

# God's Word

for  
God's Workers

A DAILY  
DEVOTIONAL  
GUIDE FOR  
CHILDREN'S  
WORKERS

Volume 1



SAM DOHERTY

# **GOD'S WORD FOR GOD'S WORKERS**



*A book of daily meditations on the  
Word of God written primarily  
to help children's workers  
in their devotional life.*

**SAM DOHERTY**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

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It has been upon my heart for some time to produce a series of meditations which would help and encourage children's workers in their daily Quiet Time, when they are studying and reflecting upon the Word of God.

It is absolutely vital that those who minister to children set aside a definite part of each day to be alone with God, to worship Him, to talk to Him and to read and meditate upon His Word. This time is what is usually known as a Quiet Time, and this book is written to give you some guidance and assistance with it.

I have included 182 meditations which are divided into 26 sections, each with seven meditations on one central theme. My suggestion is that you use each section for one week and this would give you a meditation for each day of that week. In this way you will have enough daily meditations for six months. Later we shall publish a second volume to give a total of one year's daily meditations. Each meditation is based upon or around one or two Bible verses and their context. These are outlined at the beginning of each meditation. And I would strongly recommend that you open your Bible each time, at the Bible verse reference given – and read the Bible passage in which the verse is included – so that you can better understand and benefit from the meditation.

These meditations are not a substitute for reading your Bible. They should encourage you to read it, and to be blessed by it.

I have chosen one theme for each week, and the seven meditations for that week centre on that theme. I feel it is a help to be able to follow one theme right through the week. A list of these themes is included in the outline of the book's contents.

All the meditations contained in the book are based upon messages I have preached and devotionals which I have shared with my co-workers over 55 years of ministry with Child Evangelism Fellowship. And they have always been well received. Consequently they are, I believe, of practical and not theoretical value. Some are more or less original; others are based on the ministry of others; and many have been influenced by listening to men of God, and reading books written by them. Many of these men I have known down through the years.

I trust these meditations will really help you in your time alone with God, that they will stimulate you to study His Word in more detail, help you in your walk

with God and challenge and encourage you in your ministry to the boys and girls.

In addition, and as a by-product, those of you who have the opportunity to speak to others and help them in their lives and ministries, may want to use some of these devotionals as a basis for your messages. You are welcome to do so.

# Week 1:

## Theme - The Attributes Of God

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### *Day 1*

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent” (John 17 v3).*

What we are, how we pray, how we worship, how we evangelize, how we live, how we handle our problems – all depend on our concept or understanding of God.

Charles Spurgeon in his early days as a Baptist pastor in London said, “I believe that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continual investigation of the great subject of the Deity.”

None of us knows as much about God as we should – and the result is weakness in our lives and ministries. Yet God has revealed Himself in His Word and He wants us to know and understand what He is like. Then, on the basis of that head knowledge, He wants us to come to know Him more and more in a personal way – as our verse for today reminds us.

In the Bible we can find, read and study the attributes of God. The attributes of God simply explain what God is like. The Bible outlines for us many of these attributes – His holiness, justice, love, goodness, grace, mercy, patience, majesty, eternity, sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, faithfulness, truthfulness, wisdom, jealousy, immutability – and many others. And one of the most helpful and blessed studies you and I can engage in is to study each of these attributes, as revealed in God’s Word, and to know and worship God on the basis of what we learn. Some of these attributes are “noncommunicable”. They are peculiar and special to God and God alone. But a number of God’s attributes are “communicable”. That means that they should be reflected and visible in us (to a much lesser extent of course). And so we should always apply those attributes especially to ourselves.

During the remainder of this week we will study three of God’s attributes.

There are two important facts to remember:

- A study of God’s attributes will always be a great blessing to the one who is willing to take time to do it thoroughly. It will help you to know more about God, to know Him better and more personally, and to worship Him more intelligently.

- A knowledge of God's attributes (with their personal and practical applications) will similarly be a great blessing to the children you minister to. So you should teach them simply, attractively and thoroughly both in your evangelism of unsaved children and in your edification of saved children.

## ***Day 2***

***"But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases"*** (Psalm 115 v3).

I would like to study three of God's attributes in our daily meditations this week, and we will commence with a truth about God which has had more influence on my life and ministry than any other of His attributes, as outlined in the Bible.

### ***God Is Sovereign***

I have often spoken and written on this great attribute of God – but I can't help coming back to it again and again, because when I first came to see it and really understand it a number of years ago, it became a turning point in my life. As a Christian and full-time children's worker I had always believed the truth of God's sovereignty in a qualified sense. "Yes, God is sovereign but .....!" The truth is that I had not believed this truth in an absolute sense. I had not really believed that God is sovereign and that there are no buts! Our verse reminds us that God is in Heaven and can do whatever He wants to do.

This truth of God's sovereignty is taught again and again all through the Bible. There are many verses like Daniel 4 v34 and 35:

*"I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him Who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"* (Daniel 4 v34 and 35).

And as I came to understand this truth my whole outlook was changed.

First of all I saw that God was sovereign in CREATION. He made everything exactly as He wished and when He wished, and for His own purpose and pleasure. And He even allowed sin to come into His wonderful creation because He also knew that He would bring out of it something even more wonderful – a redeemed church.

- I see God's sovereignty in the creation of the world and I worship Him.

*“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4 v11).*

- I see God’s sovereignty in the creation of myself as a special work.

*“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139 v14a).*

He used our parents to produce our bodies, and they did so according to His design, but He created directly the souls which indwell those bodies. He was sovereign in the creation of my body, my personality, and my soul.

As I see this great truth I realise that what I am and have comes from God. Therefore I accept myself realizing that God wants to use me as I am – and I should not in any way criticize Him for what He has done. Nor should I be jealous of other people. Above all He wants me to glorify Him.

*“Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him” (Isaiah 43 v7).*

### **Day 3**

***“The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all” (Psalm 103 v19).***

God was, and is, sovereign in CREATION. He is also sovereign in PROVIDENCE. That simply means that He is in absolute CONTROL over all that happens. He is Lord. Our verse for today tells us that He rules over everything.

- He not only created the world, He maintains it and keeps it in existence. He did not create the world and then leave it to “run by itself”. He *“upholds all things by the word of His power”* (Hebrews 1 v3) and *“by Him all things consist”* (Colossians 1 v17).

- He controls everything and everyone in the world:

*“All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?” (Daniel 4 v35).*

This includes the forces of nature, all creation, all men, all nations, all circumstances, the weather, history and Satan.

As I see this great truth I realise that there are no accidents in my life. Everything that happens to me has either been sent by God or allowed by God, and is for my good (Romans 8 v28). Therefore I should accept my circumstances and not complain or rebel. Above all I should trust Him.

God is sovereign in creation, sovereign in providence, and sovereign, thirdly, in REDEMPTION:

- Firstly, He was sovereign in the initiation of redemption at Calvary. The cross was not an accident, nor an afterthought, nor an alternative. It was the central part of God's plan of redemption:

*"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you"* (1 Peter 1 v19, 20).

- Secondly, He is sovereign in the application of that redemption to individual sinners.

It is God Who always takes the first step in our salvