the truth because, "God lives in us and His love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12).

- **Birthday Blessing:** "And the gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising-"
Isaiah 60:3

RBT Passage: Isaiah 15-19

"Everybody you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind always." – Anonymous

Saturday, July 20

Matthew 22:34-40

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37

If you were to ask me which classroom rule is most important, I would say that the most important rule is to respect and obey your teacher and the second is very much like it - be kind and show respect for your fellow students. If we would just follow those two rules, there really wouldn't be a need for any more.

In today's passage, one of the teachers of the religious law asked Jesus, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus responded by saying, "The most important commandment is this: 'The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." If we critically examine Jesus' response, we will discover that by keeping these two commandments we have actually kept the rest. If we love God genuinely there are a lot of things we will not do and if we also love our neighbours as ourselves we will not be eager to do evil towards them. How deep is your love for God? Are there other things sharing your heart with God? The depth of our love for God determines our height in Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things-" Psalm 107:9

RBT Passage: Isaiah 20-24

"God created you for the first and greatest commandment, to be a lover of God." – **Sam Storms**

Sunday, July 21

Matthew 5:38-48

PRACTICE LOVE TOWARD ALL

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you Matthew 5:44

A social worker shared her work experience with a particular church in Nigeria. She spoke about how she helped the less privileged in India. After the speech, a member of the audience who seemingly wanted to assist her in her great work, asked, "You have done so much to make the world a better place. What can we do to support you? The woman smiled and simply said "love your neighbour as much as you can. That is the best you can do." The woman kept mute because her neighbour probably was not in her good book.

Our passage this morning gives us two reasons to love our enemies. The first is out of obedience to Christ. It is a command from Christ to His disciples. It is an instruction, not a recommendation or a word of advice. If we profess to be Christians and we consider ourselves followers of Jesus, then we will want to do what He says. The second reason is to imitate our Heavenly Father. As Christians we are God's adopted children. We are His sons and daughters. Jesus encourages us to imitate our Father's unconditional love. The Holy Spirit can give us the ability to love our enemies day by day. The power of God's Holy Spirit is able to help us love the unlovable, if only we let Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will send you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully...." Joel 2:19

RBT Passage: Isaiah 25-28

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy to a friend." – **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Monday, July 22

Psalm 1

WALK BY THE WORD AND PROSPER

"He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers" Psalms 1:3

A boy was raised in a broken home. He carried the scars for many years and decided never to forgive his dad. This boy was introduced to a 40-Minute Bible Study on *Forgiveness: Breaking the Power of the Past*. As he progressed, he began to face the difficult reality that he needed to extend forgiveness to his dad. God's Word penetrated his heart; the Holy Spirit brought him to the reality of the forgiveness he received through salvation. He forgave his Dad and through him, the family was restored and revitalized.

This is exactly the way God's word prospers a soul. God says that the person, who lives according to His Word will be like *"a tree planted by streams of water..."* (Psalm 1:3). Trees planted by rivers do well. Their soil is fertile and they bear much fruit. Such a tree does not have to 'worry' when the heat arises or the drought comes. It is secure because it has a consistent water source that is independent of the weather. Such is the picture; and so it is with the blessed man. He is graciously planted into a relationship with the Almighty. And whether he endures seasons of much or little, rain or drought, peace or calamity, the fountain of living water continually nourishes him. He will not wither nor will he be fearful; he will be spiritually prosperous and fruitful.

- **Birthday Blessing:** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood 1 Peter 4:9

RBT Passage: Isaiah 29-31

"God's law is our pleasure when the God of the law is our God." – Charles H. Spurgeon

Tuesday, July 23

Jeremiah 17:5-8

GODLY TRUST LEADS TO FRUITFUL LIFE

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him Jeremiah 17:7

A young man went to work with some poor people in a certain village. He was deeply impressed by one old man who, despite having no running water, no electricity and little food, was so joyful. "How come you are so happy when you have so little?" asked the young man. "Because I know Jesus," replied the old man. "But I know Jesus as well." No, you might know about Jesus in your head, but not in your heart.

Godly trust simply means having Jesus at the centre of your heart. It means allowing the Lord to take the lead while you follow. Our joy as Christians should not be rooted in what we possessed. Rather, we should put our trust in Jesus Christ the creator, and sustainer of the universe. The call to trust in the Lord comes to us because, 1) we are not our own, we belong to God. 2) God has a plan for His people and we need to find how He wants us to fit into it. 3) Trusting in man undermines our relationship with Him. God's primary desire is to deepen our relationship with Him. The first blessing of trusting God is that we have direct access to divine resources. As we put our roots down in God we develop our capacity to draw strength from Him.

- **Birthday Blessing** "... I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you." Exodus 23:22

RBT Passage: Isaiah 32-34

"To trust God in the light is nothing, but trust him in the dark, that is faith." – **Charles H. Spurgeon**

SETTLE DIFFERENCES FACE TO FACE

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. Matthew 18:15, NIV

Face to face communication seems to get harder every day. Our society is moving further away from face to face communication. The invention of writing a letter to someone, telephone call, email, texting are alien to our practices in conflict resolution. Now, if you are mad at someone, you can just Tweet about it, and the whole world knows. But this is not what Jesus taught.

Christians are admonished to handle conflicts carefully. The first step is to address the matter with the other person personally. You may first pray about the conflict you are having before you address it with that person. Go into prayer humbly. Ask God to show you where you are wrong. Ask for wisdom to help you identify the parts of the conflict that you own, and work on those things before you talk to the person. When matters are handled privately, misunderstanding can be addressed, and there is great potential for the other person to respond positively. In addition, a private meeting helps to avoid the problem of gossip. Christians are called to handle disputes in love, with a goal of restoration. Settling our differences should be handled according to the steps listed in Matthew 18. This style of conflict resolution is based on a desire for holy living and love for the person who has committed wrong.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life. Psalm 121:7

RBT Passage: Isaiah 35-37

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. – C.S. Lewis

Thursday, July 25

1 Corinthians 6:1-6

HOW BELIEVERS JUDGE GRIEVANCES

I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 1 Corinthians 6:5

Once heard of two Christian brothers who have been business partners but are now in an ugly legal battle in the courts because of a disagreement they had. This issue may lead to bitterness that may affect their business as well as their home. We have seen Christian couples who have separated and have taken each other to court. We have also seen Christians who decided to sue their church to court for damages they suffered. But the Bible is very clear that it is absolutely wrong and a complete moral failure for a Christian to ever take a fellow Christian to court for conflict resolution. Instead, someone within the fold should judge the matter. Paul says a day will come when Christians will judge the world. Because of this, we should be qualified to judge small matters in the church.

There should be at least one qualified to judge between Christians without Christians making mockery of their faith in a court of law. It would be better to be wronged without getting justice than drag the matter before a court thereby soiling the name of God. Such grievance that cannot be settled amicably should not be heard in the Christian fold. For those who live like the world will not inherit God's kingdom.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD God will rejoice in you and take delight in you. Isaiah 65:19

RBT Passage: Isaiah 38-40

"To err is human, to forgive, divine." – Alexander Pope

Friday, July 26

Matthew 7:7-14

ASKING AND RECEIVING FAIRLY

Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

A cartoon pictured a little boy kneeling in prayer. Obviously disgruntled with the results of his prayers, he was saying, Auntie Beauty has not gotten married, Uncle Fame has not gotten any work, and Daddy's hair is still falling out. I am getting tired of praying for this family without getting any result.

Many of us are like this little boy. We want instant miracles or quick answers from the Lord. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that whoever asks receives, (Matthew 7:7). But Jesus goes on to say that God will not fail to give His children good things (v. 11). So, the condition to this promise is that what we ask for must be good in God's estimation. God will give advantageous gifts to His children; He will not give us injurious things, no matter how much we clamour for them. Our job is to understand what is good, so that we know what to ask for. The natural mind cannot understand this. But, when we offer ourselves as "a living sacrifice" and are transformed by the renewing of our minds, then we "will be able to know God's good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2). Then, asking for what we need in faith, we will have all we need and fullness of joy (John 16:24).

- **Birthday Blessing:** I declare this is my season to receive uncommon testimonies and breakthroughs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

RBT Passage: Isaiah 41-43

"Prayer can never be in excess." – Charles H. Spurgeon

Saturday, July 27

Matthew 7:24-29

HEARING AND DOING

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand Matthew 7:26

Francis Chan's illustration is relevant to today's topic. He said, imagine I tell my son to clean his room and he responded that he got my message. But thereafter, I found out that he has not cleaned his room. And when I asked why he has not cleaned his room according to my instruction? He said, "I heard you tell me to clean my room. I love that bit of your word to me. I have memorized it and I have been meditating on it. My sister and I have been meeting and discussing what it might look like to clean my room. I feel like I'm really learning here." What do you think will be the reaction of the Dad towards him?

Jesus explains that when people hear Him speak they should respond in obedience. This means that our goal should not be just to hear, but to respond in the right way. Two people can sit in the same church, hearing the same Scripture; yet one can respond with change, repentance and growth while the other doesn't respond at all. Many of us have access to the truth of God's word, yet it seems as if nothing has changed in our lives. We take it in but we don't digest it. Hearing Jesus' words is not enough, the question is, have you acted on what you heard?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."
Eph 5:11

RBT Passage: Isaiah 44-46

"The voice you believe will determine the future you experience." - Steven Furtick

Sunday, July 28

Matthew 7:1-6, 15-23

DISCERNING FAITH AND ACTION TOGETHER

Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Matt 7:20, NIV

A prophet reportedly convinced his congregations that his holy pen can make students pass their exams and the more you pay, the higher your grades. The Bible is very clear that in the last days, false prophets and others who are bearing bad fruit will increase, and that we would know these kinds of people by their fruit (Matt 7:15-20). Fruit in a person's life can be defined as the product of a person. This type of fruit false prophets bear is not acceptable to Jesus Christ. Thus, we must examine ourselves first, be on our guard and watch out for those who are wolves in sheep's clothing in the church and attempting to devour the innocent.

Some believers are only full of leaves like the fig tree exposed by Jesus. Bearing no fruit is just as bad as bearing bad fruit. What are you doing for the kingdom? Are you active in your church? It is time to get out of your four walls and grow an abundance of fruit. Galatians 5:22-23 defines the spiritual fruit in someone's lives as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control. As believers in Christ we are to be in the vine of Christ Jesus and, as we do so, bear good fruit (John 15).

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Thus says the Lord; 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.'" Isaiah 49:8

RBT Passage: Isaiah 47-49

"You cannot be saved and lack the fruits of the Spirit."

– AM Brewster

Monday, July 29

1 Samuel 18:10-16

SAUL FEARS DAVID

Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul. 1Samuel 18:12

There was a story about a Christian who ran away from his enemies during persecution in North Africa. He ran into a cave and prayed to God to protect him. Not long after, he spotted a spider weaving a web across the mouth of the cave. When the man's pursuers arrived, they assumed it was impossible for him to have entered into the cave because of the web that was across the mouth of the cave. They moved on and the man escaped from them.

Saul attempted to kill David through a plot because of jealousy and suspicion. Saul within his heart feared David, so he wanted David out of his presence. But the Lord was with David and had abandoned Saul. In Saul's mind, David was a threat to his claim to the throne and to the dynasty he hoped to establish through Jonathan. So Saul made David the commander of 1000 troops, sent him out to fight risky battles, hoping that David would lose and be discredited by the people or else be killed in battle (vv. 13, 17). David succeeded in every battle and in everything else he did because the Lord was with him (vv. 14-16). And David's success only made Saul fear him even more. On the other hand, David's success in military campaigns stirred the people to love him more and more.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.... Genesis 1:28

RBT Passage: Isaiah 50-52

"If you are committed enough, you can make any story work." – **Saul Goodman**

Tuesday, July 30

1 Samuel 18:20-24, 28-30

ONE WITH GOD

Now Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased 1 Samuel 18:20

There are people in this world that choose to hate other people for no just reason. As long as others around them are progressing they are filled with bitterness. They can even go to the extent of plotting evil against these people just to see them fail. But God has a way of dealing with such people. He has a way of bringing their counsel to naught. David found himself in a similar situation when the daughter of Saul fell in love with him.

Saul wanted the downfall of David at all cost just because God was with him. Because of his ulterior motive, he agreed that David can marry Michal, his daughter on the condition that he will bring one hundred foreskin of the Philistine. This was a suicide mission because there was no way David will get the foreskin of the Philistines without going to war with them. Saul had forgotten that when God is involved the impossible becomes possible. David did not only bring hundred, he brought additional hundred to prove to Saul that indeed God was with him. It does not matter how many people have risen against you. All that matters is that you have God in your camp and your victory will be assured. When you have God on your side He will make every evil planned against your to work for you favour.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies. Gen 26:17

RBT Passage: Isaiah 53-56

"The fears you don't face becomes our limits."

-Robin Sharma

Wednesday, July 31

1 Samuel 19:8-12

HELP FROM UNEXPECTED PLACES

So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. 1Samuel 19:12

The human mind can be so calculative. Many times we consider a lot of factors and weigh the level of risk involved before taking action. While this is not entirely wrong, it might sometimes deny us of some things that God has prepared for us in an unexpected package. One would have thought that Michal will betray David because her father turned against him, but she did not only take his side, she also helped him escape from her father. If David had judged Michal with her father's attitude towards him, he might have maltreated her or decided to pay her in her father's coin.

Michal would not have had any reason to stand for him when all the chips were down. We should take a cue from David's attitude. Treating people rightly should not be based on what they have done right or wrong. It should not be based on what their parents or children have done. It should solely be based on our own decision to be good to everyone at all times because you really cannot say who God will use to bless you in time of need or save you in time of trouble. This might look impossible, but with the help of the Holy Spirit we can be at peace with all men irrespective of who they are.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...Do what is right and good, for I am coming soon to rescue you and to display my righteousness among you. Isaiah 56:1

RBT Passage: Isaiah 57-59

"A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."

– Robert Quillen

Thursday, August 1

1 Samuel 20:12-17

BECOMING FRIENDS

"So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David..., and Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him...." 1 Sam. 20:16-17, NIV

Aristotle said there are three kinds of friendship: Friendship of pleasure – based on pleasure in another's company, or friendship of utility – based on usefulness in association, or friendship of virtue – based on mutual admiration. The passage shows how David and Jonathan became intimate friends of virtue by exchanging words of trust. Love and trust are inseparable. Jonathan gave his trust to David. He promised David to check out whether his father, Saul, really hated and wanted to kill David and report to him. Jonathan also requested kindness from David after God would have given David victory over his enemies.

God expects everyone to have a covenant relationship with Him and replicate it by relating sincerely with others. God first loved you by giving His Son to die for you. You are expected to reciprocate His love by accepting the offer of His Son. Jonathan saw the kind of relationship David shared with God and wanted the same. Can the same be said of you? As a young person, be careful of entering into a relationship that can lead you to sin against your Creator. Be wary of any friendship that does not exalt God. First, establish a covenant relationship with your Maker and be faithful to Him. This first relationship will regulate your relationship with others without any regret.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

RBT Passage: Isaiah 60-63

"The most called upon prerequisite of a friend in an accessible ear." – Maya Angelou

Friday, August 2

1 Samuel 20:18-23

JONATHAN AND DAVID PLAN RENDEZVOUS

"Then Jonathan said to David: ... 'The day after tomorrow, towards evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel.'" 1 Sam, 20:18-19

The Block, a residential area in Redfern, Sydney, was established in 1973. Located on land traditionally inhabited by the Gadigal people, it quickly became known as a place for the Indigenous community: "a place where people converge to share their stories and release their pain. For the Stolen Generations in particular, it is a place to reconnect with long lost family members."

In the passage, Jonathan arranged for a meeting with David which informed whether David would stay with King Saul's family or flee for safety. Jonathan suggested a sign that David should look out for, either the arrows are within reach (safety) or the arrows are beyond reach (danger). This is the sign to ascertain David's safety (vv 21-22). God has also prepared a place of safety for everyone who turns to Him. This place of safety can only be found in Christ. The Scripture says "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe (Prov. 18:10). God has already opened His arm of love it is left for us to either accept Him or reject Him. Beloved, how have you been preparing to meet the Lord at His return? If human beings like Jonathan and David could arrange for a meeting and be faithful to it, how much more will you prepare to meet your God?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." Isaiah 66:13

RBT Passage: Isaiah 64-66

"Admonish your friends privately, but praise them openly."

- Syrus

Saturday, August 3

1 Samuel 20:35-42

DAVID AND JONATHAN SEPARATE IN PEACE

"Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord...'" 1

Sam. 20:42, NIV

Separation of loved ones, either temporarily or permanently, from one another is not easy at all. Tears often roll down the cheek when any separation occurs if love exists between/among the people. The passage today tells us that after Jonathan had verified the evil intention of King Saul to kill David, they came together to bid themselves farewell. Meeting with Jonathan, David paid homage to him – he bowed down before Jonathan three times. This means that David appreciated the love Jonathan had shown him to rescue him from his father. They kissed each other, wept bitterly and separated in peace.

Separation from relatives or friends is inevitable, but when it happens how should it be? The account teaches that in any moment of separation, it should be done in peace. This is one of the reasons the Scripture tells us to make every effort to live in peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:9). How peaceable are you? As you go out today, make sure you cultivate the habit of peacemaking in your relationship with others, so that when the need to part occurs, you will be able to part in peace. Also make sure you appreciate those who shower you with love. It is then you will be called a son or daughter of God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "He (God) will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy." Job 8:21, NIV

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 1-3

"If you really want to know who your friends are, just make a mistake." – **The Bible Friend**

Sunday, August 4

1 Sam. 18:1-5; 19:1-7

COVENANT BETWEEN TWO FRIENDS

"And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself". (1 Sam. 18:3, NIV)

When two persons give their words to become friends, the agreement is binding. The scripture for today started with Jonathan's spirit becoming one with David. David became Jonathan's favourite and Jonathan made covenant with him. To express his love physically Jonathan gave David his robe, tunic, sword, bow and belt. Also, Saul gave David a high rank in the army because he won all the battles assigned to him. But later, Saul wanted to kill David (19:1). Because Jonathan loved David as himself, he exposed his father's evil intention and warned him to be on guard. Jonathan later pleaded on behalf of David that he should not be killed, and Saul granted his son's request.

What attributes of a true friend can you see in the story? A true friend's spirit becomes one with his friend; a true friend loves as himself; a true friend is loyal to his friend; a true friend gives without reservation; a true friend speaks well of and pleads for his friend; and also risks his life for his friend. Are you a true friend to others and have you found a true friend? You have to be a good friend to find true friends. Someone said, "I went out to find a friend, but I could not find one there; I went out to be a friend and friends were everywhere!" Decide today to be a true friend to someone.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you..." Isaiah 60:10a

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 4-5

"Friendship is one mind in two bodies." –Mencius

PROTECTING WIDOWS

"Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge" Deuteronomy 24:17

A court case was instituted against a widow some years ago in a certain city in the Northern part of Nigeria. The widow was not able to defend herself. So, she was to pay a ransom for the offence. The Judge noticed that the widow would pay a ransom and because she helpless, she could hardly meet her needs. Therefore, he volunteered to pay the ransom on her behalf. The judge rescued the helpless widow. In verse 17 of today's passage, God instructs the people to protect widows like the judge did. He also gave the children of Israel a warning not to take the cloak of the widow as a pledge, The reason for the instruction is that the Israelites were first slaves in Egypt before God set them free and then instructed them to cater for others in need so that He might bless the work of their hands.

This is what God is expecting from all His children today. In order to attract God's blessing, you must protect widows and help them when necessary. You will always have widows who will need your help around you. You need to think and act on how to make them happy. This is what God is commanding you to do. As you go about your activities daily give a helping hand to at least a widow who comes your way.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her, the appointed time has come." Psalm 102:13, NIV

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 6-8

"It is difficult to see how Christianity can have a positive effect on society if it cannot transform its own homes." – John MacArthur

Tuesday, August 6

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

CONTINUING THE FAMILY LINE

"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family." Deut. 25:5a

One major thing that sustains relationship is genuine love; the kind of love that transcends the human nature. God is interested in how relationships are sustained, especially family relationship. So, He gave some principles to help human kind relates in genuine love. The text sheds light on preserving the family lineage. The Israelites were to continue the family line by allowing the younger brother to marry the widow of his deceased brother and raise his first son in the name of the deceased. But if he is not interested, the wife would go to the elders at the gate and report the brother's refusal.

Although this is no longer in practice today but the intention of God can be clearly seen. To us as people of grace, the passage simply means that there is need to preserve the faith of our fore-fathers. It is also about helping one another in faith. As believers, we must be willing to go extra miles for people that need our help, especially those that belong to the family of faith. We must endeavour to look out for the best interest of those around us, even when it seems difficult. God expects us to build up one another in faith and love by helping others when we can. By doing this you are preserving God's family line. Meet someone's need today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always." 1 Chronicles 16:11

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 9-11

"Every Christian family ought to be a little church, consecrated to Christ and wholly influenced and governed by His Laws." – Jonathan Edwards

Wednesday, August 7

Matthew 1:2-6, 16

RUTH, MOTHER OF DAVID AND JESUS

"...Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse and Jesse the father of king David..."

Matthew 1:5b-6a, NIV

God works in ways that are sometimes beyond human thinking. Who would have thought that He would allow a woman from a despised tribe become a part of the history of His only Son. The story of Ruth is a reminder that God is always willing to do great things in people who are willing to release themselves and trust Him. The focus of the passage is on the genealogy of both David and Jesus starting with Abraham. The history reveals that Ruth was the great grandmother of David, and from David came Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. In essence, Jesus was fully God, and at the same time human, because His birth can be traced to Ruth.

God does not write anyone off as long as such a person is willing to accept the provision of God through Christ. God's desire is that everyone should belong to His family by accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and by walking consistently in the Spirit. Here is the good news for you if you are not yet a member of God's family, you can do it now by confessing your sins, repenting of them and putting your faith in the Lord Jesus.. Thank God if you are already a part of God's family and live to bring others in.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "With long life will my satisfy you and show you my salvation" Psalm 91:16

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 12-14

"One touch of Christ is worth a lifetime of struggling."

– A.B. Simpson

JOURNEYING WITHOUT GOD

"...After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband." (Ruth 1:4b-5, NIV)

A man was commissioned as a missionary to a foreign country and he lived there for some years. But his parents persuaded him to leave the mission field to get a secular job in another country which would earn him more money to take care of them. The man yielded to the parents' persuasion. Not more than two years in his new location, he met an untimely death. This is a danger of journeying without God.

Today's passage gives an account of a family who left their home land, Bethlehem, to sojourn in Moab. They left the presence of God for a foreign country. Four members of the family left for Moab but at the end of ten years, only Naomi came back; her husband and two sons died in Moab. As a child of God, do not embark on a journey God has not instructed you. Do not take any decision God is not involved in. Do not settle in a wrong location. Even when everybody is doing what is wrong, choose to do what is right. Always pray for the head of the family to decide right because his decision can make or mar the home. Make it a priority today and always to connect yourself to the One who knows the future. Stay connected!

- **Birthday Blessing:** "He will wipe away tears from *your* eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,..." Revelation 21:4

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 15-17

"Faith-healing is grand, but faith-enduring is grander."

– C. H. Spurgeon

A DECISION TO RETURN

"So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabites...arriving in Bethlehem..." (Ruth 1:22, NIV)

A young lady was ill-treated by her father because of the arrival of a second wife to their home. She eventually ran away from home but she lost everything she had along the way, including her peace. One day, she met the Lord at a meeting and decided to return home. Her returning home brought mixed feelings of joy and sadness, but her peace was restored.

This story is similar to what the Scripture today unravels. Naomi, having experienced the death of her husband and two sons in Moab, she returned to Bethlehem with sadness. Though Naomi came back with Ruth, her joy was not expressed. While the whole town celebrated with her by calling her 'Naomi' which means the loveable, my delight or beautiful, she said she should be called 'Mara' which means bitter. She thought the Almighty God has afflicted her and brought misfortune on her. Today's message is calling on everyone who has gone on a strange journey' to return. Beloved youngsters, perhaps you are already embarking or have embarked on a journey without God, it is time for you to return. Are you into a relationship God did not approve? Please, return! Are you doing anything presently that you know God has not instructed you? Please, return! Do not wait until disaster strikes. Return now from wherever you have gone that God has not instructed you. Return!

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten..." Joel 2:25a

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 18-21

"To be biblically evangelistic, we must be certain that what we do leads to faith, not just decisions." – Jim Ehrhard

A WARM WELCOME

"So Boaz said to Ruth, 'My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls.'" (Ruth 2:8, NIV)

C. E. Macartney said, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tost, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door." This is a heart full of warm welcome! Boaz, in the passage, gave a warm welcome to Ruth in his fields. After inquiring who Ruth was, he allowed her to glean among the sheaves behind the harvesters. She was also allowed to get a drink from the water jars the men have filled. Afterwards, she paid obeisance to Boaz for the kind welcome (v. 10). In response, Boaz made reference to the kindness Ruth had shown to her mother-in-law. This is a picture of the Yoruba adage which says, "If you pour water before you, you will step on wet ground."

The message is clear here that as a child of God, hospitality should be a lifestyle because by doing this, you may entertain angels without knowing it (Hebrew 13:2). Ruth counted herself a stranger, yet she received a warmly welcome from Boaz. Be ready to welcome the weak, poor, wretched and homeless into your home, and relieve them of their unpalatable experiences. Decide to act this out today as you go about your activities.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you..." Isaiah 55:12

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 22-24

"Hospitality pictures aspects of God's generous love in the gospel." – Jonathan Leeman

Sunday, August 11

Ruth 1:6-11, 14-18

INTIMATE FAMILY TIES

"But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay.'" Ruth 1:16, NIV

James Dobson told a story of a family he visited some years back, and learnt there how a family is supposed to function. As one of the guests, twenty people were invited for the dinner, and half-dozen grandkids were present. Every person is served with incredible meal. One might wonder how they had time to prepare such a spread. Well, the family believed life gets difficult when we live it in isolation. When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, having heard that God had visited the town, she urged her two daughters-in-law to return to their people in Moab. While Orpah returned to her people, Ruth cleaved to her mother-in-law and requested that she should not entreat her to go back. When Naomi saw that Ruth insisted, she let her have her way.

Have you ever experienced the difficulty of being isolated at one particular time or the other? If yes, then you must have learnt that life is better lived among others, not in isolation. If you want to live a better life in a family setting or otherwise, you must be ready to sacrifice like Ruth so that you can reap the reward therein. You must be ready to be involved in the life of every member of your immediate family, members of God's family and others. What will you do today to be involved positively in people's lives?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "(Your) life will be brighter than noonday and (your) darkness will become like morning." (Job 11:17)

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 25-27

"As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage He made one of two." – Thomas Adams

Monday, August 12

Ezekiel 16:8-14

GOD'S CHOSEN BRIDE

"... When I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love...I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you...and you became mine." Ezekiel 16:8

The ability to make a choice is one of God's gifts to humanity. God gave man the opportunity to make decisions and choices as he deem fit. God also makes choices and when He does, it is not based on any human criterion. In today's passage, God decided to choose the children of Israel as His own people. He spread the corner of His garment over them and covered their nakedness. He also made an oath and promised to enter into a covenant with them.

God made His people pure and dressed them to glorify Himself. God's people became beautiful and rose to be a queen. Their fame spread among nations on account of their beauty. The love of God is encompassing. It purifies and beautifies. For every one that has accepted the love of God through Christ, God is willing to clean such person from all forms of dirt and disgrace. He is willing to add meaning and colour to such live. He alone knows what our lives need to be beautiful, but we must first be willing to accept His love for us. Are you searching for beauty and fame that transcend this life? Then come to Jesus today. Only a life in Christ can be truly beautiful and totally pure.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD who heals you." Exodus 15:26

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 28-30

"Unconditional love is an illogical notion, but such a great and powerful one." – A. J. Jacobs

Tuesday, August 13

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

STATUS OF DIVORCED WOMEN IN ISRAEL

"Then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled..." Deut. 24:4a

Marriage is a human relationship instituted by God. God is so concerned about this institution that He gave detailed instructions about how to run its affairs. Today we learnt that God gave instructions on how to handle marital relationship. When a man finds any form of uncleanness in his wife, he can divorce her and marry another. However, after the divorce if the woman remarried and for some reasons divorced again, the first man she married can no longer marry her. This is to create a sense of decency in marriage. Any man or woman who wishes to save his or her marriage must be decent and pure. There is also need for orderliness and a sense of responsibility in marriage. Before one takes the step to divorce, one must have count the cost and weigh the consequences.

Our focus today goes beyond marriage between a man and a woman. It speaks of your personal relationship with God. You are married to the Lord when you surrender your life to Jesus Christ. The moment you refuse to obey the day-to-day guidance of the Lord from the Scripture and others, you are at the verge of divorce. Have you ever given your Lord a certificate of divorce? Today, take a humble step to withdraw it and get married to Him again.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you...." Isaiah 43:4

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 31-32

"When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now." – C. S. Lewis

Wednesday, August 14

1 Corinthians 7:1-11

SUSTAIN MARITAL LOVE AND FIDELITY

"To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband." 1 Cor 7: 10, NIV

When Mr and Mrs Henry Ford celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, a reporter asked them, "To what do you attribute your fifty years of successful married life?" "The formula," said Mr. Ford, "is the same formula I have always used in making cars—just stick to one model." Apostle Paul, in today's passage, gave some pieces of advice to the Christians at Corinth about sustaining marital love and fidelity. He said that it is good for singles and widows/widowers to stay unmarried as he was, but if they could not guard their passion, they should get married. It is better to marry than to burn with passion or be tempted with sexual immorality. On the other hand, to the married, he instructed them not to separate for any reason (vv 10-11).

Unmarried persons are to consider chastity and stay away from sex before marriage. Those that cannot stay away should get married because sex is only acceptable and godly within the confine of marriage. The married should stay faithful to their spouses and never consider divorce for any reason. In all, believers should strive to build homes that will become models for others. Beyond marriage, you should endeavour to build relationships on absolute trust and unconditional love for others. Let love and trust be the foundation of your relationship with others today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Isaiah 60:3

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 33-36

"Sex is from God. He gave it to us as a gift. It is a wedding gift." – **Bill Shannon**

Thursday, August 15

1 Peter 3:1-9

HUSBANDS AND WIVES, JOINT HEIRS

"Husbands...be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life..." (1Peter 3:7, NIV)

In 2005, Guinness Book of World Records said that Percy and Florence Arrowsmith held two records—the longest marriage of a living couple (80 years) and having the largest married couple's aggregate age (205 years). Both Mr. and Mrs. Arrowsmith have since died, but they left good advice. Florence said, "You must never go to sleep bad friends. If you've had a quarrel, you make it up. Never be afraid to say, 'sorry'." Percy had slightly more humorous advice. He said the secret to his long marriage was just two words, "Yes, dear."

The instruction today is for both husbands and wives to have responsibilities in marriage. The wife should be submissive to husband. The husband should as well live with his wife with understanding and respect because they are joint heirs of God's gift. The salvation that we are offered through Christ does not take to account anyone's background, tribe, gender, race or other yardsticks. We are one in Christ Jesus. As a wife, you must be submissive to your husband. As a husband, you must live with your wife with understanding, respect and love. As a single person, you need to be rooted in the God-given principles of marriage, so that your home will glorify God. Make up your mind to follow divine principles of marriage.

- **Birthday blessing:** "Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be." (Job 8:7)

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 37-39

"When two people know, accept and fulfill their varying but complementary responsibilities, oneness in marriage is promoted." – Wayne Mack

Friday, August 16

Ruth 4:9-12

BOAZ BUYS NAOMI'S PROPERTY

Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech.... Ruth 4:9, NASB

As a child, Queen Victoria did not understand that she would ascend to the throne of England. As a result, she never took her training and studies serious. In frustration, her teachers decided to tell her that she would become the Queen of England someday. As soon as she heard this, Victoria was reported to have softly responded by saying, "Then I will be good." She realised the gravity of her responsibility and worked hard to fulfil it. Boaz, when he realized the seriousness of the choice he had to make, he decided to become the kinsman redeemer to Naomi. He did not delay to fulfil his but accepted her responsibilities and that of the entire family. He solemnised and gave a public testimony of the marriage contract and the belongings he purchased. Boaz, however, without knowing, brought himself to the lineage of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we need to learn the art of being responsible and determine to accept God's divine instructions always. We must be brave enough to fulfil promises, gladden the hearts of the distressed, heal the broken- hearted and cover those that are naked at anytime God brings them our way. Taking up our responsibilities and making a public declaration of such will strengthen the faith of others and enable them to act likewise.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will look after you and multiply you, and fulfil my covenant with you. Leviticus 26:9

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 40-43

"Let others report bad news; we'll share the good news."

- Woodrow Kroll

Saturday, August 17

Ruth 4:13-17

RUTH AND BOAZ MARRY; OBED BORN

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Ruth 4:13

During the Children Sunday School class, a teacher, while explaining the story of Creation asked: “Who can tell us what makes corn grow from a dead seed planted on a farm?” One of the children answered: “it is God.” Then another child who lived on a farm shouted from the back, “but fertilizer helps.” Our text today reminds us that conception is a divine act of God. After Boaz and Ruth got married, they enjoyed their marriage privileges. But the Bible says, “And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.” This reveals that it was not only the romance, affection and sexual intercourse Boaz and Ruth shared that led to conception and brought forth a son. It was God who enabled them.

To enable means to give someone or something the ability to do something. It also means to make possible. Beloved, as God gave Boaz and Ruth conception, He is still enabling people to do outstanding things today. As you assess yourself, you need to understand that the Lord can enable you to conceive and bring forth His desires and purposes in all areas of life. God raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with the princes of his people. {Psalms 113; 7-8}.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. Psalm 20:4

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 44-46

“I never have a difficulty believing miracles, since I experienced the miracle of a change in my own heart.”

- Augustine

Sunday, August 18

Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18

SUPPORT AND PROTECT MARRIAGE

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?" Ruth 3:1, NASB

Missus was given the sad news that her mother-in-law had been involved in a ghastly accident along with other women. As expected, she broke down and wept. She was later informed that her mother-in-law survived but instead of rejoicing, Missus wailed even more than those who had lost their loved ones. When a friend asked her the reason for her pains, Missus responded that her mother-in-law's survival meant a continued suffering for her. What a sad testimony of a daughter-in-law about her mother-in-law!

Unlike this story, the relationship between Naomi and Ruth was cordial. Naomi was so concerned about the well-being of Ruth. She wanted Ruth to have a home. She wanted her to have children within wedlock. Naomi is a Christ-like example of how every mother-in-law and indeed every Christian should be. Do you seek the best for your husband, wife, children, parents, siblings, in-laws, colleagues, or neighbours? How often do you seek for means to make the lives of others better? Do you treat those around you with honour and dignity? Repair any strained relationships and seek the good of everyone involved.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. Proverbs 16:3 NIV

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 47-48

"I want my life and marriage to look less like the world and more like Christ." - Marquis Clarke

PARTNERS FROM THE BEGINNING

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Gen 2:18

Dr James Dobson reported that psychologists Cliff Nortarius and Howard Markman studied newlyweds over the first decade of marriage. They discovered that couples who stayed together uttered 5 or fewer put-downs in every 100 comments to each other. But couples who inflicted twice as many verbal wounds – 10 or more putdowns out of every 100 comments – later split up. Rather than been helpers, they actually damaged each other.

In the text, God declared that it was not good for the man to be alone. No man is designed to be an island. Rather, every man should become the best with the help of a partner which can be marital or otherwise. Two are better than one...[Ecclesiastes 4:9-10]. God created a helper of same nature; a help near man; one to cohabit with man; and one that man should look upon with pleasure and delight. God intended that marriage should be for building up. Therefore, inadequacies of a man or a woman in marriage should be catered for by their believing spouse. As partners, they should help each other grow, develop and become better. Partners should treat each other with utmost consideration. Do you see your present partner or future partner, whether marriage or otherwise, as your God-given assignment on whom you will give account?

- **Birthday Blessing:** Every good and perfect gift is from above...James 1:17

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 49

"Let the wife make the husband glad to come home and let him make her sorry to see him leave." - Martin Luther

Tuesday, August 20

Joshua 24:14-18

WE WILL SERVE THE LORD

And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God. Joshua 24:15-18

Lanre stared at the briefcase full of fresh currency notes. He would have become a billionaire and settled all his debts, thinking it was an answer to his prayers. No one would have known except him and the contact provided. But Lanre remembered the words of his late father, “Your decision in life will determine your destination in life. If he took the money, he would always be a slave to the providers of the cash. He would never be free. So reluctantly, but firmly, Lanre rejected the offer. In today's text, Joshua called the people to decide who they would serve. He reminded them of the constant pull to follow God or other gods.” But for Joshua, he declared that he and his family would serve the Lord. Then the people chose to follow God rather than the historical gods and their contemporary gods.

As believers, our faith in the Lord will always be challenged. Leah, one of the abducted girls in the northern part of Nigeria stood for God in the face of abandonment, loneliness, and possibly death, even when others were released in March, 2018. Hers is a direct message to us that we should stand firmly for the Lord no matter the circumstance. What is your decision about serving Christ? For ease or whatever betide?

- **Birthday Blessing:**...his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you. Exo 23:25

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 50

“You can’t escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.” - Abraham Lincoln

CAPABLE WIFE AND SUPPORTIVE HUSBAND

Her husband is known in the gates.... She makes linen garments and sells them. Proverbs 31:23-24, NASB

Love and Cindy had been married for fourteen years. They had gone through tough and good times but they now have the best of life. Their friends envied them and some of Cindy's colleagues wished their husbands were like her husband. Love was always available to offer help to his wife without any complaint. He would often call his wife for advice during a business meeting. Together, Love and Cindy enjoyed their marriage.

The writer of Proverbs points out that a successful marriage produces very positive attributes in the husband and the wife. The husband is seen in the society as a respectable man. He is held in high esteem. The woman is described as industrious and productive. The couple is pictured to be enjoying a wholesome relationship. God's intention about marriage is to bless the husband and the wife. Marriage can only work when a couple is committed to the union. When a man ensures that his wife finds fulfilment through the use of her gifts and skills, she will become a blessing and not a burden. When a woman ensures that her husband is capable of being the best he can be, he becomes gladness and not a grumbler. Let both singles and married bear in mind that a home like Paradise is possible. Jesus makes that happen but not without your positive involvement.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. Proverbs 16:3 NIV

RBT Passage: Jeremiah 51-52

"The real act of marriage takes place in the heart.... It's a choice you make ... reflected in the way you treat your husband or your wife." - Barbara De Angelis

LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light. Ephesians 5:8, NASB

Francis d'Assisi once invited a young monk to join him on a trip to town to preach. Honoured to be given the invitation, the monk readily accepted. All day long, he and Francis walked through the streets, byways and alleys, and even into the suburbs. They rubbed shoulders with hundreds of people. At day's end, the two headed back home. Not even once had Francis addressed a crowd, nor had he talked to anyone about the gospel. Greatly disappointed, his young companion said, "I thought we were going into town to preach." Francis responded, "My son, we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many and our behaviour was closely watched. It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!"

Our text is a reminder to all of us that we were once in darkness and have disobeyed God. Our choices were selfish. Our actions were never in the interest of God. When God's mercy located us, things changed for real. We exchanged our old way of life for the new and darkness gave way to light. Christianity is a way of life. We must walk as children of light and resist every temptation to act like the anti-Christ. Arise and shine that light!

- **Birthday Blessing:** Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life.... Psalm 138:7

RBT Passage: Lamentations 1-2

"Remember who you are. Don't compromise for anyone, for any reason. You are a child of the Almighty God. Live that truth." -Lysa Terkeurst

Friday, August 23

Ephesians 6:1-4

PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4 (NASB)

In a study, it was discovered that young men with high self-esteem had some common childhood experiences. These included three key things. First, they were very much loved by their parents. Second, their parents demonstrated sound disciplinary behaviour in parenting. Third, they were from homes where parents engaged children in openness and freedom within defined limits which created a culture of acceptance and emotional safety. The Bible encourages parents not to abuse the power God gave them. They are to govern their children with tenderness and love. In essence, parents need to realise that they can be responsible for their children's irrational behaviour. As the research above shows, children who are not provoked are more likely to turn out right. Children too have responsibilities to their parents. The first commandment on the horizontal level of relationship is to you - honour your father and mother...Exodus 20:12

It is necessary for you to consider how you have been parenting. Can you honestly say you have been bringing your children (Both biological and spiritual) up in the way of the Lord? As a child, you may need to pray for your parents to help you grow in the way of the Lord.

- **Birthday Blessing:**...so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

RBT Passage: Lamentations 3-5

"...my duty is to my family first. I am not to neglect my family." - Dwight L. Moody

Saturday, August 24

Ephesians 6:5-9

MASTERS AND SLAVES TOGETHER

With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Ephesians 6:7-8 NASB

Jindong had been the house master for a long time. Students had come and gone out of the school, but he remained. Always commended for doing good, he was never promoted. He had considered lowering his standards but he didn't. After 11 years of service, one of the students who he mentored became the commissioner of education in his State. While visiting schools, he saw Jindong still faithful and the school was the best there. The Commissioner gave him all the benefits that had been denied him.

Today, we are reminded that as Christians, we must not trivialize the work we are assigned. Actually, whatever we are assigned to do must be seen and done as unto God. Our approach to any assignment must be that we are first accountable to God who will ultimately reward us. As faithful servants we must trust God for their wages, while we do our duties willingly in His fear. Whether we are owners or employees, masters or slaves, paid or volunteer, How do you treat the assignments in our hands? What has been your attitude towards your leaders or followers? Do not hesitate to effect positive changes where necessary.

- **Birthday Blessing:** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 1-4

"Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies." –**Mother Teresa**

Sunday, August 25

Ephesians 5:21-33

MARRIAGE: A COVENANT OF MUTUAL LOVE

...a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Eph. 5:31

Zelmyra and Herbert Fisher broke the Guinness World Record for the longest marriage. They were in 1924 and in 2008 they earned the record for the longest marriage at 84 years. When asked about the secret to their lasting love, they simply stated, "Respect, support and communicate with each other. Be faithful, honest and true. Simply put, Love each other with all your heart."

Marriage is designed for two people of different hearts, minds, thoughts, perspectives and backgrounds to become one. God has given to husbands the superiority and headship but they are expected to exercise such in love and total affection for their wives. The wives are also expected to submit to their husbands with cheerfulness, fidelity and humility. Putting this noble command into practice makes marriage a joy and a blessing. When "One Flesh principle" is obeyed, everyone connected to marriage will have testimonies to share to the glory of God. What is the state of your marriage? How are you preparing to actualise the manual of God for that spouse you are planning to marry? All the questions will be answered best by following counsels about marriage from the Scripture and godly marriage counsellors. You can also pray against the devil's attack against marriages.

- **Birthday Blessing:** With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall. 2 Sam 22:30

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 5-8

"Marriage is never a contest between two teams; it is meant to be the union of two people into one team for the purpose of winning." - T. Thomas

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

Remember Lot's wife! Luke 17:32

A student went into an examination and prayed fervently for God to give him answers to the examination questions. After spending some time praying, God told him, "I can only remind you of the things which you have known." In the text, we are told to remember Lot's wife. What is it that we should remember? The story of Lot is a common story though He lived in a city where evil thrived. God sent help to him. He hesitated but the angels took him and his family out of the town. He was told to go to the mountains. He bargained and changed the instruction. He and his family were told not to look back. Unfortunately, Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt.

As believers, we must be careful and watchful about where we live. If we find ourselves in the midst of sinners, our duty is to be a light unto them and never compromise. We must be obedient to divine instructions and never negotiate such because of the adverse effects. Obedience has its rewards and likewise disobedience. Obedience pays! Never be Mr Lot's wife.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers and may the sons of your mother bow down to you...." Gen 27:29

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 9-12

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him" –John Piper

Tuesday, August 27

Genesis 18:1-15

ABRAHAM AND SARAH - BECOMING PARENTS

Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” Genesis 18:14(NASB)

Fortune and Favour clearly loved each other. They had been married for few years, but they started encountering some unbearable challenges. Everywhere Fortune went, his wife, Favour would trace him. At first, it seemed like a coincidence, but later it became regular. Favour quarrelled anytime she saw her husband with females. Her attitude was as a result of her barrenness. She thought her husband would become unfaithful because of her state. Favour had lost hope but her husband kept assuring her that God will bless them with children. Three years later, they became parents.

Abraham and Sarah had been waiting for a long time. It must have been tough to have expectations each month and not see it come to pass. They were getting old, and hope was fading quickly. But when it was time, God promised them a child and it came to pass. God could not be hindered by any visible or invisible challenge. You might be waiting for your miracle of a life partner, child, job or other things and it seemed all is bleak. Remember the God of possibilities. He does not change but changes situations. Trust in God and relax in His strength. You will soon share your testimony.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore... Genesis 22:17

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 13-15

“God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile.” – Max Lucado

CONCERNED ABOUT THE FAMILY

For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household...to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice....” Genesis 18:19 NASB

Charles Francis Adams, son of President John Quincy Adams and grandson of President John Adams, kept a diary. One day he entered: “Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted into his diary.” His son, Brook Adams, also kept a diary, which is still in existence. On that same day, Brook Adams made this entry: “Went fishing with my father—the most wonderful day of my life!” The father thought he wasted his time, fishing with his son, but his son saw it as an investment of time. If Francis Adams had carefully thought about it, he would have seen it as a useful training period.

God noted He was going to share with Abraham the events which were about to unfold for a very uncommon reason. Abraham was to ensure that he taught his children and household about the Lord and demonstrated it. Abraham’s family was to connect with God’s blessings by learning from him. Parents are called to grow their families to follow God and ensure that they transfer their faith from one generation to another. They are expected to mentor their family members, people who come in contact with them, who would in turn teach their generation. All these are to be done in fulfilment of God’s purpose. Every Christian, especially you, must see it as a rewarding exercise and not time wasting.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without painful toil for it. Proverbs 10:22

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 16-17

“You can either focus on what’s tearing you apart, or you can focus on what’s keeping you together.” –Anonymous

PLEADING JUSTICE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." Genesis 18:30 NASB

The late Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that a "Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner. This is a happy discovery for the Christian who begins to pray for others."

In our text today, Abraham interceded for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah even when he knew what God had decided to do. Abraham was aware of the lifestyle of Sodom and Gomorrah; he did not dispute the allegation nor instigated further anger, but pleaded for mercy. Rather, he interceded for a good number of people that was never found there. Consider your attitude toward others, especially members of Christ's body and intercede for mercy for those who may be under God's judgment. Remember that the prayer of the righteous said in faith still works. Are you concerned for the honest people who may be caught up in places of evil? Have Abraham's heart and know that "intercession is the act of going on behalf of someone else who needs help from Almighty God."

- **Birthday Blessing:** So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. Isa 41:10

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 18-20

"Obedience is an act of faith; disobedience is the result of unbelief." – Edwin Louis Cole

Friday, August 30

2 Peter 2:4-10

GOD RESCUES THE GODLY

...the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 2 Peter 2:9 (NASB)

Pastor was sweating profusely. How did he get into the trouble? He was on a visit to Jade who had obviously dressed in revealing clothes. Her perfume was seductive and he was beginning to lose control. His mind fluttered here and his will power seemed to be deserting him. Contemplating on what to do, suddenly, there was the sound of an explosion. As Jade ran to the window to see what was happening, he rose quickly too and went to check outside. It was the security light bulb that had exploded. That was the saving grace.

The writer of this letter affirms that God knows how to rescue the godly from temptation. Temptations will always come to everyone who seeks to live for God. However, God always delivers us. Little wonder Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” As you go about your day, live your life in godliness. Do not live in fear of the tricks, traps, and temptations of Satan. Instead, live in faith knowing that God is watching you to deliver you from all temptations. But be careful not to put God to test.

- **Birthday Blessing:** He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Ps 23:3

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 21-22

“We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the problems.” – Oswald Chambers

Saturday, August 31

Genesis 19:2-14

SODOM'S SIN REVEALED

for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it.” Genesis 19:13, NASB

Gunter arrived at the meeting determined to have his way. He was sure there was no other candidate who could defeat him. He had prepared his acceptance speech filled with humour and loaded with quotes from some of his most admired leaders in the world. For good effect, he had included his personal view of integrity. As the meeting began, he noticed that no one smiled at him. They had all spoken with him the night before and assured him of their support. Then the chairman of the panel called him and handed two pieces of paper to him. Both were his secondary school results, but one was a fake. He had been found out. It affected not only his speech but also his integrity.

In the passage today, the angels told Lot that God would destroy Sodom because their sins had become an outcry that He could not ignore nor bear. Thus, there must be judgment. We must understand that no sin is hidden from God and He cannot be deceived. He is Omniscience and Omnipresence. Just as it happened to Gunter, the day of reckoning will come like a thief in the night. All sins will be exposed and reward will be awarded. To avoid God's judgment, confess all sins and flee from every appearance of evil.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace. Psalm 29:11

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 23-24

“The evil that men do lives after them; The good is oft interred with their bones.” — William Shakespeare

Sunday, September 1

Genesis 19:1, 15-26, 29

THE FAMILY ESCAPES SUCCESSFULLY

"So when God destroyed the cities of the plain...he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived." Genesis 19:29, NIV

A family of five had an accident on a bridge. The car somersaulted twice and got stuck on the metal bar built to prevent automobiles from plunging into the river. People at the scene of the accident thought there would be no survivor. To everyone's amazement, when the rescue team got there, all the family members were alive. God used the metal bar to prevent them from plunging into the river, which would have led to their untimely death.

In today's passage, two angels were at Sodom to execute God's plan concerning the city. Lot and his family dwelt there. Lot distinguished himself being respectful and generous to the strangers (angels) (v. 1). These attributes coupled with the righteousness and plea of his uncle, Abraham, Lot's family was spared from destruction. He obeyed the instruction to escape the imminent destruction of the city. His family was rescued from eternal destruction [v 15-16]. In like manner, the world is filled with wickedness, but God expects you to live as His obedient child. Accept God's call to distinguish yourself from the world, embrace the loving arms of Jesus, escape the second death and enjoy eternal victory. Ensure that all your family members and neighbours accept and believe the Gospel. Pray for the grace to be faithful till the end.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." 1 Sam 1:17

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 25-27

"Salvation is free for you because someone else paid."

– Anonymous

THE NAZARITE VOW

"...He must abstain from wine and other fermented drink...He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins." Numbers 6:3, NIV

‘Will you please tell me in one sentence,’ said a Christian woman to a minister, ‘what your idea of consecration is?’ Holding out a blank sheet of paper, the pastor replied, ‘It is to sign your name at the bottom of this blank sheet, and let God fill it in as He will.’ It is evident from our passage that some Israelites had made a special vow. That means that they decided to live a life of consecration to the Lord [vv. 1, 2]. During this period, they must watch their diet, appearance and associations [vv. 3-6]. This was not just a vow of personal self-discipline; it was an act of total devotion to the Lord.

The institution of the order of Nazarites was designed to represent the pure and perfect state of man. The Nazarite vow could be taken for a short time or a lifetime. However, the Christian consecration is for life. A Christian is expected to avoid sin, renounce all sensual pleasures and delights, and resolve to live a life of self-denial. Do you know that greatness in God’s kingdom is not based on position and power, but on consecration and commitment? Pray now for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to live a life of consecration unto God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air...they are given into your hands. Genesis 9:2

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 28-30

"The Lord doesn't want the first place in my life; He wants all of my life." – Howard Amenzing

Tuesday, September 3

Psalm 99

“O LORD OUR GOD, YOU ANSWERED”

“O LORD our God, you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.”

Psalm 99:8

The following lines were inscribed on the wall of a bomb-blasted air-raid shelter in Germany after the Second World War.

I believe in the light, Even when the sun doesn't shine.

I believe in love, Even when it isn't given.

I believe in God, His voice can be heard;

Even when his voice is silent. (Anonymous)

From the world's viewpoint, people are often considered great if they are successful. The writer of Psalm 99 reminds us that only God is truly great. This psalm refers to what God has done for Israel. Like in the above poem, the psalmist makes us understand that God answers the prayers of His people (vv. 6-8). And when they err He forgives. However, it must be noted that God is merciful when He punishes, and He overlooks no sin when He loves. As Christians, we are to emulate the attributes of God. Having the assurance that God is the same yesterday, today and forever, it is necessary to move closer to Him through Jesus. Are you burdened or troubled? God still seeks our fellowship and delights in hearing and answering our prayers. Therefore, get it settled through prayers.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “...I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.” Exodus 33:17

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 31-32

“God punishes with one hand and blesses with the other.”

– Yiddish proverb

HANNAH IS CHILDLESS AND SUFFERING

"And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her." 1 Samuel 1:6

Nwakaego had been married for over ten years without a child and had experienced humiliation from her in-laws. One day, her mother-in-law asked her to leave her son's house. Nwakaego lost her patience in the process and both of them engaged in a rift. Her mother-in-law pounced on her, she fell and started to bleed. Nwakaego's husband rushed her to the hospital only to discover that she had lost four weeks pregnancy.

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, who was barren, had a bitter experience with her rival, Peninnah who had children. She made her miserable (vv. 6, 7), and also made her cry at the annual family feast (v.8). It must be noted that, Hannah's barrenness was not due to punishment for any sin (v. 5). It is evident that her barrenness, suffering, shame and waiting were a trial of her faith. Likewise, there are times God may allow us to pass through some challenges. There may be insults, embarrassment and neglect from people around us. God expects us to wait patiently in prayer and put our trust in Him. Let that which you are passing through motivate you to trust God more. He will surely intervene at His purposed time.

- **Birthday Blessing:** But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. Psalm 81:16

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 33-35

"God uses our down times to build us up." – **Anonymous**

Thursday, September 5

1 Samuel 1:21-23

ELKANAH ATTENDS THE YEARLY SACRIFICE

"When the man Elkanah went up with his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow..."

1 Samuel 1:21, NIV

Few years ago, during the annual Harvest Thanksgiving in a Baptist church, Mrs Akpan's only child, Victoria, faced unusual health problem. The experience was filled with painful contradictions. Though helpless, she trusted God for a supernatural healing and wholeness. She displayed a strong faith in God but sometimes questioned her trust in God. She watched her daughter groaning in pain with endurance. In spite of all the daily struggles and dark experience, she gave a huge sum of money to her church annually in fulfilment of her vow.

In the same vein, Elkanah attended the yearly sacrifice to fulfil his vow (v. 21). Thrice a year, every Israelite male was required to appear before the Lord at the central sanctuary (Ex. 23:14-19). Elkanah, no doubt, made vows annually to the Lord as he prayed for God's blessing on his crops and flocks, and fulfilled those vows at the Feast of Tabernacle. Making vows to God was a common feature of Old Testament piety, usually involving thanksgiving offerings and praise. Answered prayers are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness. It is not too late to fulfil that vow you have made. No circumstance should debar you from fulfilling your vows. It is better not to make a vow than to make a vow without fulfilling it. Those who are steadfast resolve to pay their vows.

- **Birthday Blessing:** With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Isaiah 12:3

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 36-38

"Gratitude is born in the hearts that take time to count past mercies." – Charles E. Jefferson

SAMUEL IS DEDICATED TO THE LORD

"So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD...." 1 Samuel 1:28 NIV

As a woman was walking down the street one day, she noticed a little girl leaving the church all alone. When the child passed by her, the woman inquired where she had been. 'In there,' replied the little girl, pointing to the church. 'And what were you doing in there?' the woman asked. 'Cleaning the pews and praying,' was the prompt reply. Thinking the child was probably bothered with some problems, the woman inquired, 'What were you cleaning the pews and praying for, dear?' 'Nothing,' the child replied. 'I just love Jesus. I have been dedicated to the Lord from the womb.'

The passage for today's devotion talks about another child, Samuel, who was dedicated to the Lord and His service. Hannah did so in fulfilment of her vow [1 Sam. 1: 10-11]. By dedicating the only child to the Lord, Hannah gave her whole life to God. It must be noted that Hannah could have offered a token as ransom to redeem the boy (cf. Lev. 27:1-8) but, she gave up what she treasured most. Hannah's action is a good example for every genuine Christian. Do your gifts cost you little, or are they gifts of sacrifice? Do you prefer to give God tokens, or your entire life? Like Samuel, your dedication to the Lord should be seen as a privilege to worship God perpetually.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will be blessed more than any other people, none of your men or women will be childless..... Deuteronomy 7:14

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 39-40

"One can pay back the loan of gold, but one dies forever in debt to those who are kind." – **Malayan proverb**

Saturday, September 7

1 Samuel 2:18-21

HANNAH REWARDED FOR HER FAITHFULNESS

"And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she...and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD." 1 Sam 2:21

A suitor in Wales, who was rebuffed for forty-two years, eventually won his fair lady. He had written 2,184 love letters without any response. Though shy, he was courageous and hopeful. He visited and asked for her hand in marriage. To his delight and surprise she accepted! The couple married at 74 years of age.

Like the suitor in the above story, Hannah was rewarded at last for her persistency and faithfulness (vv. 19, 21). If Hannah had had many children, it would have been easy to part with just one of them. Hannah had only 'Samuel' after years of waiting and she was faithful to the Lord to the extent that she sacrificially gave her only child to the Lord as a living sacrifice. Eli, the prophet, even recognised Hannah's faithfulness and prophesied to her life [v. 20]. God thereafter blessed her with three sons and two daughters [v. 21]. What a faithful God! Hannah's reward for her faithfulness teaches us that God is faithful and will reward our sacrifices in multiple fold. If you are faithful to God, His reward might not be immediate; but it will surely come. What are those things you are trusting God for? Do not give up as answers will surely come. Hold on to Him and you will not be put to you to shame.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will still bear fruit in old age; you will stay fresh and green.... Psalm 92:14

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 41-43

"God can bring showers of blessing out of storms of adversity." – Anonymous

Sunday, September 8

1 Samuel 1:9-20

GOD ANSWERS HANNAH'S PRAYER

"So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the LORD for him.'" 1 Samuel 1:20

I asked God for strength that I might achieve;
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for help that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I was given nothing that I asked for;
But everything that I had hoped for.
Despite myself, my prayers were answered;

I am among all men most richly blessed. (Anonymous)

Despite the fact that Hannah was passing through a challenging period of bareness, she was very committed to the service of her Creator and was fervent in prayers. Her prayers were coming from the deepest groaning of her heart (vv.12-13a). She didn't seek for an intermediary, or those "prayer merchants" or "commercial prophets" of her time. God answered Hannah's prayer without any intermediary. As a child of, you must also understand that God is your friend. Be consistent and fervent in your prayers. He will revive your story.

- **Birthday Gift:** I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you...Genesis 12:2

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 44-46

"Whosoever walks towards God one cubit, God runs towards him twain." – **Jewish proverb**

STRIKING A FAIR BALANCE

"Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality." 2

Corinthians 8:13, NIV

At a quarterly meeting of a church, a brother said that "I regret to say that in the past one year, there has been no increment in church membership." The way the brother expressed his observation was a misuse of language. He would have said that no new member joined the church. Responding, another member said, "the trouble with this church is that there are two classes of parishioners: The wealthy and the poor who are being oppressed."

Churches like the above can never strike a fair balance unless it removes the gap between the rich and the poor. The thrust of today's devotion is giving and sharing among Christians that there might be equality (v. 13). It is evident that the Corinthian church had planned to collect money for the Jerusalem church. Paul, therefore, encouraged them to act on their plans. He commends the act of giving of Macedonian church and challenges Corinthian church to help their brothers in Jerusalem. For they may be asked to do the same for the Corinthians (v. 14). This is the striking of a fair balance that Paul is talking about. However, we are not being asked to give away all that we possess and lack basic things but to give generously. Can God depend on you to strike a fair balance today?

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Psalm 32:8

RBT Passage: Ezekiel 47-48

"If he has the spirit of true generosity, a pauper can give like a prince." – Corinne V. Wells

Tuesday, September 10 1 Corinthians 12:18-26

BELIEVERS DEPEND ON ONE ANOTHER

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." 1 Corinthians 12: 26

The proud owner of the world's largest collection of termites, 230,000 of them, says that these insects have a 'secret formula' that helps them survive. The 'formula' is that they cooperate and depend on one another. Zoologist Alfred Emerson said that 'one of the main ways that termites survive is through co-operation, not competition.'

The church is made up of different people with different backgrounds, gifts, and abilities. It is not unusual for these differences to bring disunity, as was the case in Corinth. Paul makes it clear that as the human body must have diversity to work effectively as a whole, so the church have diverse gifts, the use of which can help bring about the accomplishment of God's purpose (vv. 18,19). Like the different parts of the body, believers are not to envy or look down on one another, but to see everyone as important and treat them equally. (vv. 21-26). God's uses different ways to create unity. He established the church to share in the pain and pleasure of all the members. Develop interest in the lives of others and get involved in the ministries of your fellowship and church. You too need others.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! Deuteronomy 1:11

RBT Passage: Daniel 1-3

"The cock that crows at dawn belongs to one family, but its voice is the property of the whole neighborhood."

– African proverb

THE LORD RESPONDS TO COMPLAINTS

"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'at twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'" Exodus 16:12, NIV

Charles Lamb was giving a talk at a mixed gathering and someone in the crowd hissed. Lamb calmly responded, 'There are only three things that hiss, a goose, a snake and a fool. Come forth and be identified.' Everybody was so stupefied by Lamb's response that they all sat in silence for a long time. They didn't know that Lamb could hear that someone in their midst hissed.

Likewise, the Lord responds to Israelites' grumbling. It is interesting to note from this passage that, God gave fair hearing to those who murmured. The Lord responded to their complaints by sending them meat in the evening and bread in the morning (v. 12). God's act was to teach them two lessons: (i) to prove that it was His infinite power and goodness that brought them out of Egypt; (ii) to remind them that He was their God. The manifestation of God's glory was to end the murmurings of the people and to honour His servants, Moses and Aaron (vv. 9, 10). Do you get irritated when in pain? Do not grumble against God. Instead, pour out your heart to Him. He cares for you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

RBT Passage: Daniel 4-5

"Only Christ the bread of life can satisfy our spiritual hunger." – Anonymous

CONDUCTING DAILY FAMILY DUTIES

"Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away." Exodus 16:21

One evening, young Alice sat on her mother's seat at the dinner table, to serve the family meal, because her mother was not around. Her immediate elder brother who was not pleased with the arrangement,—said 'So you're the mother tonight. All right, how much is two times seven?' Without a moment's hesitation, Alice replied nonchalantly, 'I am busy, ask your father.'

Like our mothers who are saddled with conducting daily family duties as it is evident in the above story, the Israelites were to gather the food that God has provided every morning. The leftover must not be kept till the next day (v. 19). There are two verifiable reasons why God gave them this instruction: (i) to test their obedience; and (ii) to teach them to depend entirely on Him for their daily needs. Jesus teaches us the same lesson in the Lord's prayer: 'Our Father in heaven (where the manna comes from)...Give us today our daily bread' (Matt. 6:9, 11). However, some Israelites who thought they were 'wiser' than God kept part of it peradventure the promise failed (v. 20). But they were disappointed. Since God is the source and giver of all you have, why don't you share with others those 'riches' you are hoarding before they are corrupted (v. 21, cf. Jam. 5:2, 3). You brought nothing into the world. You will not go with anything.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed through you. Genesis 12:3

RBT Passage: Daniel 6-8

Pity the home where everyone is the head. –Jewish proverb

OBSERVING THE SABBATH DAY

"Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath...Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out." Exodus 16:29, NIV

God ended the entire world's array,

And rested on the seventh day:

His holy voice proclaimed it blest,

And named it for the Sabbath rest. -Anonymous.

God instructed the Israelites not to work on the Sabbath day. It was to emphasize the importance of resting after working and toiling for six days. He showed the example by resting on the seventh day of creation. The only exception to the instruction to take only enough manna for their daily needs was in regard to the Sabbath. On the sixth day, God made double provision for the Israelites, because of the Sabbath. This exception points to the significance of observing the Sabbath as a day of rest. God also demonstrated what He meant by observing the Sabbath by not providing manna on that day. Some of the people actually went out on the seventh day to gather manna but found none (v. 27). Disobedience, even in a small matter, provokes God and they were thus reproved. However, it is important to note that works such as saving lives, preaching the Gospel and the likes cannot but be done on the Sabbath. Do not allow flimsy excuses debar you from observing the Sabbath as ordered by God. Learn to consciously set apart time for God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. Isa 43:4

RBT Passage: Daniel 9-12

"The Lord's Day is so called, because on that day, the joy of our Lord's resurrection is celebrated." – **St. Isidore**

SYMBOLS OF REMEMBRANCE

"Moses said, 'This is what the LORD has commanded: Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come..." Exodus 16:32, NIV

Abdul-Akeem was a Jihadist, the firstborn of a reputable Imam. No one could have succeeded in preaching the gospel of Jesus to him. However, an incredible revelation of Jesus got him converted two decades ago. The "Inner Voice" (whom he later understood to be the Holy Spirit) told him to keep two things out of the Muslim paraphernalia: the Quran and the prayer cloth-mat from Saudi Arabia. The Quran as a reference material, the cloth-mat for his bed.

Likewise, the Israelites were commanded to put some manna in a special jar as a reminder of the way God provided for them in the wilderness (v. 32). The preservation of this manna from waste and corruption was a standing miracle. God's miracles and mercies are to be in everlasting remembrance, for our encouragement to trust in Him at all times. Symbols of remembrance have also become an integral part of Christian worship. Jesus Christ Himself is the true manna, the Bread of Life. (John 6:49-51). Do not forget that the Word of God is the manna by which our souls are nourished (Matt. 4:4). Have you symbols of remembrance anywhere? Do not make them objects of worship, instead let them draw you closer to God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. Psalm 91:7

RBT Passage: Hosea 1-4

"Life without Christ is a hopeless end; life with Christ is an endless hope." – **Anonymous**

Sunday, September 15

Exodus 16:1-8, 13-15

GOD PROVIDES FOR THE PEOPLE

"When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, 'What is it...Moses said to them, 'It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.'" Exodus 16:15, NIV

Alexander, the Great, had a famous but poor philosopher in his court. The philosopher was pressed for money and made an application to his patron for a relief. Alexander had commissioned him to draw whatever cash he needed from the Treasury, so the philosopher presented a request for a very huge sum. The Treasurer refused to honour the draft until he consulted his royal master, adding that he thought the amount was exorbitant. Alexander replied, 'Pay the money at once. The philosopher has done me a singular honour. By the largeness of his request he shows the idea he has conceived both of my wealth and my generosity.'

God provided for the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness. However, when their food supplies got exhausted, they began to complain bitterly against Moses and God for the third time (vv. 2-3). They completely forgot God's past goodness and mercy. In the midst of our present challenges, as Christians we must remember God's past deeds with thanksgiving. God should not be accused of neglect and unfaithfulness. In spite of Israelites' attitude, God showed them His faithfulness by providing quail and manna. What are your pressing needs? Present them before Him with a heart of gratitude. God still provides for His people.

- **Birthday Blessing:** ...You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Psalm 23:5

RBT Passage: Hosea 5-9

"He who gives you a shirt will not find it difficult to give you soap." – African proverb

Monday, September 16

Psalm 106: 1-12, 48

PRAISE THE LORD!

Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the LORD. Psalm 106:48

The revival preacher suddenly removed his jacket and loosened his tie. His shirt was literally drenched with sweat coming out of his body due to the 'violent' prayer session. Then he said, "You will gather all the remaining strength in you, and shout to the heavens, 'My Father, My Father, let this month of September be a month to remember for me, raise your voices and pray now.' You must have been part of such prayer meetings at one time or the other. Though there is nothing wrong in praying violently, but when such prayers are answered, do we praise God with the same intensity and passion with which we presented our requests?"

The opening statement in today's passage is written in the imperative, "Praise the LORD!" (v. 1) This suggests that praising God is a duty every child of God owes Him. The children of Israel sang His praise after He delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh and rescued them from the Red Sea. Can you recollect how many times God has delivered you from dangers this year alone? Have you taken time to praise Him? Even if you have done it before, you can do it again because praising God is "from everlasting to everlasting."

- **Birthday Blessing:** "This is what the LORD says: 'I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings.'" Jeremiah 30:18.

RBT Passage: Hosea 10-14

"Nature is the one song of praise that never stops singing."

—Richard Rohr

Tuesday, September 17

Numbers 13: 17b- 24

SPYING OUT THE LAND

See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. Numbers 13:18

Our church wanted to buy a piece of land for our preaching station. We decided to send two people to verify the authenticity of the property and negotiate. They brought the report and the entire Church Council was convinced that it was a good land. We decided to purchase it and paid few days after. None of us had been there, but we bought the land based on God's leading and the convincing reports of those who went to 'spy out' the land. We believe that God who led us to start a church in the area has also provided a place for His house to be built there.

Similarly, Moses sent out people to explore the land they were about to take as an inheritance. He gave them specific things to look out for while exploring the land. This did not mean lack of faith in God who has been leading them. Moses believed that the spies would bring positive information about the land. Possibly, the information about the land may encourage them to renew their strength for the journey. If God is leading you into any venture, try and do a little research about it. This will aid your preparation and motivate you to pursue it.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being." Ephesians 3:16

RBT Passage: Joel 1-3

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

—Benjamin Franklin

REPORTING MIXED REVIEWS

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take the possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.' Numbers 13:30

The writer of Hebrews says, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). James, in his epistles, admonishes that if one claims to have faith, that is, confidence in what he hope for and assurance about what he do not see, then such a person must demonstrate it through his action (James 2:17). The spies returned with contradictory reports.—Caleb had faith and said "We can certainly do it," but others saw fear and said, "We can't." One saw opportunity and possibilities, others saw obstacles and impossibilities.

Even if God is giving you a vision that seems overwhelming, it is because He does not want you to trust in your ability but to look to Him for strength to accomplish it. He wants to do the extra-ordinary things in and through you so that He alone can take the glory. Therefore, don't despair, instead rise confidently in faith and declare like Paul, "I can do all things through Him (Christ) who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Being confident of this, that He (God) who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:6

RBT Passage: Amos 1-4

"If you feel weak, limited, ordinary, you are the best material through which God can work." —**Henry Blackaby**

MOSES RESISTS GOD'S PROPOSAL

Then the LORD relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened. Exodus 32:14.

Anyone in the ministry of intercession will understand what 'spiritual negotiation' means. There are stories of great intercessors that negotiated for the salvation of loved ones for years until they received what they wanted. The nation of Israel fell into sin again which grieved God to the point that He wanted to wipe them off the face of the earth and promised to raise through Moses. What an opportunity to have one's name entrenched in the history of time as the father of a nation. Interestingly, Moses interceded for them and rejected the proposal and would rather have the entire nation forgiven and restored than destroyed.

It takes a man with a very large heart to do what Moses did. God fairly offered him intercessory opportunity. He held out to Moses what could be referred to as inducements [v. 10b]. Some leaders would have quickly seized the opportunity since God was the One making the proposal. He declined because he was not selfish. He preferred the salvation of the Israelites to his personal aggrandizement and considered the covenant God has made with their fathers. How large-hearted are you? Do you think only of your own benefit or you consider the glory of God and the benefit of others when there is crisis?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The LORD bless and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you." Numbers 6:24-25

RBT Passage: Amos 5-9

"People describe intercession by saying, "It is putting yourself in someone else's place."—Oswald Chambers

Friday, September 20

Deuteronomy 1: 34-40

GOD DECIDES WHO WILL ENTER CANAAN

No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. Deuteronomy 1:35-36a

Many skilful players who participated in the rigorous training for months in preparation for a particular local tournament could not make the final list. In the technical committees' report, they wrote: "No doubt a lot of the boys showed great skills but they lacked discipline, like controlling their appetite, reporting late for training, sneaking out of the camp, lack of respect for the coach's authority, and so on. For anyone to participate in this kind of competition there must be both competence and character. Therefore, anyone found to lack either or both was dropped from the final list."

Though it was easier for the Israelites, to get out of Egypt, it seems difficult to get Egypt out of them. At every point, they forgot the faithfulness of God and doubted His promise. They were all condemned to die in the wilderness except Caleb and Joshua who were to enter Canaan. Similarly, when you keep going back to the world from which you have been rescued, you are jeopardizing your salvation. Although God is merciful and gracious, but is not pleased with unbelief and backsliding. Do not forget that you are on a pilgrimage in the wilderness of this world heaven is your home. Do not doubt the faithfulness of God. Set your eyes on the goal lest you miss the mark.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "May the LORD bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life." Psalm 128:5

RBT Passage: Obadiah 1

"God is sovereign. He is God all by Himself and for Himself."

—Gbile Akanni

Saturday, September 21

Numbers 14:13-20

MOSES INTERCEDES FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

The LORD replied, 'I have forgiven them, as you asked.'

Numbers 14:20

The work of a lawyer is to be an advocate, advisor and counsellor to the person he represents. He counsels his clients about legal options and represents them in criminal or civil proceedings. It is interesting to see a lawyer pleading a client's case in the court. The lawyer does so passionately as if he is the accused, by citing relevant provisions of the law.

Like a lawyer, Moses interceded for the Israelites. He did so passionately by citing relevant provisions why God must change His mind from destroying the Israelites. He argued that the Egyptians will taunt them and question God's power and integrity to fulfil what He promised His people. The high point in his intercession was "in accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now" (Numbers 14:19). God has called us all to the ministry of intercession. The interest of others should be above ours. Our prayer of intercession can prevent God's judgment.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you." Isaiah 54:17

RBT Passage: Jonah 1-4

"Discernment is God's call to intercession, never to fault finding."—Corrie Ten Boom

Sunday, September 22 Numbers 13:1-2, 25-28; 14: 1-10

DON'T DOUBT: TRUST GOD'S PROMISES

...And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them. Numbers 14:9

Sometimes, I make promises that I don't keep. I don't break my promises deliberately, sometimes I just forget; sometimes things don't just work out the way I had planned it. This shows the limitation of humans; however God does not break His promises because He is not limited by any factor. He promised Israel's ancestors to give them the land of Canaan. He repeatedly reiterated His commitment to fulfil the promise by freeing them from slavery and leading them to the land of their inheritance. The Scripture says, "God is not human, that He should lie, not a human being, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?" Numbers 23:19

Just as Caleb and Joshua challenged the congregation of Israel not to rebel against the Lord by doubting His ability to fulfil what He has promised, that is, giving them the land of Canaan, we too must continue to believe in God who does not lie. We must not doubt His ability to fulfil everything He has promised. Any time God speaks, He does so, because He is God who means what He says and never changes. Unlike human beings, God won't forget His promise, and no factor can limit Him. Therefore, don't doubt Him; trust in His promises always.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut." Revelation 3:8

RBT Passage: Micah 1-4

"We can count on God's promises because of God's character." —Mark Altrogge

BLESS THE LORD WHO FORGIVES

*Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all His benefits,
Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.*

Psalm 103:2-3

Oh what a joy filled my heart on the day that I surrendered my life to Jesus. A heavy burden was lifted off me. I had a sound sleep that night. The assurance of forgiveness of my sins and the freedom from guilt and other consequences of sin was what produced the joy. Of greater joy is the realization that I received forgiveness along with other benefits without deserving them. Anyone who has had a genuine salvation encounter will understand this.

When the Psalmist puts forgiveness of “all your sins” as the first item on the list of “all His benefits,” he means that the greatest benefit anyone can enjoy from God is forgiveness, which serves as the foundation for every other benefit like healing, deliverance, provision and so on. When God forgives, He forgives us of all our sins and gives us the opportunity of a new beginning. It is important that we continue to remember that we are products of mercy. The forgiveness we have received should make us humble and sober. Above all, we should always be grateful and continuously bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.”
Proverbs 4:12

RBT Passage: Micah 5-7

"Do we praise God for forgiving our sins? Do we regard ourselves "blessed" for the forgiveness we received from Him?" —Efren Narido

Tuesday, September 24

Acts 10:34-43

JESUS FORGIVES OUR SINS

All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. Acts 10:43

Suddenly, the whole court room became silent. Every attention was on the Judge who bowed His head while scribbling some things on a large book on His desk. His pronouncement will put an end to the legal battle, which began several months earlier. The accused was sweating profusely; his lawyer had done his part to free him from the impending peril. Finally, the judge raised his head, adjusted his eyeglasses and said, "You are hereby discharged from this offense because I have an affidavit here sworn to by the complainant to drop the charges against you and to forgive you. You may go home a free person."

In the same way, Jesus dropped every charge against us. In Peter's message, he emphasised that anyone can receive forgiveness when they put their faith in Him. We are all guilty of sins and we deserve to face the consequences of our sins. However, out of God's own love, He decided to wipe our record of sins and discharge us from their eternal consequences. No matter how terrible you have been, you can receive forgiveness if you believe in Him. He is still discharging and acquitting people who believe in Him. He is waiting for you. Do not cover your sins.

Birthday Blessing: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number.' Genesis 1:28

RBT Passage: Nahum 1-3

"The love of Christ who died for me is more than mind can know." —**Timothy Dudley-Smith**

Wednesday, September 25

Numbers 14:21-25

GOD'S FORGIVENESS DOESN'T ALLAY SUFFERING

Since the Amalekites and the Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and set out towards the desert along the route to the Red Sea. Numbers 14:25

God is not a liar. When He says He has forgiven, He has truly forgiven. Nevertheless, Israelites' sins have triggered a consequence which cannot be allayed. God's answer to Moses' prayer was both of mercy and judgment. God said none of those who saw His glory and the signs He performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness but chose to be disobedient will see the Promised Land. They have to suffer for their continuous disobedience and rebellion. Even though they were already at the border of Canaan, they will continue to wander in the wilderness until they all perish with the exception of "My servant Caleb [who] has a different spirit and follows me whole-heartedly" (v. 24).

Truly, God is merciful and gracious. He is patient and willing to forgive us when we confess our sins and repent. However, our sin sometimes may have set in motion consequences, which even His forgiveness would not allay. The Israelites shut themselves out of a promise made several years back which was about to be fulfilled in their time. Likewise, some have truncated God's purpose for their lives and lost their eternal reward because of wilful sin. Therefore, do not treat God with contempt. Do not take His mercy and forgiveness for granted.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will give you every place where you set your foot." Joshua 1:3

RBT Passage: Habakkuk 1-3

"We all make choices, but in the end our choices make us."

—Ken Levine

**GOD'S FORGIVENESS MAY INVOLVE HARSH
JUDGMENTS**

So tell them, "As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say." Numbers 14:28

According to C. S. Lewis, "Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible." In essence, every action—good or bad—has its consequences.

Similarly, the story of the Israelites in today's passage teaches that there are consequences for every action and that God will not condone sin forever. Although He remains merciful, gracious and forgiven, yet He will not let the guilty go unpunished. Since they have consistently refused His offer, He decided to punish them by allowing them to perish in the wilderness. The wages of sin is still death. Let us do away with anything that will provoke God. It is important to patiently run the race that has been set before us. Don't allow what you are going through to hinder you from getting to where you are going.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you." Isaiah 60:1

RBT Passage: Zephaniah 1-3

"There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences." —Robert G. Ingersoll

CHILDREN SUFFER FOR ADULTS' SINS

Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in this wilderness. Numbers 14:33

It is a known fact that children are the most affected when it comes to adults' misbehaviour. Take for instance, a mother who consumes alcohol and other dangerous substances is very susceptible to having a child with some disabilities. This is no fault of the child at all; however, the child will live with this challenge all through his/her life unless the problem is miraculously or medically corrected. Likewise, some children go through social stigmatization because of the reckless behaviour of their parents. When a parent chooses the way of crime and he/she is sent to jail, the children may find it difficult to live in the society.

This illustrates the essence of today's passage, that is, one person's action may bring grave consequence on several generations. Those who sinned received their judgment by wandering in the wilderness until the last of them died. However, their innocent children will bear the brunt. They "will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness." If we all realize that the consequences of our sins may extend to the present and future generations, we will be more careful, faithful and responsible. Make a decision today never to trivialize sin because of its consequences.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Isa 60:1

RBT Passage: Haggai 1-2

"Choices made...follow you forever and affect everyone in their path, one way or another." —J. E. B. Spredemenn

PEOPLE REBELLED AND WERE DEFEATED

But Moses said, 'Why are you disobeying the LORD's command?...Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies' Num 14:41-42.

A preacher once said, "When you sin, simply confess it and move." The truth is that moving on after a sin has been committed is not as simple as the preacher suggested. Though the preacher was right about confessing, but the journey has just started after confession and can only be sustained through a determination to closely walk with God. The Israelites admitted their sin but they were in a hurry to move on. Perhaps they thought they could buy God's favour with their presumption, even after Moses warned them against their action. Moses disapproved their emotions and told them not to go up. It is a fact that whoever refuses to obey the law is obliged to submit to the penalty. The result of that rebellion was that they suffered great defeat.

When we sin, it affects our relationship with God. It is pertinent to acknowledge this broken relationship, be sober and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse and restore us. Until that is done, we must not carry God's instrument or act as His servant to avoid being defeated. A Bible commentator wrote that, "Sometimes, right actions or good intentions come too late. We must not only do what is right, but also do it at the right time. God wants complete and instant obedience."

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord will rescue me [you] from every evil attack and will bring me [you] safely to His heavenly kingdom." 2 Timothy 4:18.

RBT Passage: Zechariah 1-5

"If you build the guts to do something, anything, then you better save enough to face the consequences."— **Criss Jami**

Sunday, September 29

Numbers 14:10b-20

THE LORD SAYS, "I DO FORGIVE"

The LORD replied, 'I have forgiven them, as you asked.'

Numbers 14:20

Tomas Borge was a leader in the struggle against the totalitarian regime that had dominated his country, Nicaragua. During the revolution, Borge was captured and put in prison. While there, he was subjected to the most extreme torture for over 500 hours. After the revolution, Borge was freed and later became the Minister of Interior. One day, he found one of his torturers in jail. He walked up to this man who had inflicted such terrible, relentless and brutal pain upon him and said, "I am going to get my revenge from you". He then held out his hand and said, "This is my revenge, I forgive you."

The children of Israel had 'inflicted' so much pain on God by breaking His heart many times. They seemed hardened and encouraged in their rebellion by the leniency and patience of God. God was in a position to completely destroy them, but He restrained Himself and held out His hand and said, "I have forgiven them!" God still forgives sinners. It is not His desire for anyone to perish but is patiently waiting for all to come to repentance. Don't write off anyone. Like Moses, pray for the salvation of others so that they too can partake in His forgiveness.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "From six calamities He will rescue you; in seven no harm will touch you." Job 5:19

RBT Passage: Zechariah 6-10

"Few things accelerate the peace process as much as humbly admitting our own wrongdoing and asking forgiveness." —Lee Stroebel

PRAISE GOD'S WORKS

Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2.

In November 2017, our church embarked on a thirty-day challenge to thank God throughout the month for everything and not ask Him for anything. It was a great experience for many of us as God unfolded several areas of our lives we have taken for granted. The most important aspect of those thirty days journey was the experience to focus on God and meditate on His works, in spite of all the challenges around. In fact, many people testified that they never thought they could stay in prayers for hours only thanking God and their thanksgiving list never get exhausted.

Comparing this with Psalm 111, one can suggest that the aim of this psalm is to motivate us to praise God, especially when we ponder on His works. In praising God's works, the central theme that keeps showing up is His faithfulness. Even in our own lives today, God has not ceased to demonstrate His faithfulness. He loves us. He chooses us. He prefers us. He keeps His word. He does all these for us because of His faithfulness and love. God's works in our lives and around us are evidences of His greatness. Therefore, give Him praise for His works.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, just as you are progressing spiritually." 3 John 2

RBT Passage: Zechariah 11-14

"If we would talk more about the Lord and praise Him, we would have less time to talk about ourselves."

- M.R. DeHaan

Tuesday, October 1

Hebrews 8:1-12

MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

"...as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises." Hebrews 8:6, NIV

Fifty-nine years ago, Nigeria gained her independence from the Great Britain. The implication of that is that Nigerian people began to rule themselves. Before independence, the colonial masters (the Britons) were in charge of government in Nigeria. History has it that when we got independence, Jaja Wachuku became the first black speaker of the Nigerian Parliament. Jaja Wachuku received Nigeria's instrument of independence on October 1, 1960 from Princess Alexandra of Kent, the Queen's representative at the Nigerian Independence Ceremony.

As the name of Jaja Wachuku went into the history of Nigeria independence, the name Jesus Christ is the centrepiece in God's plan of redemption for humankind. Jaja Wachuku did not pay any special price for the role he played in Nigeria history, but Jesus Christ suffered, shed His blood and died on the cross because of the sin of humankind, especially your sin. He was buried in the grave, but on the third day, He resurrected and ascended into heaven. By this truth, Jesus Christ became the mediator of God's New Covenant for humankind. Your personal faith in Jesus brings you into a covenant relationship with God: you are His son and He is your Father forever.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him..." 1 Peter 2:9

RBT Passage: Malachi 1-4

"If you and sin are friends, you and God are not yet reconciled." - J. C. Ryle

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH US

"The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb"

Deuteronomy 5:2, NIV

I wanted to open a current account with a bank sometimes ago. The bank required me to bring my electricity bill, my national identity card and an introduction letter from two people. I wondered why they were subjecting me to such unnecessary stress. Upon complaining to a friend, he explained to me that what the bank was requesting were normal because they want to know who I am before they enter into a relationship with me.

Just like human organization, God delights in having a personal relationship with you. God loved the Israelites so much; He longed to deepen His relationship with them, even as He was leading them into their Promised Land. He, therefore, brought them into a covenant with Him. This covenant stands as an insurance for His relationship with them and bound them intimately with Him. God is not satisfied with mere attending church service or serving in a unit in the church, He wants you to have an intimate relationship with Him. This is why He gave us His Spirit and His written words. The Bible is God's covenant book. If you want to know God intimately, you must start to treat it as God's love letter to you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12, (NIV)

RBT Passage: Matthew 1-4

"Loving God is a strong inner emotion, not a mere outward action." - John Piper

REMEMBER THAT YOU WERE THERE

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" Deut. 4:9

I once participated in a relay race. I was the last person to collect the baton. The first person did well, but the second person fell while he attempted to collect the baton from the first person. I was very eager to move, but I couldn't because my running mate had fallen. While opponents collected their batons and sped off, I kept panting on the spot.

Life in the kingdom of God is like a relay race. The baton in the relay race stands for the knowledge of God in the kingdom race. God expects one generation to pass His knowledge to another generation. If a generation fails, the succeeding generation will suffer the consequences of their actions. The instructions God gave to the people of old, He gives to you today. God had you in mind when He gave the instructions in the Bible. You were there so you must keep His words and pass it on to other people. The most effective way of passing the baton of the knowledge of God is by living out the Word of God, by living a life of total obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit daily. Another way is to make sure that your life and your knowledge of God have a positive influence on people around you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden" Matthew 5:14

RBT Passage: Matthew 5-6

"When you embrace the word of God, your destiny is established." - David Oyedepo

Friday, October 4

Deuteronomy 4:14-24

MAKE NO HEAVENLY OR EARTHLY IDOLS

"Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God ...do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden" Deuteronomy 4:23, NIV

Many young people make idols of celebrity. They want to dress like them, they want to talk like them, in fact they practically pattern their lives after them. What many of them do not know is the fact that the lives of the celebrities are not ideal. They give a perfect picture on the outside, whereas many of them are full of silent struggles and regrets. This is the same with every earthly idol. They entice you with outward appearance but in the real sense, the life they offer is full of struggles.

God warned the people of Israel against worshipping and serving idols. The idols in the olden days were largely physical images representing deities. Those deities could be past human heroes or certain evil spirit. The idols of today could be anything, person, an association or ideology that fully wins your admiration, devotion or allegiance. God hates idolatry in any form; idolatry is a force that pushes God from the centre of human heart and enthrones another thing. So, God fights idolatry and the idolaters. Do you have any idol in your life? If yes, you must quickly renounce your allegiance and return to God in genuine repentance and the Lord will pardon and accept you.

- **Birthday Blessings:** "Blessed is the one who does not walk in the step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers." Psalm 1:1

RBT Passage: Matthew 7-9

"We never grow closer to God when we just live life. It takes deliberate pursuit and attentiveness." - Francis Chan

Saturday, October 5

Deuteronomy 4:25-31

GOD WILL NOT ABANDON YOU

"For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors..." Deuteronomy 4:31, NIV.

Many times, we have done things that seem unpardonable; things that we even find difficult to forgive ourselves. But there is an assurance of God's love, despite our hopeless state. God, like a shepherd, gently bears us in His arm and carefully guides us with His eyes irrespective of our state. Today's passage gives a vivid picture of the hopeless state in which the children of Israel will find themselves if they choose to forsake God and follow other gods.

God warned the people of Israel about what they must avoid upon entering the Promised Land. They must refuse to be influenced by the cultures of other nations, and if they get influenced, God will be angry with and punish them. Meanwhile, if they can repent and return to God, then He will forgive them because He has promised never to abandon them. What state have you found yourself today? What lies has the devil been feeding you with about God's love? The truth is that there is no state you find yourself that God is not always willing to accept you. It does not matter how you got there, what matters is your willingness to step above that state and cling to God. No matter what happens in life, remember that God will never abandon you!

- **Birthday Blessings:** "No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you...." Isaiah 54:17, NIV

RBT Passage: Matthew 10-11

"Christ is our faithful Shepherd. Put your trust in Him."

—Charles Colson

COMMIT TO COVENANT OBEDIENCE

"And the Lord directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess." Deuteronomy 4:14, (NIV).

Flying an airplane requires keeping many rules. For an airplane to take off and attain the highest altitude, the pilot must follow many instructions. So, the safety of the passengers depends largely on the pilot's attention to the weather condition and the messages coming from the control tower.

As Moses prepared the children of Israel for their entrance into the Promised Land, he reminded them of God's covenant rules and he enjoined them to obey them all. He warned that obedience to the covenant of God will guarantee their prosperity and safety in the land. There is also a place God has prepared for you and you can only get there by complete obedience to His prompting. He has made resources available for what He wants you to do, but the key to access these resources is your obedience to His instructions. He wants you to become who He had wired you to be, but you must know and obey His covenant rules. The Holy Bible and the voice of the Holy Spirit is the equivalence of God's covenant with Christians today. You can also receive God's instruction through the words of godly parents, Keep the words in your heart daily and always be responsive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

- **Birthday Blessings:** "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it" Isaiah 30:21, NIV

RBT Passage: Matthew 12-13

"Partial obedience is gross disobedience." - Anonymous

Monday, October 7

Proverbs 3:1-10

KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

"My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart" Proverbs 3:1, NIV

The Holy Bible contains the Word of God that can deliver us from all evils. But you must put it in the right place for it to have its desired effect in your life. People can place it under the pillow, on the table, in smart phones, in tablets or inside their bags, but the best place to keep the Word of God is inside our hearts!

The father instructed his son in today's passage to keep his words in his heart so that his days might be long. One of the basic instructions he gave his son is that he should trust the Lord with all his heart and acknowledge Him in all his ways and He will direct His path. Keeping the Word of God in your heart helps you to activate its power whenever you need it. It also helps your faith to grow and guides every step you take. Meditating on God's Word will keep your heart from evil and this will help you to fear God more. How much of God's instruction do you know? How much of His Word have a place in your heart? Read the Bible every day, meditate deeply on it and obey it in all your walks and relationships.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:19, (NIV)

RBT Passage: Matthew 14-17

"Practicing obedience becomes the solid foundation to weather the storms of life." — Ronald Beers

Tuesday, October 8

Matthew 17:1-7

ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH JESUS

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves." Matthew 17:1, NIV

Intimacy is said to be that moment when our true identity is revealed - when traumas, fears and ambitions are shared. It is a situation where you allow your life to mingle with another person's life. This is true about God as well as humans. Those who affect our lives more are those whom we spend time together most. This is why Jesus spent adequate time with His close friends so as to develop an intimate relationship.

Spending time alone with Jesus is not only possible when Jesus was physically present on earth. It is also a reality now. One effective way of having intimacy with Jesus today is by setting time apart alone to worship Him and study the Holy Bible. It is a time when you talk intimately with Jesus, a time you carefully listen to His voice. If you will grow up spiritually, you must cultivate the habit of setting time apart to commune with Jesus as your friend. You must choose a place where there will be minimal distraction; a place where you can be alone with Christ, where all your attention and focus will be on Him and nothing else. If you can sustain this habit, you will be surprised at how your life will be greatly transformed to become more like Jesus Christ within a short period of time.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28

RBT Passage: Matthew 18-20

"God is far more interested in a love relationship with you than He is in what you do for Him." —Henry Blackaby

PROPHETIC EXAMPLES OF FAITHFULNESS

"Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon." Luke 4:26, NIV

An important key to achieving outstanding success is focus. Focus refers to one's ability to accurately perceive and clearly understand what one is supposed to do and to doggedly pursue it despite numerous distractions until one accomplishes the purpose. All successful people can attest to the fact that they intensely focused on their goals before they could achieve it. In the same way, Jesus Christ alluded to two great men in the Old Testament that did not allow anything to distract them from what God wanted them to do. They are Elijah and Elisha.

Particularly, Jesus said that God sent His prophet, Elijah to a particular widow in Zarephath. Zarephath was not an Israelite town, yet Elijah was willing to obey God. Also, the kind of person he was sent to was not promising in terms of what the man of God might want to benefit. He didn't allow any distraction like material gain or location to prevent him from going to where and whom God sent him to. That is faithfulness! Note that you are not here by accident. God deliberately sent you into this world to achieve a specific purpose. You must locate it and focus on it until you achieve it. Follow the example of faithfulness of the prophets of old and you also will leave an indelible mark.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" Philippians 1:6, (NIV)

RBT Passage: Matthew 21-22

"All God wants from us is to follow His plans."

—James F. Garrido

PAUL RESTORES LIFE

Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" Acts 20:10, NIV

In 1555, as part of her campaign to re-establish the Catholic Church in England, Queen Mary, also known as bloody Mary, arranged for John Philpot, one of the leading protestant ministers of the day, to be burned at the stake. When his death sentence was pronounced, Philpot said, "I am ready; God grant me strength and a joyful resurrection. Philpot walked to the place of execution on his own, rather than having to be dragged to it, and when he reached it, he knelt and kissed the stake at which he would be burned.

The apostle gave up all the good things of life to serve the purpose of Jesus. To Paul, nothing has any value, everything is vanity if it is not engaged to serve the purpose of Christ. Because of this commitment of Paul, God endowed him with the supernatural ability to do miracles, especially raising of the dead. Who or what do you want to live your life for? The vanities of life or for the king of life? Once you yield your life to Jesus in totality, He will surely endow you with abilities to do the impossible!

- **Birthday Blessings:** "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7, NIV

RBT Passage: Matthew 23-24

If you will not be forgotten, as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading, or do things worth writing. - Benjamin Franklin

Friday, October 11

1 Kings 17:1-7

GOD-SENT RAVEN FEEDS ELIJAH

"The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook." 1 Kings 17:6, NIV

In different cultures, ravens mean different things. It could be a symbol of bad omen, symbol of death, symbol of goodwill, etc. They are greedy and can eat anything available. They keep company with wolves hunting for food in the wild. The Bible mentions raven as the first bird Noah sent out of the ark to check whether the ground was dry, and it didn't return.

As unreliable as a raven is, the Bible states in today's passage that the ravens brought bread and meat to Elijah twice a day for many days. This can only be God's handiwork. How was it possible for such a greedy creature to share food with Elijah at a time of famine? Only God can use the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. God can make unbelievable things happen in your life if you decide to obey His Words. He can use that difficult situation to favour you. In human imagination, a raven is the last animal that could perform such a crucial role for the prophet of God. What difficulties are you facing or going through? God is able to use anything or anyone to turn things around for you. You only need to obey His instructions and you will experience God's intervention.

- **Birthday Blessings:** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Matthew 5:6, NIV

RBT Passage: Matthew 25-26

"God never made a promise that was too good to be true."

- Dwight L. Moody

Saturday, October 12

1 Kings 17:17-24

ELIJAH RESTORES LIFE TO WIDOW'S SON

"The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived" 1 Kings 17:22, NIV

There are a lot of things that are common to humans. There are things that are consistent with the human nature which every human being should be able to do without struggle. Things like talking, walking, eating and other day-to-day activities. However, we refer to some things as supernatural because those things are beyond the human nature. Raising a dead person is not within the ability of a natural man.

The woman who hosted Elijah lost all hope when her son took ill and eventually died. Elijah prayed earnestly for the dead boy. God heard his prayer and restored the boy's life. Then the woman became happy and confirmed that Elijah was a true prophet of God. By this story it becomes clear to us that Elijah carried divine life within him. This is why he could restore the life of a dead boy. Jesus Christ promises every Christian the divine life. He said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" John 10:10, (NIV). When you cultivate God's presence in your life, His power will be released to do amazing things through you. Dedicate your life to Him. He wants to do the impossible through you!

- **Birthday Blessings:** "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." 2 Peter 1:3, NIV

RBT Passage: Matthew 27-28

"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen." —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sunday, October 13

1 Kings 17:8-16

WIDOW'S FAITHFULNESS REWARDED

"She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family"

1 Kings 17:15, NIV

Mrs Raymond amazed all her co-workers when she reported that she found a small bag containing a huge amount of money in foreign currencies. Being a poor widow who was struggling to pay her children's school fees, no one expects her to be so truthful and faithful. But God paid her back greatly when the owner of the money, a CEO of a multinational company, gave the woman job in his company and her status suddenly changed.

The widow Elijah met showed a selfless attitude. She obeyed the prophet's instruction. She prepared the bread for the prophet first and that singular action brought an end to poverty and lack in her life. It might appear to her that she would lose her last meal to an unknown prophet, but her obedience paid off in that God provided for her such that she did not run out of food until after the famine. When there is a need to give to God, rather than looking at the cost of what He is asking, it is more profitable to consider the reward that will follow such sacrifice because our God has promised that He will repay our labour of love. Is the Lord demanding anything from you at present? If you will be faithful like that widow, you will also experience miraculous blessings.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland" Isa 43:19

RBT Passage: Mark 1-3

"Earth circumstances are insignificant when compared to Heaven's provision." —**Albert Hibbert**

Monday, October 14

James 5:13-18

THE PRAYER OF FAITH IS POWERFUL

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:16

Janet stood out in her department as a Christian. A lecturer threatened to fail any male student who failed to buy him two thousand naira recharge card and any lady who refused to sleep with him. Janet decided that she would never do that. She informed her prayer partner and they prayed for God's intervention. Two weeks later, the lecture mysteriously fell ill and was hospitalized. A Christian lecturer took over the course and majority of the students passed the course, including Janet.

Prayer is relevant in every situation of life. The Bible instructs that believers ought to pray in all situations. Whether you are in trouble, happy or sick, you ought to pray. The Bible says, "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" Luke 18:1, (NIV). The reason the Bible places much emphasis on prayer is that it is a powerful weapon. Through prayer you can bring about positive change in your life and in any circumstance you may find yourself. Note that, prayer is most powerful if you are born again and you are living a righteous life. Do you desire any positive change around you? Pray about it and your prayer will be answered!

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3, (NIV)

RBT Passage: Mark 4-5

"The man who can pray truly is richer and more blessed than all the others." —**Marcus Aurelius**

Tuesday, October 15

Mark 5:25-34

YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL

"He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" Mark 5:34, NIV

A multi-national company advertised vacant positions for applicants who had minimum of second class upper grade from the university. An applicant had third class grade and he submitted application. On the day of interview, he was asked why he applied for the job since he knew his qualification was below the minimum requirement. The applicant replied: "I applied because I have what your company needs to move to the next level." The panel interviewers became interested in what he could do for the company and eventually gave him the job.

The woman who suffered from the issue of blood had many obstacles on her way to receiving miracle from Jesus Christ. She was a woman, her gender limited her socially. She was religiously unclean because she was bleeding and there was a large crowd around Jesus, the crowd that shielded Jesus from anyone who may want to have personal contact with Him. Nevertheless, she carefully thought of a way out for herself. There is always something you can do about any challenging situation that comes your way. Like the woman, the wisest thing to do is to take the matter to Jesus. Seek to know the mind of God and take a step of faith. The problem will become a stepping stone for you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

RBT Passage: Mark 6-7

"Real leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination." — **Anonymous**

BELIEVERS ARE BLESSED

So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. Galatians 3:9, NIV

Have you at any time found yourself being punished alongside others for the offense committed by just one person? On the other hand, have you found yourself enjoying some privileges because of what someone had done previously? Paul in this passage affirms that believers, regardless of race and denomination share the same blessing as Abraham because of their faith. Abraham believed in God and it was credited to him as righteousness; hence, those who put their faith in God today partake of this blessing.

Being partakers of the Abrahamic blessings is not a function of being born as a Jew but a result of accepting and believing in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Consequently, biological descent, racial affiliation, social status and other human designed barriers cannot prevent a person from receiving and enjoying the covenant blessings and provisions of God. Have you come to faith in Christ Jesus? If yes, then congratulations; but if no, it is not too late to believe in Jesus and confess Him as your Saviour and Lord so that you can begin to enjoy the blessings that come with the relationship. Remember that only those who have believed have become partakers of the blessings of Abraham.

- **Birthday blessing:** You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. Deuteronomy 28:3

RBT Passage: Mark 8-9

"Rejoice that if you are God's child his love toward you is endless." – **Andrew Murray**

Thursday, October 17

Mark 10:46-52

BARTIMAEUS HEALED BY FAITH

Go, said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Mark 10:49, NIV

S ometime ago, a village experienced an unusually long period of drought. When there appeared to be no end in sight to the drought, they decided to seek the face of God in fasting and prayer. On the chosen day, all the villagers gathered in the village square for prayer but there was one boy who came with an umbrella believing that their prayers will be answered. As the prayer session was coming to a close, a heavy downpour came on the village and everyone at the meeting was drenched, except the boy who went with an umbrella.

In our passage today, Bartimaeus demonstrated faith when he used the messianic title, "Jesus, Son of David" in addressing Jesus. While some considered him a nuisance and tried to stop him, his resilience and persistence caused him to receive Jesus' attention and he was healed from his blindness. In the varying categories and degrees of 'blindness' that we struggle with today, we need to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus who alone is able to restore our sight and meet all our needs. As you go out today, put your faith in the Lord and you will experience His power.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. Psalm 16:6

RBT Passage: Mark 10-11

"Physical blindness is no obstacle to spiritual sight; conversely, physical sight is no guarantee of spiritual sight."

- Victor Babajide Cole

Friday, October 18

Luke 6:46-49

FAITH IS EXPRESSED THROUGH ACTION

...Everyone...who hears my word and puts them into practice...they are like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. Luke 6:47-48

As fire fighters battled to put out the great fire which had engulfed a building, the shouts of a father echoed through the noise to his son who was trapped on the second floor of the building to jump down before the fire caught up with him. After some moments of hesitation, the boy jumped and he was safely caught in a blanket by his father. After regaining his breath, the boy said, "Even though I could not see you or the method you had devised to save me, I knew I could trust your words to jump down."

In today's passage, Jesus likened those who acted in consonance with His words to wise builders who built their houses on rocks. When we act in line with the Word of God that we have read or heard, we keep our integrity; enjoy great comfort, peace, hope and joy in the midst of the greatest stress; and have our everlasting welfare secured in Him. However, when we do not act according to His Words, we fall into the pit of disappointments, discomfort and danger similar to the crumbling of the labours of a lifetime. As you go out today, determine to be the doer of the Word of God at all times and in all places.

- **Birthday Blessing:** May the LORD send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion Psalm 20:2.

RBT Passage: Mark 12-13

"Faith in action is the epitomy of trust." – George Bostrom

Saturday, October 19

Luke 7:11-17

JESUS RAISES WIDOW'S SON

He said, 'young man I say to you, get up!' The dead man sat up and began to talk. Luke 7:11-17, NIV

After going through thick and thin to train her only son up to university level, the life of an aged widow came crashing when she was informed of the gruesome murder of her son by Boko-Haram insurgents while observing the mandatory National Youth Service Corp in one of the northern states in Nigeria. All efforts to console her proved abortive as she cried uncontrollably saying, "What else am I living for? Let me go and join him."

The above incident is similar to the story in our passage today; a case of utter hopelessness. However, in the story of the widow of Nain, when the burial procession met Jesus on their way out of the town hope was restored from an otherwise hopeless situation. At Jesus' command, the dead boy came back to life thus bringing joy to the mother, amazement to the people and glory to God. No matter how hopeless your experience seems, never forget that Jesus possesses the power to redeem every situation and make things work out to the praise of His name and joy of His beloved. Ask Him to intervene in that case today and experience His power at work. I pray that every dead virtue of yours shall receive life, in Jesus' name.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6

RBT Passage: Mark 14

"He the Perfect Man knew how to weep with them that weep. His sympathy is a real thing today; he can have compassion now as then." – George Goodman

Sunday, October 20

Luke 7:1-10

JESUS HERALDS THE CENTURION'S HEALING FAITH

I tell you, I have not found such great faith in Israel.

Luke 7:1-10, NIV

During a Sunday school class, someone asked: "Can unbelievers receive miracles from God?" One of the answers given to this question was that God mostly acts in response to individual faith; however, He may work miracle in an unbeliever's life with the intention of using such miracle to draw that unbeliever to Himself.

In our passage today, the centurion demonstrated two great virtues necessary for miracles – humility and faith. His humility was displayed when he confessed that he was not worthy to have Jesus under his roof and his faith was brought to the fore when, in line with his daily experience as a senior military officer who is used to giving orders to subordinates, he requested Jesus to simply give an order and his servant would be healed. Jesus commended his faith and pronounced the servant healed. All the provisions of God are at our disposal and we can come to fully enjoy them as we ask in humility and faith. God gives grace to the humble and makes all things possible for those who have faith. May you enjoy the fullness of His provisions as you humbly ask Him in faith, in Jesus' name.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God Isaiah 62:3

RBT Passage: Mark 15-16

"Wait on the Lord, trust his word and be patient; have faith in God, he'll answer yet." – **B.B. McKinney**

Monday, October 21

Isaiah 52:7-10

GOD'S SALVATION FOR ALL PEOPLE

The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. Isaiah 52:10, NIV

After presenting a seminar paper on the doctrine of Election and Salvation by Grace, a doctoral candidate was asked whether he thought God's door of salvation is perpetually open and whether it is open to everyone. He responded that God's door of salvation had been open since the fall of humankind at Eden; and yes, the door is open to everyone who is willing to come in.

Our passage today reveals that the heralds of the good news of salvation have a goodly heritage (v. 7), and that God's salvation is not exclusively reserve for a privileged few but a provision for anyone who comes to acknowledge and appropriate it. Yes, God's salvation is for all people; He, however, needs people who would serve as the bearers and conveyers of the good news of salvation to all the ends of the earth. Regardless of colour, language, race, and socio-economic status, everyone is included in God's plan of salvation. As you go out today, be reminded that you have a responsibility to make known to the world the good news of God's salvation through Jesus Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. Isaiah 61:7a

RBT Passage: Luke 1-2

"The Gospel includes three things – peace, salvation, and the news that God reigns." – **Edouard Kitoko Nsiku**

Tuesday, October 22

Luke 5:20-26

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven' Luke 5:20, NIV

Max Lucado once said, "Jesus is God in the flesh who wants to change lives." The truth of this statement can be found in the passage for our devotion today where Luke emphasised how people responded in faith to Jesus and were rewarded by blessings greater than they could imagine. A group of men defied all obstacles to bring their paralytic friend to Jesus for healing. However, Jesus, instead of pronouncing him healed, pronounced him forgiven of all his sins.

When the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees questioned His authority to forgive sins, Jesus proceeded to pronounce the man healed from his sickness and the people gathered praised God for the miracle they witnessed. While the sick man's friend earnestly desired that their friend be healed physically, Jesus wanted to first heal the soul before the body. Do you have a challenge that appears daunting? Trust in the Lord for breakthrough. You may have to engage the power of networking and involve a few brethren to join you in prayers. As you go out today, remember that no challenge is too great for Jesus to solve; hence, put your trust in Him and experience His intervention in your affairs. It is well with you!

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow Jeremiah 31:13b

RBT Passage: Luke 3-4

"To heal the body is temporal; to heal the soul is eternal."

- Max Lucado

SALVATION REQUIRES ENDURING WITNESS

The one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Mark 13:13b, NIV

For more than ten years now, the Nigerian state has been engaged in a severe battle against Boko-Haram insurgents who have launched series of attacks on religious and public institutions especially in the North-east region of the country. Consequently, the churches in the north-east have suffered great loss from the attacks of the fundamentalist group. This makes one to ask, "Must we continue to be killed because we are Christians?" Despite these attacks, their faith keeps waxing stronger.

Jesus had foretold that His followers would be sorely persecuted for their faith in Him and this has been the case since the time of the early Church. Even today, persecution of Christians continues globally and in different forms. To believe in Jesus to the end will require perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed. Through severe trials, true believers will be separated from fair-weather ones; and while enduring to the end does not earn us salvation, it marks us as already saved. Regardless of the nature and severity of the persecution you are facing, hold fast to your faith in the Lord and He will keep you safe.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious unto you. Numbers 6:25

RBT Passage: Luke 5-6

"Faith is the pencil of the soul that pictures heavenly things." – T. Burbridge

Thursday, October 24

Romans 10:5-13

ALL WHO CALL WILL BE SAVED

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans 10:13, NIV

As he fled from the mob pursuing him, the thief fell into an uncovered well and got injured in the process. The pursuers searched the area frantically but couldn't find him. As they were about to give up and return home, they heard someone scream, "Please come and help me out of this pit, I am the thief you are looking for." The people first put aside their indignation at the thief for his offence and rescued him from the pit, took him to the hospital for treatment before handing him over to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

In this passage, Paul established that it is possible for everyone to come to faith in Jesus Christ by confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing that God raised Him from the dead. Believing in Jesus erases the dividing line between Jews and Gentiles and unites all in God. Like the thief in the above illustration, we can also cry out to the Lord to rescue us from the pits of life, whether they are of sin or daily challenges. Anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, colour, and language that calls on the Lord will be saved. Call on Him today, your salvation is sure.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, just as you are progressing spiritually. 3 John 2

RBT Passage: Luke 7-8

"Faith honours God, God honours faith." – E. Doan

Friday, October 25

John 13:12-20

TREAT EACH OTHER LIKE JESUS DOES

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet. John 13:14, NIV

We were preparing for our evening devotion and my wife had asked the kids to go and tidy up their room. Suddenly, our eldest child called out, "Mummy, I have laid the bed but my sister is not sweeping the floor." This was just one out of their many arguments, quarrels and reporting over doing household chores. Watching my kids argue and quarrel about 'who does what' usually reminds me of the age-long struggle of humankind to accept responsibility and the unwillingness of anyone to be the errand boy.

In today's passage, Jesus taught His disciples a principle that would help extend His mission on earth after He was gone. The disciples were to move into the world serving God, serving each other, and serving all people to whom they took the message of salvation. He personally set an example by carrying out a duty reserved for household servants – washing the feet of guests at a meal. What a difference it would make in our relationships, homes, churches and institutions if we continually have the mindset that we are here to serve one another. The key message of today's devotion is to serve others without thinking of reward. Ask yourself, "What can I do today to serve others the way Jesus did?"

- **Birthday Blessing:** See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. Revelations 3:8

RBT Passage: Luke 9-10

"There will be no one in heaven who does not have a dirty towel from the washing of the feet of men."

– Roger E. Dickson

Saturday, October 26

Luke 7:24-30

LEADERS REJECT GOD'S MESSENGER

But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John. Luke 7:30, NIV

A church worker had acted contrary to the provisions of the church constitution and the ethics of Christian ministry. When the matter was brought up at the church council meeting, the house became divided as the older members of the council gave excuses in support of the erring worker and insisted that he should not be disciplined while the younger members of the council argued that the stipulations of the church constitution on such matters be strictly followed and the worker should be disciplined so as to serve as deterrent to others.

In today's passage, Jesus nudged His listeners to reflect more on the ministry of John the Baptist – the firmness of his message, his modest lifestyle, and his prophetic ministry. At the end of the evaluation, the crowd was divided into two – the poor people and the tax collectors who acknowledged that the way of God is right and the learned Pharisees and scribes who rejected God's purpose. Even today, most religious and political leaders reject God's purpose and way through their disposition towards the Gospel. All that matters to God is not your personality, religiosity, or academic acumen but your response to His Word. Decide to be one of the few that would accept God's purpose and acknowledge the righteousness of His way.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord 2 Peter 1:2

RBT Passage: Luke 11-12

"Approaching God's word with an attitude that 'I am perfect' means that one misses the greatest of blessings." – Paul Isaak

Sunday, October 27

Luke 7:37-48

HER MANY SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven.

Luke 7:47a, NIV

After realising the error of their ways, people, especially in the African milieu, often resort to weeping to show their remorse and also seek forgiveness from the one offended. The woman in today's passage was described as one who had lived a sinful life in the city. In Jesus' opinion, this woman through her emotional display is appreciating the love of God in forgiving her sins. While Simon, the host, felt too important to treat Jesus as an equal and extend the courtesy of feet washing, welcome kiss and hospitality to Him, this sinful woman lavished tears, expensive perfume and kisses on Jesus. Jesus ruled that it is this sinful but grateful, woman, and not the stingy self-righteous host whose sins are forgiven.

Although we are not saved by acts of love or generosity but by God's grace, this woman's act demonstrated her true faith and Jesus honoured it. No matter how great or terrible your sins are, they are not beyond the forgiving range of Christ. Acknowledge your sinfulness and helplessness to Christ today and He will come to your aid. What are you doing to appreciate God for His love over your life and for forgiving you of your sins?

- **Birthday Blessing:** And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus
Philippians 4:19

RBT Passage: Luke 13-15

"Overflowing love is the natural response to forgiveness and the consequence of faith." – Ronald A. Beers

Monday, October 28

Deuteronomy 19:15-20

WEIGH THE EVIDENCE CAREFULLY

A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. Deuteronomy 19:15a, NIV

An African adage says, "He who judges a matter after hearing only one side is grossly wicked." This saying applies in every issue of adjudication as lawyers try to build their arguments and cases on the testimonies given by witnesses. Judges also, in giving their verdicts, weigh the evidences supplied by witnesses and argued by lawyers. This makes the position of a witness very serious and important. God gave the Israelites different kinds of guidelines to moderate all aspects of their lives and relationships. One of such is that they should not bear false witness (Deut. 5:20).

However, prohibition was not enough, there had to be prescriptions of punishment for false witnesses and false accusers with the aim of deterring such. In our daily activities, we should be careful of peddling rumours about others and be wary of accusing people of things we are not sure of. When someone is reported to us, we must be careful and patient enough to diligently find out the truth of the matter before forming an opinion or giving a verdict. Remember, every matter has to be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your very eyes, says the LORD. Zephaniah 3:20

RBT Passage: Luke 16-18

"He who judges a matter after hearing only one side of the argument is grossly wicked." – African Proverb

Tuesday, October 29

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

BUILDING UP YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY

Live in peace with each other. 1 Thessalonians 5:13b, NIV

As relationships grow old, we tend to become too familiar and this may lead to taking one another for granted. We often forget to appreciate the sacrifices others are putting in to sustain the relationship and we most times stop putting in our own best. In our passage today, Paul admonished the Thessalonians on virtues that can help to nurture their inter-personal relationships and also strengthen the bond of peace in the household of faith. He urged them to: respect the diligent workers, live in peace with one another, warn the idle, encourage the timid, help the weak and be patient with everyone. He also encouraged them to avoid vengeance and be kind to one another and to everyone else. In their spiritual pursuits, they were to be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, keep their spiritual fervency, give due honour to prophecy, hold on to the good after testing all things, and avoid every kind of evil.

The Lord expects us as believers to imbibe these attributes too in our daily lives as well as in our relationship as the body of Christ. We should never take lightly the sacrifices of others; rather we should appreciate them even as we strive to contribute positively to the growth of our faith community.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. Deuteronomy 28:12

RBT Passage: Luke 19-20

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others." – Cicero

PREPARING FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:29, NIV

One of the topics that have remained in the teaching curriculum of primary school Health Habits is "Table Manners." It teaches the child principles pertaining to sharing meals with others, such as having water available when eating, washing of hands before eating, and not talking while eating. In today's passage, Paul reminded the Corinthians that partaking of the Communion is in remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ and should be done in orderliness, after strict self-examination. Anyone who partakes of the communion without recognising the body of the Lord brings judgement upon themselves.

As believers in this present time, we need to recognise that the Lord's Supper is not just some church tradition or mystical ceremony, it is an exercise to help us retain the memory of the sacrificial death of Jesus. Whenever we are privileged to participate in its observance, we should do so with all humility, soberness and thankfulness to God for the gift of salvation through Christ's death. We need to examine ourselves on daily basis to see if there is anything in us that can prevent us from partaking in the Lord's Supper because whatever denies one from participating in the earthly communion, which is only a remembrance may deny one from partaking in the heavenly communion which is the real deal.

- **Birthday Blessing:** No one will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Joshua 1:5.

RBT Passage: Luke 21-22

"To observe the communion in an unworthy manner would be to sin against Christ himself..." – Dachollom Datiri

HONOUR YOUR ELDERS.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour 1 Timothy 5:17, NIV

At the five years appreciation service of a senior colleague, members were given the opportunity to give testimonies about the man of God. Of the many encomiums showered on the pastor, some things stood out – he was described as diligent, loving and faithful to the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine. In Paul's admonition to Timothy, he charged him to lead the church to accord double honour to elders who have served well, especially in the handling of the Word of God. He also charged him not to entertain accusations against elders except such is backed by the testimony of two or three credible witnesses, and if any elder is found guilty of sin, such should be appropriately reprimanded. Today, many people find accusations against ministers of God as fast-selling news. Such reports, especially if made against a well-known minister, quickly spread and create sales for media houses. We must be careful not to muzzle the ox that treads the grain by spreading malicious reports and unfounded allegations. Rather, ministers who labour selflessly should be accorded due honour and support so that they can minister more effectively and with peace of mind. Determine to be a helping hand to a minister today and God will reward you for it.

- **Birthday Blessing:** He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. Isaiah 30:23.

RBT Passage: Luke 23-24

"Give me my wreath while I live" – Anon

TEST THE SPIRITS

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirits, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” I John 4:1

One day, a certain man came across a prophet on his way to his workplace. The prophet told the man that he would die in two weeks’ time. But, with his knowledge of the scripture the man told his pastor and they prayed together. Surprisingly, the man did not die even after so many years. The Bible text warns us not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits so as to verify if it is from God. John enlightens us on how to distinguish the Spirit of God from other spirits, “every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and is from God.”

Beware of prophets who do not acknowledge the lordship of Jesus. The fifth verse of our text tells us the characteristic of these false prophets, that, they are from the world and speak from the viewpoint of the world. Testing the spirits is to have good understanding of the Scriptures and be willing to talk to God on all occasions. Give yourself to studying and meditating on God’s Word so that you can detect and overcome the schemes of falsehood. Also, examine the Scriptures daily in order to see if the teachings you have heard are true as the Berean Christians did in Act 17:10-11.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong...” I Kings 3:9a

RBT Passage: John 1-2

“Discernment is not a matter of telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right.” — Charles Surgeon

Saturday, November 2

2 Corinthians 9: 10-15

GIVE GENEROUSLY TO ENRICH YOUR LIFE

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." 2 Corin 9:11

There is a saying that giving is living. There was a man who had great wealth. He had so much wealth that he thought of ways to reduce it and was advised to give it out. To his amazement, the more he gave, the more he was blessed. Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Achaia encouraging them to give generously as the opportunity comes. He told them the benefits of giving generously and it includes: physical increase, enlargement of righteous harvest and enrichment in every way. He further explained that being generous in every occasion will result in thanksgiving to God. Paul calls it indescribable gift.

As a Christian, you must cultivate the habit of giving and giving generously not out of coercion. This attitude makes God to bless and enrich your life more so that you can continue to be God's channel for blessing others. Proverbs 11:24 says, "One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty." You will be blessed, and the heart of the people you have met their needs will reach out to you in prayers and God will be praised. God is not just interested in blessing you; He is also interested in blessing others through you. Do not hold back from blessing someone today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely..." Psalm 112:5a

RBT Passage: John 3-4

"Generosity takes an open heart and a love that asks for nothing in return." —Anonymous

EXAMINE YOURSELVES IN YOUR FAITH LIVING

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?” 2 Corin 13:5, NIV

In any educational institution, teaching, learning and assessment processes take place. Examination is conducted as a form of assessment for the students to evaluate their level of comprehension. Apostle Paul, in his writings to the church in Corinth, warns them against false teachings that was going on around them and causing them to sin. He charges them to examine themselves to see whether they are in faith because of their expression of weakness as they request for proof to know if Christ is speaking through him. He established the reason for testing themselves which is to know if they are still in the faith of Jesus Christ and His Word. Not being able to pass the test means they are not conscious of the presence of Christ Jesus in them.

He encouraged them to examine their faith by doing what is right and not doing anything that is against the truth as he had exemplified. As Christian youth, your faith in Christ Jesus will be tested by what you encounter in life and other life issues. Go through them with the consciousness of God's presence in you as you examine your faith in doing what is right and not living against the truth of God's Word.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Test me, Lord and try me, examine my heart and my mind.” Psalms 26:2

RBT Passage: John 5-6

“Examine your heart and put away any distraction so you can worship God freely.” - Jim George

Monday, November 4

Romans 5:1-5

SUFFERING LEADS TO ENDURANCE, CHARACTER, HOPE

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Rom 5:3-4

Horatio Spafford, the writer of the song “It is well with my soul” wrote this song as a result of the pain of the loss of his family. Instead of giving up on his faith, he chose to identify with the Word of Christ that says, ‘be of good cheer I have conquered the world. Similarly, Apostle Paul stated to the Romans that, Christians can rejoice in suffering because they know that it is not meaningless. Through Jesus Christ, we as believers have gained access by faith into the grace of God to stand in the face of trouble. As we stand two things happen: we boast in the hope of God’s glory and also, glory in our sufferings which produces perseverance, character and hope.

Part of God’s purpose is to produce character in his children (James 1:3). The experience of Spafford implies that no man can hold claim of these three virtues from our Bible text, without undergoing suffering. Your own trying time could be psychological, emotional, educational and financial. Be assured, it will produce godly virtues in you. As a disciple of Christ, you must bear in mind that suffering is part of the Christian journey that gives us hope which does not put us to shame.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I shall live; do not let my hopes be dashed.” Psalms 119:116

RBT Passage: John 7-8

“There has never been any great person who never met great trials...but their patience...and perseverance saw them to the end as great people.” —Anonymous

Tuesday, November 5

Romans 5:6-11

RECONCILIATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." Romans 5:11, NIV

One day, a rift broke out between a man and his wife. The man said he would never forgive his wife as it was her habit to always curse and disrespect him. He intended to divorce her, but as the Lord would have it, the Word of God came expressly to him during one Sunday ministrations by his pastor. This made him to reconsider his position about his wife and sought for reconciliation. To reconcile is to put an end to hostility and restore broken relationships. This is reflected in the letter of Paul to the Roman Christians. He states that we all have erred in the past but Christ forgives and reconciles us back to God through Jesus Christ.

Humans are naturally enemies of God and the hostility must be removed for reconciliation to take place. God took the initiative in bringing this about through the death of His Son. Hence, there cannot be reconciliation elsewhere except through Jesus Christ. Humankind will cease to live as enemies of God if we believe and accept the provision God makes for our reconciliation – Jesus Christ. Are you reconciled to God? God is waiting for you to accept His provision for your reconciliation today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Turn my heart towards your statutes and not towards selfish gain." Psalms 119:36

RBT Passage: John 9-10

"The search for Jesus is about reconciling loss and tragedy to God and us." —**Scott Lineberry**

BE READY FOR CHRIST'S COMING

"So you also must be ready, because the son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Mat 24:44

Ever witnessed the dressing room of a bride about to get married? The joy that fills the air is indescribable. Everyone around must make sure that the bride has everything she needs to have an impeccable appearance. Looking at the other side, is the groom waiting patiently to receive his bride, who he expects to be the most beautiful lady in that auditorium. Jesus, as the Bridegroom, also expects the Church to prepare herself so as to be presented as a bride without spot or wrinkle. The text describes the day of Christ's coming as unknown, yet we are to keep watch and be ready for His appearance.

The words of Jesus Christ establish His second coming and He will surely come. It will be unexpected, sudden and will be like the days of Noah. Do not be carried away by the things going on around you. There are lots of things contending with your readiness for Christ's second coming. They are there to distract you and shift your focus. But you are to remember always that Jesus' Word is more certain than the existence of the universe. Be prepared, vigilant and ready for He is coming again. Like a bride, do everything necessary to prepare for the coming Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine - the best of meats and the finest of wines. Isaiah 25:6

RBT Passage: John 11-12

"The second coming of Christ is essentially the revealing of the internal sense of the world." – **Steve Sanchez**

Thursday, November 7

Philippians 2:5-11

LIVE CHRIST'S MIND AND CHARACTER DAILY

In your relationships with one another, have the same mind set as Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5

In a particular branch of a bank, fraud was detected and the people involved were apprehended, but unfortunately an innocent man was among those accused. After thorough investigation, it was discovered that Mr. Mark was not involved, so, he was exonerated. This was discovered after examining the testimony of the life he has lived and his interaction with fellow staff, customers, family and his neighbours over the years. Apostle Paul admonishes the Christians in Philippi to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ as our perfect example, did not consider equality with God, but, humbled Himself in human likeness and became obedient to death. Jesus Christ was able to fulfil God's plan for humankind because, He has the mind of God, though, it was tough for Him, yet He submitted to the price of death on the cross. God rewarded His humility by giving Him a name that is above every name. Christ's mind in you must be expressed in your attitude as you relate with people and handle issues of life on a daily basis. Do you have character problem? You need to go back to God for help. As a Christian, you must have the attitude of self-sacrifice, humility and love for others as it is in Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalms 51:10

RBT Passage: John 13-15

"Genuine conversion means a change of life and especially a change with our attitude toward sin." —Anonymous

Friday, November 8

Acts 17:1-9

UNDER PERSECUTION PROCLAIM JESUS THE CHRIST

"...This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah, he said." Acts 17:3b

Christians are often persecuted for preaching the Gospel, especially in a non-Christian environment. A group of students narrated an experience they had in 2001 during a mission outreach organised by their campus-based BSF. Unknowingly, they entered the house of a notorious herbalist in the village, to preach the Gospel to the wife. Upon his arrival, the herbalist furiously challenged their audacity, and asked them to leave his house immediately. He even threatened to use charm on them, but his plan failed and the name of God was glorified.

This experience is similar to that of Paul and Silas in our passage today. Some Jealous Jews led others to persecute them and oppose the message of Jesus being preached. Those who accepted the message were also attacked. Despite this set back, they were undaunted as they continued with the divine mandate committed into their hands. Believers should expect persecution as part of the deal in preaching the Gospel. This will keep them in readiness for any opposition without being discouraged. The devil is behind Christian persecution, but God is behind the persecuted Christians to strengthen them and see them through. Be reminded that God is always with you as you proclaim Jesus to the world. Do not let anything take the gospel message from your mouth.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded, declares the LORD. Jer. 31:16

RBT Passage: John 16-17

Persecutions are inevitable as Christians. – **Monica Johnson**

FACING TEMPTATION, STAY LOYAL TO CHRIST

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed...." 2 Corinthians 2:3

Fairbairn once asked, "What is temptation? Seduction to evil, solicitation to worry? It stands distinguished from trial thus: trials tests, seeks to discover man's moral qualities or character; but temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin. The one means to undeceive, the other to deceive. The one aims at man's good, making him unconscious of his true moral self; but the other at his evil, leading him more or less unconsciously into sin. God tries; Satan tempts."

In today's passage, Paul warned the Thessalonian believers of the danger of being deceived by false teachers and their teachings. They taught that the day of the Lord has already come. The world today is also filled with false teachers and doctrines. They seek to pervert the truth and lead Christians astray from their hope of glory. Some have even made false claim that they are Christ, confirming the prophecy of Jesus to His disciples. Unfortunately, some believers have fallen into their trap. Christians who are not firmly rooted in Christ and God's Word will easily fall prey of the tempter. The power to say no, then, lies in our resolve not to trust in our strength but to constantly look to God for grace to remain faithful to Christ. Stay true to the Truth and shun all appearances of evil.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The LORD is my light and salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? Psalms 27:1

RBT Passage: John 18-19

"...In all temptations let us consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose." – Richard Sibbes

Sunday, November 10

1 Thessalonians 2:1-10

EXAMPLES OF FAITH TO ALL BELIEVERS

"You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed."

1 Thessalonians 2:10

The power of example cannot be overemphasised. Students are usually given one or two examples before being asked to solve a problem in mathematics and some other subjects. This is done by the teacher in order to serve as a guide to the students. A student, who fails to use the given example, may end up missing the answer. In the same vein, Apostle Paul's life and ministry serves as a worthy example for all believers to follow.

The passage read today x-rays the life of faith lived by Paul. He did not compromise his faith in the face of persecution. Paul pursued integrity in life and ministry with purity of heart and act, avoidance of personal gain and glory and walked in humility. As believers, our lives ought to show inspiring examples of Christ in love, holiness, selfless sacrifice, passion for souls and humility. What kind of example are you among believers and unbelievers? Can people testify that you practice what you preach? Do your classmates or colleagues see you as an impostor, using Christ name as a mere cover up? Your Christian faith is not strong if it does not reveal Christ and challenge others to be like Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. Psalm 91:7

RBT Passage: John 20-21

"It doesn't matter what everybody is doing – be the change you wish to see in the world." – **Anonymous**

Monday, November 11

Isaiah 40:6-9

GOD'S WORD IS TRUE AND RELIABLE

"The grass withers and flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." Isaiah 40:8

Historically, the Bible has survived many attempts to exterminate it by those who considered it offensive to them. Some, in the process of destroying and discrediting the written Word of God have been touched and changed by its transforming power. Someone wrote, "Although many have tried to contaminate it, corrupt it and otherwise do away with it, it has remained – intact, unscathed and unrivaled. It is truly God's Word, unique among all the so-called Scriptures of all ages."

Today's passage compares God's Word with humans. Human beings are likened to grass and flowers, which have short life span but God's Word endures and lives forever. Human beings are prone to change and disappointment because of the human nature. But the Word of God cannot fail or fade because it is true and trustworthy; correct and current; sure and safe. In a world of changing values and standards, you can trust in the unchanging Word of God to guide and guard your life in your journey on earth to heaven. Since God's Word is God-inspired it cannot expire. It is God-approved to prove our worth in His sight. Commit it to head and heart; it will never confuse you but connect you with your divine destiny. Has God spoken anything concerning your life? Believe that it will come to pass because His words are true and reliable.

- **Birthday Blessing:** But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD; whose confidence is in Him. Jer. 17:7

RBT Passage: Acts 1-3

"Begin at the beginning of Genesis, and read to...Revelation, and see if you can find, that there were any that trusted in the Lord, and were confounded" – John Bunyan

Tuesday, November 12

Romans 7:14-25

JESUS ENABLES VICTORY OVER SIN

"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:25a

During the Welsh revival, a notorious drunkard was converted. The bar owner was angry to lose such a good customer, and called out to him one day as he passed the bar: "What's gone wrong, Charlie? Why do you keep passing by instead of coming in?" With a skyward glance and a grateful tear glistening in his eyes, Charlie replied: "Sir, it is not just that I keep passing by; we pass by! Ah, yes, it is the secret! We pass by- Jesus and I. Faith unites me to the living Christ, so that His life flows to me."

Paul also had struggles with sin. He was trapped in sin, and tried to free himself by his own human effort. The good he wanted to do was not possible because the law of sin has held him in bondage. Until he surrendered to Jesus, he remained in slavery to sin. Thereafter, the power of sin was broken and the glory of God broke forth in his life. Are you struggling with sin too? Do you tell lies, fornicate or you are filled with lustful thoughts. There is victory in Christ. He has paid your ransom from slavery to sin. All you need to do is to come to Him in humility and faith in order to have dominion over sin. Then together with Jesus you will live above go past sin like Charlie.

- **Birthday Blessing:** If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you; no disaster will come near you. Psalm 91:9-10

RBT Passage: Acts 4-5

"SIN is Satan Identification Number, which only the blood of Jesus can delete." – Gbenga Osho

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8

Love is one of the most common words used today, particularly among young people. It is common to hear them say, "I love you." Most of the contemporary movies and soap operas shown on the screen are replete with love stories, mirroring the state of the society. However, a number of people do not understand the true meaning of agape love as expressed by God through Jesus Christ to the world. To some, love is about having sexual affairs with the opposite sex. Others simply love those who love them.

The passage of today reveals the mind of God regarding how to show love to one another. According to Paul, love is a debt that we owe one another. It means that everybody deserves to be loved. It does not give room for discrimination either as a result of language, age, sex, religion or social class. Love is the fulfilment of God's law, which enhances our moral and spiritual lives. To love one another, we must relate with one another in purity of heart and do no harm to one another. Love demands that what we cannot do to ourselves, we do not do to others. It does not take undue advantage of others. In other words, treat others the way you want them to treat to you. Let your life reflect the sacrificial love of Jesus.

- **Birthday Blessing:** And I pray that you, being rooted and establish in love, may have power to grasp how wide ... and deep is the love of Christ. Ephesians 3:17-18

RBT Passage: Acts 6-7

"Whatever a person may be like, we must still love them because we love God." – John Calvin

Thursday, November 14

Romans 8:1-11

NEW LIFE THROUGH THE SPIRIT

"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ." Romans 8:9

The story is told about a little boy who was flying a kite. It was a windy day, and the kite kept going higher and higher. Finally, it got so high that it was out of sight. A man passed by and saw the little boy holding onto the string. The man could not see the kite, and he asked the boy, "How do you even know you have a kite up there?" The boy replied, "Because I can feel it." Although we cannot see the Holy Spirit, we should be able to sense His work in our lives changing us into the image of Christ.

Paul asserts in today's passage that it is only those who possess the Spirit of God that can live to please God. God's Spirit regenerates and lives in those who have accepted Christ's offer of salvation. This is the beginning of a new life, which terminates the power of the old sinful flesh. However, it is not enough to have the Spirit of Christ, He must be allowed to govern our lives in accordance to the will of God. In the process, our thought and action will align with the life of Christ, making Him known to the world. Therefore, let the Holy Spirit have His way in your life.

- **Birthday Blessing:** In famine He will deliver you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. Job 5:20

RBT Passage: Acts 8-9

"You do not need to work to become spiritual. You are spiritual; you only need to remember that fact. Spirit is within you. God is within you." – **Julia Cameron**

LIVE BY THE SPIRIT

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Galatians 5:25

A father and son arrived in a small western town looking for an uncle whom they have never seen. Suddenly, the father, pointing across the square to a man who was walking away, exclaimed, "There goes my uncle!" His son asked, "How do you know when you have not seen him before?" "Son, I know him because he walks exactly like my father." The Spirit of God is capable of producing the godly character of Christ in us, so that we look exactly like Him.

Today's devotion is a continuation of yesterday's -- new life through the Spirit. Paul admonished the Galatian believers to walk in the Spirit, thereby overcoming fleshy and self-centred desires. The evil and immorality we see in the church and the world at large are products of the flesh. Christians are to be different in their conduct and character as they allow the Holy Spirit to guide and work in them. The only available option to counteract works of the flesh such as lying, greed, cheating, sexual immorality, hatred, selfish ambition and envy, is to live by the dictate of the Spirit who enables us to bear Christlike fruit. A Spirit-controlled life is a God-centred while a self-controlled life is a sin-centred. Choose one today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. Deuteronomy 28:6

RBT Passage: Acts 10-11

"If we walk in the Spirit, the world should know us by our walk." – Lee Roberson

Saturday, November 16

1 Peter 1:3-12

REJOICE IN GOD'S ACTIONS IN CHRIST

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.

1 Peter 3:6, NAS

My family and I were invited by some friends to spend a summer holiday in three West African Countries. I broke the news to my children ahead of the holiday and they couldn't just wait for the time. I also used the trip as a motivation for good performance in school. I listened to my children as they talked severally about their improved performance, praying for the families who had invited us, and expressing their excitement about the idea of travelling to three countries on a holiday.

Similarly, there are wonderful things that God has done for us through Christ, which call for rejoicing. God has given us new birth and living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, He has prepared for us an imperishable inheritance and is presently preserving us through His power until that glorious moment which shall be revealed at the end of age. The certainty of these should cause us to rejoice, even though we presently pass through some suffering and trial for a while. We are being refined like gold in the fire and our faith shall be proved to be genuine and result in praise, glory and honour at the revelation of Christ. Let us therefore, love the Lord, believe in Him and allow our hearts to be filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. For what He has promised is sure.

- **Birthday Blessing:** And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you...Gen. 12:2a

RBT Passage: Acts 12-13

"Our Heavenly Father is pleased when we don't compromise our faith and principles in times of desperation." —**David Green**

Sunday, November 17

1 Peter 1:13-25

CALL TO HOLY LIVING

Because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1 Peter 1:16, NAS

A coach led an athlete to a beach in Accra, Ghana. While the coach was relaxing on a chair under a canopy with some drinks to cool off, the athlete was busy on a sunny afternoon performing some routine exercises marked out by the coach. The athlete's efforts seemed to pass unnoticed by the coach who only charged him to move on any time he wanted to stop. This was necessary because of what lies ahead of the athlete. The present suffering will become nothing when compared to the future glory.

In the same way, Apostle Peter wanted the Christians in Asia-Minor to prepare for the glory that was placed before them. Their preparations include the need to be self-controlled; non-conformity to the evil desires of the world; being holy; living as strangers in the world; being pure and obedient and loving the brethren. The same is expected of us who have been redeemed through the precious blood of Jesus and are having our faith and hope in God. Having been born again, we have the responsibility of living lives worthy of our calling. Like that athlete, we must constantly prepare for the glory which is to be revealed in due time. The Word of God urges us on to victory.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." Gen. 17:2

RBT Passage: Acts 14-15

"Honor is the presence of God in Man." —Pat Conroy

Monday, November 18

Revelation 22: 14-17

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY COME

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." Revelation 22:17a, NAS

When asked what the secrets of his success in three consecutive Olympic competitions were, Usain Bolt mentioned among other things his strict adherence to some set of discipline which pertain mostly to his social life and food intake. He also said that his preparation for another Olympic begins when one competition ends.

Our text for today speaks about the importance of preparations in waiting for the coming kingdom. The happy ones, here, are those who wash their robes – those who avoid being stained by the dirty things of this world. They are the ones who by virtue of their conscious preparations shall enter God's kingdom. But dogs (homosexuals), those who practice magic arts (witchcraft), the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and all who practice falsehood will be shut outside the kingdom. The Holy Spirit is crying aloud to us to come out of the dirty acts of this dying world. The Lord Jesus is offering you forgiveness from dead works and inviting you to accept the free gift of eternal life. Are you a child of God, then stay focused and keep preparing. If you have derailed, the Spirit and the Bride are saying come. If you are not yet born again, you can receive the invitation to receive Christ into your life today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water... Exodus 23:25a

RBT Passage: Acts 16-17

"Opportunity doesn't make appointments; you have to be ready when it arrives." –Tim Fargo

OUR DWELLING PLACE

O satisfy us in the morning with Thy loving-kindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Psalm 90:14

Psalm 90 is titled, “A prayer of Moses, the man of God.” On one hand, it portrays Israel’s forty years of enforced sojourn in the desert (Deut. 8:15) on its journey to the Promised Land which resulted in their backwardness among the community of nations. Their route to freedom took so long (apparently under the wrath of God) that their backwardness became obvious. On the other hand, in spite of the dismal state of the Israelites which was as a result of their disobedience (which they acknowledged in all sincerity), they also knew through faith that God’s unfailing love can be confidently appealed to (v. 14).

Two main reflections emerged from these. First, the Lord, who has ever been our “dwelling place” (v. 1) has shown us the power of His wrath (v. 7). Second, God is the everlasting One (v. 2), while we must come to terms with the little numbers of our days (v. 12). These two reflections necessitate the prayer in verses 13-17 and especially v.14. Do you realise that your time on earth is fleeting? Your entire life lasts for a brief time. You need God for your little time to make meaning. The questions we ask, “When will this or that be?” “How will this or that happen?” can only find answers in God “Our Dwelling place.”

- **Birthday Blessing:** And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” Exodus 33:14

RBT Passage: Acts 18-19

“Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face” —Ronald Reagan

ONE DAY LIKE ONE THOUSAND YEARS

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2 Peter 3:8, NAS

A young man travelled to Lagos in the early 80s in order to spend the holiday with his brother who worked there. He was able to locate where his brother lived and gained entrance in his brother's absence. Few hours later while still waiting for his brother to return from work, he took a stroll down the road and the unfortunate thing happened. Police on patrol picked him up with the charge of purposeless wandering and was remanded at the Kirikiri Maximum Prison. To cut a long story short, it took seven years before he got bailed out by a foremost Lagos lawyer. When he was asked how the seven years seemed to him, he answered, "Each day was like a year." Imagine how long it took to wait for that freedom.

God is patiently waiting for us to come to repentance. He does not delight in anyone perishing. We should not think that His judgment is delayed; the day of the Lord will certainly come like a thief in the night. You need a Saviour who can save your soul from eternal damnation. Please accept Jesus today and repent from your sin. Jesus is the advocate (lawyer) that you need. Have you backslid? Do not wait for judgment to overtake you. Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. This whole world is coming to an end someday.

- **Birthday Blessing:** So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you... Lev. 26:9

RBT Passage: Acts 20-21

"The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today." —H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Thursday, November 21 2 Peter 3:11-15a, 17-18

THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? 2 Peter 3:11, NAS

A little boy pleaded with his father to have their house re-painted and beautified but the father refused. The father had received compensation from government and a quit notice because the house was billed for demolition to allow for other development. While they marked time, the father was building a new house for them in another part of the town. But as that delayed, the little boy pressured on until the father asked him, "Of what value will be a renovation on a house that is scheduled for demolition with time?"

The above question is relevant to our text. Since everything in this world is awaiting destruction, should we live in it and allow ourselves to be corrupted by it so much that we are destroyed with it? No! We certainly cannot afford to be so influenced by the corruption of this world to the destruction of our souls. What then are we to do? The text recommends the following things: we must live holy and godly lives; we must look forward to the day of the Lord, which will usher in the home of the righteous; we must ensure that we are not carried away by the evil practices of this world; and continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart. Psalm 7:10

RBT Passage: Acts 22-23

"Heaven will be the perfection we've always longed for. All the things that made Earth unlovely be absent." —Billy Graham

THIS IS MY SON; LISTEN TO HIM!

And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" Luke 9:35, NAS

DNA paternity test is the use of DNA profiling to determine whether two individuals are biologically related. It is a legal process that ascertains the true paternity of a child. Many cases of a child's paternity have been resolved through DNA test. God had sent many prophets before the coming of Christ so much that most people of Jesus' day took Him for one of the prophets. In today's text, God bears witness to the person of Christ by affirming that He is His beloved Son. That is the divine testimony concerning the identity of Jesus Christ and we know that God's Word cannot be faltered. God further says about Jesus "Listen to Him."

Who is Jesus to you? Do you think of Him as one of God's prophets? The truth is that Jesus is the Son of God; He is Christ, the Saviour of the world. God commands everyone including you to listen to Jesus. Obeying Jesus' leadership assures us of a beautiful ending. Have you accepted Jesus as your Saviour and Lord? Or, do you still belong to the league of those who question His divine relationship with God the Father? God says Jesus is His Son; believe that and you will be saved. Endeavour to develop your relationship with God through complete obedience to Christ and enjoy God's friendship.

- **Birthday Blessing:** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them. Ps 34:7

RBT Passage: Acts 24-26

"You are not what others think you are. You are what God knows you are" —**Shannon L. Alder**

SOLID REASONS FOR HOPE

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place...and the day star arise in your hearts: 2 Pet 1: 19

According to Wikipedia, “Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one’s life or the world at large.” There are divergent opinions regarding the means of salvation and the way to reach God. All religions of the world offer some kind of “expectation” to their adherents and this makes people abandon one religion for another in search of a more assuring hope.

No truth can be more assuring than that which reveals Christ as the King and Saviour of the world. Peter emphatically states that faith in Christ is not based on cunningly devised fables, which other religions propose. Rather, it is based on eyewitness account of Christ’s majesty as attested to by God, the Father who bestowed such glory and honour on His Son. Not only that, but also of a sure Word of prophecy, which holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. No religion offers such solid reasons for hope as Christianity. No amount of pain we go through can shake the hope we have in Christ. Let this hope in Christ encourage your heart to press on. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be assured that your expectation will yield a positive outcome at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Birthday Blessing:** O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! Psalm 34:8

RBT Passage: Acts 27-28

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” —Desmond Tutu

ALWAYS KEEP THE FAITH

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 2 Peter 1:10 (KJV)

When soldiers are dispatched for an operation, they are given rules of engagement and final charge by the commander. They are expected to carry out their assignment in a professional way, being mindful of the charge given to them. Doing the right things will ensure that they properly represent their country.

The Christian faith also comes with a charge for every believer to remain standing till the end. Peter admonishes all Christians to add certain ingredients to the faith which they already profess. The ingredients are: virtue; knowledge; temperance; patience; godliness; brotherly kindness (treating others as brothers or sisters); and charity (love). These are the ingredients that make the Christian life fruitful. We must endeavour to live in a manner that honours God at all times, even in the midst of trials and tests. We must strive to treat others better than ourselves and show love to everyone, even in the midst of hatred. Is your Christian life barren or fruitful? Or, are you blind and cannot see far and you need to be reminded that you have been saved? You have a charge to keep for making your calling and election sure by constantly walking in God's light and shinning this light on the paths of others.

- **Birthday Blessing:** But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Thy works. Psalm 73:28

RBT Passage: Romans 1-3

"God will never give you anything you can't handle, so don't stress." —K. Clarkson

Monday, November 25

Deuteronomy 18:1-5

DUTIES OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

"For the LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of the LORD forever. Deuteronomy 18:5 (NAS)

According to Wikipedia, "Duty is a term that conveys a sense of moral commitment or obligation to someone or something, it is the binding or obligatory force of something that is morally or legally right, an action or task required by a person's position or occupation." The levitical priesthood had the obligatory function of standing to minister in the name of the Lord. Today, as the Scripture says, we equally have an obligation. God has chosen us out of many others by grace to serve Him. We have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light in order to declare His praise (1 Peter 2:9). This is a duty that we must be faithfully committed to.

Now that you know that you are duty bound, you must rise above excuses and fulfil your obligations of making Christ known to others. The devil may try to place obstacle on your path, lay hold of the power of God that is at work in you. It is a great privilege to be found worthy of God's service; therefore, we must give it all it takes. It is an obligation to God and duty to Christ. Live your life as a member of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. Your lifestyle should show forth God's praise – it is a duty!

- **Birthday Blessing:** The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever. Isaiah 40:8

RBT Passage: Romans 4-7

"We never fail when we try to do our duty, we always fail when we neglect to do it." —R. Baden-Powell

Tuesday, November 26

1 Chronicles 13:5-8, 13-14

DAVID DELIVERS ARK TO OBED – EDOM

So David did not take the ark with him to the city of David, but took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 1 Chronicles 13:13 (NAS)

The Ark of the Covenant symbolises God's presence among the Israelites. Recall that they carried it from place to place and moved with it on their journey. At some point, the ark was captured by the Philistines during a battle and David longed to see its restoration. The Philistines were forced to let go of the ark when they were struck with series of disasters. When David arranged for the ark to be brought into Jerusalem, another disaster struck on the way – Uzzah died. As a result, David was displeased and afraid of taking the ark into his palace. The Ark was delivered into the house of Obed-edom whose household experienced tremendous blessings for the entire period that the Ark was with him.

God's presence is not to be rejected by us but revered and cherished. His presence brings a lot of blessings as was the case in Obed-edom's life. When we follow God's instructions for our lives we not only enjoy God's presence but also enjoy every good thing that comes with His presence. As Christians, we should earnestly desire God's presence and live lives worthy of that glorious presence. Let us open our hearts, lives and homes to receive God's holy presence. Pray and invite God's presence into your life today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** He gives strength to the weary, And to *him* who lacks might He increases power. Isa 40:29

RBT Passage: Romans 8-10

"Everybody has to be responsible for their own actions..."

—Kate Mara

LEADER TO BRING ARK TO JERUSALEM

So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. 1 Chro. 15:14

God assigned the Levites as His chosen priests to stand and minister in his name (Deut. 18:5). They were, therefore, supposed to lead the Israelites in all religious celebrations of which carrying the Ark of Covenant was a major assignment. However, when King David made the first attempt at returning the ark to Jerusalem, he assigned individuals who were not priests. This resulted in Uzzah's death. Subsequently, when David launched out a second time, he engaged the right persons, encouraged them to sanctify themselves for the assignment and the result was different – a huge success. This implies that: God's work must be done in accordance with divine regulation; our intensions must be weighed by divine revelation; and we must accord respect to divine order and give honour to whoever it is due.

Do you have a clear template of your assignment? Where have you gotten it wrong in your service to God? Have you been applying the wrong methods or have you been acting in ignorance? You can ask God for forgiveness and determine to get it right. Pray that you will be rightly guided by the Word of God and His Spirit. Remember that your service is unto God and it must meet certain standards in order for it to be acceptable to Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10b

RBT Passage: Romans 11-14

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way." —**John Maxwell**

ARK PLACED IN TENT IN JERUSALEM

And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. 1 Chronicles 16:1

An artist asked a lady at a beach to pose for fifteen minutes while he hurriedly did a painting of her on a board. When he showed her the painting, she was amazed at how he perfectly captured her image. She wanted to have the painting but the artist demanded for \$100 and her reaction was, “\$100 for fifteen minutes work?” The artist responded, “This is rather a work of fifteen years training” and if you like “let me pose for 15 hours so that you can do the painting” he said. The truth is that, work becomes like play when it gets to the hands of experts.

Consider also, how bringing the ark up to Jerusalem and setting it in a Tent at David’s second attempt looked smooth and easy. When the wrong persons attempted it at first, the whole thing ended in disaster. The second attempt, however, ended in great jubilations, the people were blessed both spiritually and materially. The Levites took their rightful place in the service of God. It is important to allow the Spirit of God to guide us in our services to Him. The Spirit should decide for us who should lead and the right steps to be taken. We should allow others to serve as we also serve, our combined efforts will bring more glory to God. Let us not quench other people’s gifts just to promote ours.

- **Birthday Blessing:** I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations. Isaiah 42:6b

RBT Passage: Romans 15-16

“Right actions for the future are the best apologies for wrong ones in the past.” —T. Edwards

Friday, November 29

1 Chronicles 16:37-43

REGULAR WORSHIP SERVICES RESUMED

So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required. 1 Chro. 16:37

The absence of the Ark of Covenant from among the Israelites had adverse effects one of which was their inability to hold regular worship services. Returning the ark to its place, therefore, became a great blessing – regular worship services resumed and the entire people were happy. The ark symbolised the presence and glory of God in the midst of His people so much that when it was carried away, the news of it caused Eli to slump and broke his neck and died, the wife of Phinehas also, named her child I-chabod (the glory has departed from Israel).

In the same way, our regular worship services will be meaningless as long as God's presence and glory are not established. The exercise will be empty and futile – void of essence. Even our individual worship of God makes no sense without the presence of God. We must, therefore, like the Israelites, seek to restore rightful relationship with God in order for our worship to be acceptable to Him. The only way to restore our relationship with God is to renew our faith in God and follow His instructions to the letter. We should also consecrate ourselves for the service of God. What are those challenges hindering you from offering regular worship to God? Take them to God in prayers and enjoy tremendous breakthrough.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past.” Isaiah 43:18

RBT Passage: 1 Corinthians 1-4

It is not fitting, when one is in God's service to have a gloomy face or a chilling look. —Saint Francis of Assisi

ENGAGING IN SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1

Man is made of spirit, soul and body but the body is weak and it can easily compromise. Thus, the need to keep it under check becomes a necessity. The inability to control the desires of their bodies has been the reason for the downfall of many. The Bible warns against yielding to the desires of the flesh (1 John 2:15-17). Paul at this point also talks about the need for Christians to deal with the body – present your bodies as living sacrifice. There are three ways Paul advises us to go about this. First, we must not conform to the standard of this world. Whatever we do that agrees with the pattern of this world is a compromise and conformity. Second, we must be transformed through the renewal of our minds. To experience transformation, we must renew our minds.

A corrupt mind cannot conform to divine standards. Third, we must engage in spiritual worship. This requires the manifestations of spiritual gifts for the building of the body of Christ. How is your own worship life? Are you still conforming to the standard of this world or you are daily seeking to be transformed through the renewal of your mind? Present your body now as a living sacrifice to God that your service to Him may be reasonable and acceptable.

- **Birthday Blessing:** Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? Isaiah 43:19a.

RBT Passage: 1 Corinthians 5-9

"It is the pleasing of God that is at the heart of worship."

—R. C. Sproul

Sunday, December 1

1 Chro. 15:1-3, 14-16, 25-29a

REJOICE IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

So David and the elders of Israel went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-Edom, with rejoicing. 1 Chronicles 15:25, NIV

Rev. John MacDeath once said "Sometimes God sends His love letters in black-edged envelopes." He allows us to taste the bitterness of want and the desolation of bereavement. At such times it may become difficult to see the hand of God or believe that He is work in our favour. It looks as if things have gotten out of hand, and somehow we have been forgotten. When we get to this point, the best thing to do is to remember the faithfulness of God evident in previous situations and believe that indeed "God is faithful, who will not suffer the pain to exceed the measurement of my endurance."

The children of Israel had lived many years without the Ark of God, which stands for the presence of God because it was taken away by their enemy. After a long time, the ark was restored to its rightful place and everything changed. God showed His faithfulness to His children when they least expect. Our situations and experiences in life cannot turn God's faithfulness into unfaithfulness. He remains faithful in all situations and as believers we should constantly rejoice in this. The challenges you are facing right now is a good opportunity for God to show His faithfulness if only you will allow Him. Turn those things to God in prayer and experience divine turn around.

- **Birthday Blessings:** I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail.

Psalm 89:28, NIV

RBT Passage: 1 Corinthians 10-13

"It is both a privilege and duty to rejoice in the Lord." - A.W. Pink

Monday, December 2

Isaiah 45:20-25

ALL NATIONS INVITED TO WORSHIP GOD

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." Isaiah 45:22, NIV

A.B. Simpson once said that the gospel, "Tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner cancelled, the curse of the Law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide, the power of sin subdued, the guilty conscience healed, the broken heart comforted, the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone." Today's passage is an invitation to everyone to acknowledge the awesome power of God through worship and reaffirm His faithfulness. God is interested in everyone irrespective of whom they are and what they do. His utmost desire is that everyone will worship Him genuinely. Are you bothered about your present sinful state? It does not matter what your life has been before now, God is a just God and a Saviour. He is willing to give you a fresh start. Has He promised you something and it is looking like it will not come to pass? Be assured that every Word that is spoken of God will surely come to pass because he has sworn by Himself. Make Him your Lord so that you can also enjoy righteousness and strength in Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence."

Psalm 91:3, NIV

RBT Passage: 1 Corinthians 14-16

"Worship is an inward feeling and outward action that reflects the worth of God." —John Piper

Tuesday, December 3

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

RESPONSE TO GOD'S GENEROSITY

And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household. Deuteronomy 26:11, NIV

A couple visited a missionary and there they saw a father and his son working in a rice paddy. The old man guided the heavy plough as the boy pulled it. "I guess they must be very poor," the man said to the missionary who was their guide. "Yes," replied the missionary. "That's the family of Chi Nevi. When the church was built, they were eager to give something to it, but they had no money. So they sold their ox and gave the money to the church. This spring they are pulling the plough themselves." After a long silence, the woman said, "That was a real sacrifice." The missionary responded, "They do not call it a sacrifice. They are just thankful they had an ox to sell."

Many people find it very difficult to give to God. Probably they have forgotten that there nothing we have that we have not first received from God. God instructed the children of Israel to bring the tenth of everything He has given to them and rejoice in all that He has provided for them. How do you also respond to God's blessings in your life? Are you willing to bless people around you? Do you even rejoice in what you have or you murmur over what you do not have?

- **Birthday Blessing:** *"For in him we live and move and have our being..." Acts 17:28 (NIV)*

RBT Passage: 2 Corinthians 1-4

"The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service." —John Piper

GOD'S SAVING DEEDS

He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings: "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." Psalm 105:14-15, NIV

A man in Ireland was convicted of his sin and was on the verge of accepting Christ when the devil raised the often repeated objection: "If you believe, it won't last. What about tomorrow?" The church worker who told him about Christ pointed to a water mill nearby. "What turns that wheel today?" "The stream," he replied. "What will turn it tomorrow?" He asked again. "The stream." The man responded "And the days after?" He probed further. But the man gave the same answer, "The stream." The man was led to see that there is abundance of God's grace to save, keep, and meet all needs.

Many Christians have fallen victim of the devil's deception that there is limit to God's saving power. They have forgotten that God's commitment is everlasting. Today's passage is calling us to praise God for the things He has done and also to bring to memory His awesome deeds. More importantly, we are reminded that God is committed to taking care of His own and nothing can stop Him. Are there circumstances that the devil is using to scare you? Remember that He has promised to reprove kings for your sake and protect you from every evil. When the devil brings challenges, remember the One who has the power to save. Constantly rejoice in this assurance of God's saving ability.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you...." Num 6:24

RBT Passage: 2 Corinthians 5-9

"You may think you can live fine without Christ but you can't afford to die without Him." —C.H. Spurgeon

Thursday, December 5

Psalm 106:40-48

GOD'S GRACIOUS COMPASSION

"For their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented. He caused them to be pitied by all who held them captive." Psalm 106:45-46, NIV

A chaplain was ministering to a soldier in the hospital and said, "You have lost an arm in the great cause." The soldier replied, "I didn't lose it—I gave it." Jesus did not lose His life either. He willingly gave it so we could be reconciled to God. The greatest compassion anyone can show is the gift of one's life. God's gracious compassion was made manifest in the gift of His only Son for the atonement of our sins. He could have left humanity to perish in their sins, but He chose to have mercy on us by redeeming us through the sacrifice of His Son.

We should be reminded of this great sacrifice and respond to it by accepting Christ and also sacrificing for others around us. If God can give His only Son, then nothing can be too much for Him to give to us? We can ask for whatever we need, since we have a great assurance in God that He will freely give us all because He did not withhold His Son from us. As Christ gave His life for us, let us also freely share this life with people around. Let others see Jesus in you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord will make you the head, not the tail...you will always be at the top, never at the bottom." Deuteronomy 28:13.

RBT Passage: 2 Corinthians 10-13

"Mercy is not something God has, but something God is."

—A.W. Tozer

Friday, December 6

1 Chronicles 16:14-18

GOD'S FOREVER COVENANT

"He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations." 1 Chro. 16:15

A woman, after suffering many losses, went to a great doctor for sympathy. After being in his study for some time, she suddenly exclaimed, "I've got it! I've got it!" The surprised doctor immediately asked what she had got. Instead of answering directly she pointed to a text over the mantelpiece, on which were the words "THOU REMAINEST," and said, "I see now that no matter how much I lose, God remains, and He is all I need."

God's covenants are ever sure and His promises are eternal. Though times may change and seasons may pass, but the Word of God will never change. Today's passage is a reminder that God's covenant transcends human life, it is to all generations. He confirmed the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and to Jacob. He also made a covenant with Israel and fulfilled it. This shows that God's covenants with us will never change. Whatever God has decided to do no man can change it. Therefore, it does not matter what anybody says as far as God has not said it, it cannot be established. What has God spoken concerning you or your family? Rest assured, no circumstance can change His promises. He will surely keep His Words and fulfil them. Just trust in Him.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." Ps. 1:3

RBT Passage: Galatians 1-3

"When God says "I will" it forms a covenant."

—Reinhard Bonnke

GOD'S FOREVER STEADFAST LOVE

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." 1 Chronicles 16:34, NIV

After an earthquake in a small town, a father rushed to his son's school only to find that the school had been flattened. There was no sign of life. But he had no thought of turning back. He had often told his son, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you when you need me!" Though the situation appeared hopeless, the father began removing the rubbles from where he believed his son's classroom had been. Finding strength and endurance beyond himself, the loving father continued to dig. Then in the 38th hour, he heard voices. "Armand!" he screamed. A child's voice responded: "Dad! It's me... Armand!" "I told the other kids not to worry that if you were alive, you'd save me!" While the townspeople praised Armand's dad, his explanation was, "I promised my son, 'No matter what, I'll be there for you!'"

Today, we are reminded of God's unchanging love even in a constantly changing world. Diligently and faithfully, God has showed His love to us. Despite our sinful life, He has never stopped loving us. Therefore, we have been called to turn from our sinful ways and praise him continually for this love that can never be bought. Even when you are buried under a heavy yoke of sin, remember that God's steadfast love is always there to help you.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence." Ps 91:3

RBT Passage: Galatians 4-6

"Trusting God's unfailing love is the pathway to unending peace." —T.Thomas

Sunday, December 8

1 Chronicles 16:8-13, 19-27

GOD'S WONDROUS DEEDS FOR ALL PEOPLE

"Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced." 1 Chronicles 16:12, NIV

Have you ever wondered how the sea knows just where to stop? Or how the sun knows just when to show up? When we consider the nature around us, we cannot but stand in awe of God. The way He is administering the universe and how everything seems to know what to do per time is indeed amazing. Even when we are down and do not even expect to see God, He will still show up to rescue us. Today's passage is a call to worship God for all the mighty things He has done in our lives. If we consider the works of our hands, we will discover that God has not dealt with us according to the multitude of our sins.

While others see hopelessness, God sees a renewed hope. Where others see death, God sees life. This was what made Him give His only Son to restore human kind back to Himself. Instead of making a long list of requests, why not give God praise and thanksgiving for all He has done for you and the ones He is yet to do? God has shown us so much mercy than we ever deserve, let us therefore reciprocate this act of love with genuine adoration.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." Acts 1:8

RBT Passage: Ephesians 1-3

"A God wise enough to create me and the world is wise enough to watch out for me." - Philip Yancey

Monday, December 9

1 Chronicles 22:6-13

DAVID CANNOT BUILD THE TEMPLE

But this word of the LORD came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. 1 Chronicles 22:8, NIV

Finding a place in the service of God is such a great privilege that must be cherished. But unfortunately, many people take it with levity and act as if God does not have a choice other than to use them for His service. David was a man after God's heart yet God did not find him fit to build His house. His sin of shedding too much blood stood against him. Even when he felt God would not get a better choice, God showed him that He would rather use the generation coming after him for His purpose. Many people are not worthy of the Lord's service yet the grace of God found them. God is the only One that chooses who to use for His service. What He expects from us is to position ourselves in the right place and do the right things all the time. Has God given you a particular assignment and you are feeling like He cannot do without you? Humble yourself today so that both you and your service will not be rejected like David. If God can reject the service of David, a man after His heart, there is no service He cannot reject. Put away those things that will not make you worthy of God's service? Ask for grace to make things right today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first." Job 42:12.

RBT Passage: Ephesians 4-6

"Service to God is a privilege not a right." - T. Thomas

Tuesday, December 10

1 Chronicles 28:2-10

SOLOMON TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. 1 Chronicles 28:6-7, NIV

The thoughts of God are far beyond human comprehension and His ways are unsearchable. He honours one and despises the other. He is the sovereign God whose deeds are unquestionable. God chose Solomon among many other children in place of his father to build Him a house. David told Solomon that God has promised to establish his kingdom if only he will constantly do His will. David encouraged his son to get to know God personally so that he can serve Him willingly and with a perfect heart. We cannot faithfully serve a God that we do not know.

To serve God acceptably, we must first develop a personal relationship with Him. God has also chosen you to be His son or daughter. He did this by giving His only Son for your sake. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ reveals God's commitment to be our Father only if we choose to remain His children. The only way to prove our sonship is to obey His commandments and yield to His instructions. But you cannot fully do this if you have not known Him. Determine to build a personal relationship with God today and experience the working of His power.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:6.

RBT Passage: Philippians 1-4

"God chooses a man He can work on and walk with."

—T. Thomas

Wednesday, December 11 1 Chronicles 21:28–22:1

ORNAN'S LAND IS SITE OF TEMPLE

At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there. 1 Chronicles 21:28, NKJV

One of the war memorials dedicated to the Americans reads: "Think not only upon their passing, remember the glory of their spirit." These words were written in memory of those who gave their lives for the love of their country. When one considers the sacrifice people make for the things they love, one will discover that there cannot be love without giving. Ornan willingly gave his threshing floor to David to sacrifice to God. This genuine act of love led to the place becoming a house of God. If Ornan had refused to allow David use his land for the burnt offering, he would have missed the opportunity to provide a house for God.

Many people get so carried away by their personal survival that they find no time or space for God. Sometimes people get so carried away by their possessions that they find it difficult to part with them. They do not know that they are denying themselves of certain blessings that comes with such sacrifice. The first thing God is asking is the ownership of our lives. Like He took over Ornan's floor and turned it into His dwelling place, He wants to own your life and turn it into His abode forever. Will you give Him a chance?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "See, I have placed before an open door that no one can shut." Revelation 3:8.

RBT Passage: Colossians 1-4

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." - C.T. Studd

Thursday, December 12

2 Samuel 7:1-11a

GOD NEEDS NO HOUSE

"Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?" 2 Sam 7:5-6, NKJV

Many times we feel we know exactly what God wants. We feel if we consider the environment we live and the things happening around us, we will be able to determine what God requires of us. We have forgotten that many things that seems right before man are far from God's desire. David saw that God had given him rest from all his enemies. He had given him victory in all his battles, so he decided to build a house for God in appreciation of what God had done for him.

God told him not to bother about building a house for Him. Instead for God to accept David's offer, He promised to build a house for His people and save them from all those who afflict them. This does not mean that God rejected David's gift, but, He rather saw a need to do exactly for David what he wanted to do for Him. As much as we desire to do things for God, we should also ask Him whether those things are needed at that time. As believers, what God can do for us is far beyond what we can do for Him. He is willing to do beyond our expectations if we will only allow Him to work through us.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan." Joshua 5:12.

RBT Passage: 1 Thessalonians 1-5

"The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless." - Billy Graham

Friday, December 13

1 Chronicles 17:7b-10

GOD'S MAKES A HOUSE FOR DAVID

"I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you:

1 Chronicles 17:10-11, NIV

One of the best acts of kindness is the one we least expect. David showed his intentions to build a house for God without knowing the gravity of such thought in God's sight. Even though God did not allow him to build it, God rewarded his intention. God built a house for David in the royal realm - a dynasty of kings. This was not a physical house but a privilege to always have one of his descendants as king in Israel. This was far too great a reward compared to David's intention to build a physical house for God. There are times when our intentions to give to the Lord weighs as much in His sight as the actual giving.

Nothing is too small or too big to give to God as far as the intention to give is sincere. No matter how big our gift for God's work is, it can never be compared to what God can give in return. You do not have to be persuaded or begged before giving to God. We should respond to His call to give with joy and excitement because God does not owe any man. All we need to do is to be sincere, cheerful and honour God with our substance always.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him." Psalm 32:10

RBT Passage: 2 Thessalonians 1-3

"God is the greatest giver in the universe, He won't let you outgive Him." - Randy Alcon

THE LORD REGARDS THE LOWLY

Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. Psalm 138:6, KJV

A pastor told a story of how he saw God in a revelation giving awards to His servants. When it was the turn of his church, he was sure God would have a little hard time making a choice from the church's four associate pastors and five dedicated deacons, not to mention the youth coordinator and other spiritual people. But to his utmost surprise, God did not pick any of these people, but went straight to meet a man anyone hardly noticed in the church. This pastor became angry and asked God for what He saw in this man. God told Him that while other workers were noticed and members graciously reward them, this man remained unnoticed yet committed to His service.

Our passage today reminds us of what God looks for in a service - a humble heart. God is concerned about a heart that is humble in all situations and not proud at any time. There is a very thin line between testifying to God's faithfulness and bragging. The intention behind our actions determines whether we are humble or proud. Do not act because you want to be noticed by people, rather act in such a way that God alone will notice you and He who sees your labour in secret will reward you in the open.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil." Psalm 92:10

RBT Passage: 1 Timothy 1-6

"God bestows His blessing without discrimination."

- F.F. Bruce

Sunday, December 15

1 Chronicles 17:1-4, 11-14; 21:18-27

TWO HOUSES FIRMLY SETTLED

He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 1 Chronicles 17:12-13, NKJV

God intended that every life will make a note and leave a message that will inspire the next generation. Every man, through his faith must be able to secure a future for the next generation. David lived his life in such a way that secured generational blessing for everyone coming after him. He walked with God to a point where God decided not just to bless him but to also bless his children and his entire lineage.

David wanted to build a house for God. He felt uncomfortable with the fact that he lived in a mansion, whereas the ark of God was placed in a tent. God saw the intent of his heart and told him not to build Him a house, rather He will make his children build the house and in turn God promised to build David a house that will last forever. How we live our lives will not only affect us but it will also affect everyone coming after us. To live a life that bestows blessings on our children requires living consciously in the will of God. Striving daily to understand the mind of God per time and living in line with His will. What kind of legacy are you passing to the people coming after you?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee."
Psalm 20:1

RBT Passage: 2 Timothy 1-4

"Sometimes our denial denies our generation a testimony."

- Gbenga Kotila

Monday, December 16

Luke 1:57-66

JOHN THE BAPTIST BORN TO ELIZABETH

He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Luke 1:63-64

Waiting is one the most difficult things for humankind to do. Often times, we want quick manifestation of everything God has said. While it is true that God's words will surely come to pass, we must not also forget that one of life's principles is patience. It takes time for every seed to bring forth fruits. But no matter how long it takes, once a seed is sown, it will surely spring forth.

Elizabeth and Zachariah had been without a child for many years. Imagine how fervent they must have prayed to God for the gift of a promised child. Imagine the insults they would have received from people, the pity looks and the gossip about what could be wrong with them. Despite all these, they chose to wait for the promise of God and it came to pass in due time. At the christening of the baby, it was evident that both parents heard from God concerning the identity of their child because they both gave him the same name at different times and everyone saw that God was indeed with the child. Waiting can be difficult but when we ask God for grace to wait patiently we will be able to wait for His promises to be fulfilled. God cannot lie. Whatever He has said concerning your life, He will surely do. Just trust Him!

- **Birthday Blessing:** Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jeremiah 33:3

RBT Passage: Philemon 1; Titus 1-3

"The future is as bright as the promises of God."

- Christian Quote

Tuesday, December 17

Luke 1:67-79

ZECHARIAH BLESSES GOD FOR JOHN'S MINISTRY

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.

Luke 1:67-68, NIV

Having an encounter with God brings about wholesome change in people's lives. The kind of turnaround that happens after an encounter with God can be really amazing. It completely changes a person and can make every wrong be made right. It is quite amazing that the same Zachariah who doubted God's Word earlier before the birth of his son later saw clearly the plan and purpose of God through his child, John. Our God is full of mercy and He is always willing to forgive us the moment we acknowledge our wrongs and repent of them. The moment Zachariah declared the name 'John' for his son, which is a sign of obedience and submission to God's will, the Holy Spirit opened his spiritual eyes and He was able to speak about the purpose and the future of his child. God is still in the business of speaking through His anointed servants in our generation. We should be sensitive enough to know when He is speaking and be obedient enough to respond to His Word. When He sends His word, He releases power to backup it so that it will bring evident changes in our lives. How has God's Word changed you? Pray for a special encounter today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." John 6:37

RBT Passage: Hebrews 1-4

"God speaks to those who take time to listen and He listens to those who take time to pray." - Unknown

Wednesday, December 18

Isaiah 7:10-17

YOUNG WOMAN'S PREGNANCY IS SIGN OF IMMANUEL

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 NIV

The soul of everyman craves for peace especially in the midst of chaos. We all want an assurance that the difficulty we are passing through will soon be over and every passing day we want to believe that we are closer to the end than before. The feeling was the same for the people of Judah. King Ahaz and the people of Judah were troubled and confused when they heard the king of Assyria was set to attack Jerusalem. In their state of fear, God sent a word of encouragement to them, assuring them of His presence. God promised to send a sign by making a virgin conceive and give birth to a Son that will be named Immanuel. No matter the problem or challenges we might be facing in life, Immanuel, meaning God with us, is the greatest comfort we can ever have. Prophet Isaiah gave this word of assurance to the people and all their fears were gone. As believers, our confidence must never be in the abundance of our wealth or tactical approach to solving problems, but our confidence must always be in the assurance of God's presence in our lives. God is our refuge and His presence is our peace.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" Ezekiel 36:27, NKJV

RBT Passage: Hebrews 5-8

"Worry is believing God won't get it right." -**Todo Wagner**

Thursday, December 19

Luke 1:26-33

VIRGIN CONCEPTION ANNOUNCED TO MARY

You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. Luke 1:31, NIV

It is easier for a couple trusting God for the fruit of the womb to believe a prophecy for the gift of a child, than it is for a virgin who is still single. In this instance it is a lot difficult to believe and fear of disappointment sets in. This was the difference between Zachariah and Mary's responses to the same prophecy. Mary, in her simplicity made further enquiry from the angel about how the prophecy will come to pass. On the other hand, one can say that Mary was asking the angel whether there another way to get pregnant apart from having a union with a man? God saw the humble and sincere heart of Mary and gave answers to her questions. When God's Word hits us at angles we find impossible to understand, instead of doubting, we can choose to ask for more light in the same direction. God is never weary of providing answers to our questions, provided they are borne out of a sincere desire to know more of Him and not to doubt His ability to help us. Everything God is doing in our lives is for a purpose. He made a virgin to conceive because He wants Immanuel to be born. Also, believe that everything God is doing in your life is for a purpose.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "For I will look on you favourably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you." Leviticus 26:9, NKJV

RBT Passage: Hebrews 9-10

"Stop talking yourself out of what God has called you to do."

-Steven Furtick

Friday, December 20

Luke 1:34-38

MARY ACCEPTS MIRACLE OF PREGNANCY

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. Luke 1:38, NIV

Response is a very vital aspect of communication. When a party gives a piece of information and there is no response or a negative response is given, it may discourage the one who initiated the communication and cause communication breakdown. When the angel gave Mary the news of what was about to happen to her, she asked a question to clear her curiosity. Even though she was surprised, she received the news with total surrender to the will of God. She knew that what the angel said was beyond what she can bring to pass on her own, so instead of bothering herself about it, she chose to believe that the One who has said it is able to bring it to pass.

The major problem believers have is that in our mind, we have set a limit for God. We try to predict what He can do and what He cannot do. So when He is speaking we have a way of shutting our ears to things that are difficult to relate with. But the truth is that God still speaks today and He still does miracles, but how we respond to these things matters. When God tells you about things around you how do you react? Do you react in faith or doubt? How we react determines the extent of God's manifestation we will enjoy.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "... may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness." 2 Cor. 9:10, NKJV

RBT Passage: Hebrews 11-13

"God never made a promise that was too good to be true."

—Christian Quote

Saturday, December 21

Matthew 1:18-25

JOSEPH OBEDIENTLY HONORS MARY'S ROLE

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 1:24-25, NIV

Dr Viktor Frankl, the author of the book "Man's Search for Meaning," was imprisoned by the Nazis in World War II because he was a Jew. His wife, children, and parents were all killed in the holocaust. The Gestapo made him strip himself totally. As they cut away His wedding ring, Viktor said to himself, "You can take my wife, you can take away my children, you can strip me of my clothes and my freedom, but there is one thing no person can ever take away from me – that is my freedom to choose how I will react to what happens to me!"

Even under the most difficult circumstances of life, happiness is a choice that transforms our tragedies into triumph. Joseph was already engaged to Mary, the love of his life, only to discover that she had become pregnant. The first question that would cross anyone's mind is "by who?" Joseph could have chosen to leave Mary and nobody would have been able to blame him for his action, but he chose to believe the Word of the Lord concerning his seemingly unfortunate situation. How do you react to situations God allowed on your path to fulfilment? Are you careful enough to see the hand of God in your life? Look beyond what people say around and focus on the Word of God.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you." Exo 23:25

RBT Passage: James 1-5

Faith takes God without any 'ifs'. D.L. Moody

Sunday, December 22

Luke 1:39-56

BLESSED MOTHERS OF THE FAITHFUL

"Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" Luke 1:45, NIV

Many times people try so hard to find different ways to please God. Some can do anything and everything within their capacity as far as they believe that God will be moved. In as much as it is not wrong to do things for God, trying to win God's heart by our actions might be a difficult task. One sure thing that moves the heart of God anytime is faith. When we believe God's Word, we move His heart and hand to fulfil that which He has spoken.

Elizabeth and Mary got the word of God through an angel and they chose to believe it against all odds. They knew God's Word is superior to whatever they might be facing and so they stood on the promises of God and generations after them called blessed. When God's word comes to us, how do we react to it? It may not come the way we want it or sound good in our ears, the truth is that our emotions is not strong enough to stop God's Word but our doubt can hinder it. James said in the Scripture that a double-minded man will not receive anything from God. Do you also desire to be celebrated like Mary and Elizabeth? Then have faith in God by meditating on His Word and choosing to believe in Him at all times.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." James 4:10.

RBT Passage: 1 Peter 1-5; 2 Peter 1-3

Only God Himself fully appreciates the influence of a Christian mother in the moulding of character in her children. —Anonymous

Monday, December 23

Psalm 89:19-37

GOD'S FOREVER COVENANT WITH DAVID

I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. Psalm 89:28, NIV

When God decides to honour a man, there is no one that can stand against it. Sometimes, you may even wonder what God saw in a person that made him or her qualify for such mercy. Many times, what makes people qualify is beyond what they did or did not do, it is simply God's decision to bestow His honour on them. David was one of such rare personality whom God chose to honour despite his numerous sins. God singled him out and established a covenant with him forever.

The covenant God made with David was eventually fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who came as the Son of God and at the same time the Son of David. This covenant has also been transferred to everyone that chooses to believe in the sacrifice of Christ for humanity. As believers can enjoy everything God promised David because we have an inheritance in Christ Jesus. We can be assured that whatever God has promised us will surely come to pass, irrespective of what we are passing through presently. Since God's promises have also been established in your life forever, key into it and enjoy these blessings forever.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" Phil. 4:19

RBT Passage: 1 John 1-5

God's love is the surest anchor in life's stormy blast.

—T. Thomas

Tuesday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:11b-17

THE LORD WILL BUILD DAVID'S HOUSE

"The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you. 2 Samuel 7:11b, NIV

In one of his messages on praise, Joel Osteen gave an example of his daughter who came to him to request for a car as a birthday present. After she made sure he had given his consent, she left with full assurance that her dad will definitely buy the car. Once in a while, she would sit on his laps singing his praise and telling him how grateful she was for the car he is yet to buy. At such times, he would feel like making the car two instead of one. Many people wonder what made David so precious to God. Why God will be willing to do anything and everything for him. The answer is simple. David knew how to trust God for His promises. He knew how to praise God for just anything, even the things He has not done.

God, in today's passage promised to build a house for David and establish his throne forever. This promise was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. If only we can trust God like David, a lot of our problems would have become a testimony. What has God promised you? Learn to trust Him wholeheartedly and see His power wrought wonder on your behalf.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you and your house..." Deut. 26:11

RBT Passage: 2 John 1; 3 John 1; Jude 1

The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us. -C.S. Lewis

NO GOD LIKE OUR GOD

"How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. 2 Samuel 7:22, NIV

A teacher was telling her class how everything in the world was formed prove to them that God does not exist. She said, "Look out the window. You can't see God, can you?" The kids shook their heads. "Then our logical conclusion is that God does not exist, does He?" she asked at last, certain that she had won her audience over. But a girl said, "Miss Smith, just because we can't see it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. We could do brain surgery and investigate the parts of your brain and see the brain patterns in your head. But we couldn't prove that you've had a single thought today. Does that mean that you haven't thought anything today? Just 'cause you can't see it doesn't mean it doesn't exist."

David, in today's passage does not need anything to prove that God exist. The things God did for him are enough proof of His existence. David considered everything happening around him and gave praises to God for them. He offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God, acknowledging what He has done for him. When we around us, we will discover that a lot of thing would not have come into being if not for God's intervention. At such times, we should be bold to proclaim the name of the Lord and declare His faithfulness among the nations. Endeavour to share your experience of God's faithfulness with someone today.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "May He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion" Psalm 20:2

RBT Passage: Revelation 1-3

Even in our dark times, God is still there. His light still shines. —Anonymous

Thursday, December 26

2 Samuel 7:23-29

NO PEOPLE LIKE GOD'S PEOPLE

And who is like your people Israel – the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself... 2 Samuel 7:23, NIV

There is no nation in the world as special and God-acclaimed as the people of Israel. God loved Abraham and brought forth a nation from his lineage. Interestingly, the Saviour of the world came from this nation and thereby fulfils God's promises to Abraham that "through thy seed, all the nations of the world will be blessed". King David was aware of this wonderful promise of God to His people. He, in his prayer of thanksgiving, acknowledged how special his people are to God. He based his judgments on what God has done since their exodus from Egypt to Canaan land and how God's love has sustained them.

The community of believers is the present day nation of Israel. God made us His people by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The death of Jesus Christ provided us a place among those who will inherit the promises and blessings of Abraham. We should see ourselves therefore as full partakers of His special choice and always live to show that we belong to God's family. Do not allow the devil to feed you with his lies. Re-affirm your sonship in Christ every day, especially at difficult times and you will experience tremendous change.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..." Joel 2:25a

RBT Passage: Revelation 4-7

You may have some big obstacles, but if you will be grateful for where you are, then God can get you to where you want to be. —Anonymous

Friday, December 27

1 Chronicles 22:2-5

DAVID SELECTS MATERIALS FOR TEMPLE

David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD should be of great magnificence...in the sight of all the nations. Therefore I will make preparations for it." So David made extensive preparations before his death. 1 Chronicles 22:5, NIV

When I was in primary school, a classmate of mine gave something to someone and the person rejected it. In order to cover up the shame of rejection, the giver quickly said, "I didn't want to give you in the first place, I just wanted to test you." Even though God rejected the offer of David to build a temple for Him, David didn't see it as a discouragement. He went further to prepare the materials for the building of the temple. He not only prepared the things his son would need to build the temple, he made sure that those materials were the best anyone could find around.

This singular act of David further reflects why God loved him. Giving to God's work does not have to come directly from you with your name attached to it. It can be given without anyone noticing. What matters to God is the intent of our hearts. God loves a cheerful giver and in every way we can, let us provide for God's work without calling attention to ourselves. Also, when we have the privilege to give to God, let us give God the best and not the rest. What we give to God reflects the kind of value we place on Him.

- **Birthday Gift:** *"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near." Isaiah 55:6*

RBT Passage: Revelation 8-11

Until obedience is absolute, pleasing God is an illusion.

—Bode Thomas

DAVID ORIENTS BUILDERS ABOUT TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION

He said to them, "...Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD...into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD." 1 Chronicles 22:18-19, NIV

Leadership is a lifetime responsibility. It can be said that a leader have succeeded in leadership only when he is able to set a pace for the next generation to also succeed. David served the Lord with all his heart and he led God's people to follow the laws of God. When he was about to die, he made resources available for the construction of God's temple and also gave instructions on how to go about it.

God is a detailed and orderly God. Just like when the first tabernacle was erected in the wilderness when Moses received instructions from God on how to build it. David also gave instructions to the builders on how to go about the building of the temple of God. We cannot do God's work in our way. In order to please God, His work must be done His own way. This can only be done when we pay attention to God's instruction through the mouth of His prophets/servants. Where ever God has placed us, as children of God, people are looking up to us for instructions on how to please God and follow His will. Are you ready to fulfil this assignment? David did this before he died. Will you also lead others to follow Christ?

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you..." Gen. 12:3a

RBT Passage: Revelation 12-14

Discipleship is a lifestyle filled with relationships; a life of pouring yourself out for others. —Anonymous

Sunday, December 29

1 Chronicles 17:16-27

DAVID'S PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? 1 Chronicles 17:16-17, NIV

In every relationship, praise and thanksgiving go a long way in encouraging one another. It tells others that their efforts and sacrifices are being appreciated and it also says, I want more of your efforts. Few verses before today's text show that God had just rejected David's gesture to build a house for Him. The natural response should have disappointment and discouragement, but David chose to praise the Lord. David enjoyed a lot of God's blessings and favour as a result of his constant praise and thanksgiving to God. It was more like, the more the praise, the more the blessing.

This is true because God responds and dwells in the praises of His people. Our praises and thanksgiving to God must be more than our requests. This is because while thanksgiving opens the gate to God's presence, praise opens His court and in His presence, all requests are turned into testimonies. It must therefore be the habit of every child of God to praise God in all things. In whatever situation we find ourselves, we should choose to praise God because we are sure that He will cause all things to work together for our good.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principalities and power." Col. 2:10

RBT Passage: Revelation 15-17

You can't choose what happens in your life, but you can choose how to respond. — T. Thomas

Monday, December 30

Revelation 11:15-19

HEAVENLY VISION OF THE ARK

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. Revelation 11:19, NIV

When God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, He commanded him to build according to the pattern he was shown. This means the tabernacle and the ark in it was a copy of the original in heaven. According to our text today, a heavenly mode of worship was described as the twenty-four elders fall down to worship God and to sing of His praise. It was seen in this heavenly temple as well the ark of covenant, which symbolizes the presence of God.

As believers, we should always remind ourselves that we are the temple of the living God and that the Ark of the Covenant is our heart. Our heart is the seat where the Holy Spirit dwells. Therefore, we must do all that is within our power to guard the content of our heart, so that we can make our heart conducive for the Holy Spirit. What we feed our ears and hearts will determine how receptive we will be to the Holy Spirit. It will also affect the quality of our worship. Therefore, let us continually keep God's temple holy so that our worship will be acceptable before God always.

- **Birthday Blessing:** "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you." Genesis 12:2

RBT Passage: Revelation 18-19

Nothing moulds a man like serving God. — T. Thomas

Tuesday, December 31

1 Corinthians 14:26-33a

AN ORDERLY WORSHIP SERVICE

But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

1 Corinthians 14:40, NIV

Reading through the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, we will discover that God is orderly and peaceful. He is not a God of chaos. In the account of creation in Genesis, God created all things one after the other so as to maintain order and balance. While I was growing up, I have been to some church meetings that was disorganised, scattered and out of control and I wondered what form of worship service it was. All these were allowed in the name of “the spirit is flowing.” Apostle Paul saw this in the Corinthian church and he corrected that all things be done in order (1Cor 14:26-29).

The move of the Spirit during worship may not be predictable but how we handle it is what matters so that we do not appear disorganised or confused. It is our responsibility to see that order is maintained in our worship. This is not a law but a good counsel given by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Apostle Paul to the church. Our God is a God of order. Worship service to God should be orderly in honour of His presence. As path of your preparation for the new year, determine to be conscious of God's presence everywhere you go, especially during worship service.

- **Birthday Blessing:** “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

RBT Passage: Revelation 20-22

God's work done in God's way will never lack God's provision. — Hudson Taylor

NAMES AND CONTACTS OF MARKETERS

S/N	NAME	LOCATION	PHONE NO
1	BAPTIST BOOKSTORE	IBADAN	8028252317
2	HIS GRACE CHRISTIAN BK SHOP	IBADAN	8067910629
3	J & G OLAWUWO	IBADAN	8139108326
4	TRIPLE T	IBADAN	7065588322
5	WOLY MOLY	IBADAN	8132185799
6	ESTYOM	IBADAN	8159990122
7	ADEOTI AMOS	ISEYIN	8034316906
8	KAFETO	OYO	7033977773
9	MRS AKINOLA	OYO	8033681008
10	AYO OLU FOUNTAIN BK SHOP	OYO	8034658654
11	BAPTIST BOOKSTOTRE	OGBOMOSO	7032856315
12	GIDEON ADELEKE	OGBOMOSO	8035368021
13	ACT BOOKSHOP	OGBOMOSO	8069056768
14	JUMITH	OSOGBO	8062186417
15	OSUN BAPTIST CONFERENCE	OSOGBO	8039588675
16	AABO JESU	AGO ARE	
17	POPOOLA	SAKI	8054160308
18	R F ADEOLA	SAKI	7031195167

19	AJAO, F B C	AWE	8088496039
20	MAAJA	OKE IHO	8024993424
21	EMMANUEL VENTURES	ILORIN	7032740211
22	ROYAL HERITAGE	OFFA	7037363420
23	ADESOPE	ABEOKUTA	8032331191
24	FIDEMALIA	ABEOKUTA	8030733766
25	BOOKS & MORE	ABEOKUTA	8033464346
26	MRS AKINOLA	OGUN	8068823928
27	GOD'S HERITAGE	OGUN	8060401096
28	MRS OGUNMODEDE	SANGO OTA	8038512977
29	FEMILAYO BOOKS	SANGO OTA	8028330194
30	MRS STELLA AMOSU	IFO	8068823928
31	TIOLUTADE	IBAF0	8024729261
32	FBC MOWE	MOWE	8066615675
33	OLASUNKANMI O	ONDO	8035369960
34	ONDO BAPTIST CONFERENCE	ONDO	7030132767
35	LAGOS BAPTIST BOOKSHOP	LAGOS	8158893168
36	OGO OLUWA	LAGOS	8056274479
37	ALABI TAIWO	LAGOS	8032381772
38	NEW HEIGHTS	LAGOS	8053416644

39	FEMIKE	LAGOS	8029896551
40	MRS OLORUNIN-SOLA AFOLAKEMI	LAGOS	8025329960
41	MRS ADEDIRAN	LAGOS	
42	SHALOM BOOKSHOP	LAGOS	8139524641
43	MRS OLALEYE	LAGOS	8159990015
44	RUTH PRAISE	LAGOS	8028381492
45	DEDOTUN STORES	LAGOS	8037161996
46	ADEJUMOBI	LAGOS	8139333795
47	J A ABISOYE	LAGOS	8035635153
48	MRS LADOKUN	LAGOS	8055358226
49	MRS BABATUNDE	LAGOS	
50	GWADAH YUSUF	KADUNA	8028190210
51	BTS KADUNA	KADUNA	7037971907
52	DEISA BOOK SHOP	KADUNA	8065282694
53	BAPTIST BK STORE	KADUNA	8029005057
54	IBRAHIM AUDU	YOLA	8065544731
55	ANGELA KATUGA	YOLA	7063074988
56	OGUNLOWO	JOS	8159094127
57	MRS FABUNMI	JOS	8161112722
58	PIUS N. G	JALINGO	7030651385
59	MRS BAMIGBOLA SARAH	KOTANGORA	8039678267

60	FBC KUBWA	ABUJA	8059657108
61	BISFEM	ABUJA	8035886807
62	FBC GARKI	ABUJA	8159994444
63	2ND B C MUBI	MUBI	8065283627
64	BAYELSA BAPTIST CONFERENCE	YENOGOA	8159993704
65	OLULOWO	OTUOKE	8037218286
66	RIVERS BAPTIST CONFERENCE	PORTHACOURT	7028001828
67	PROVIDENCE DELTA BAPTIST CONFERENCE	WARRI	8037366385
68	ISHIAGWO	WARRI	8033560502
69	ETHIOPE-DELTA BAPTIST CONFERENCE	SAPELE	8035764651
70	KIZITO	DELTA	8087112647
71	FBC OWERRI	OWERRI	8037103368
72	FAITHFULNESS	BENIN	8111695040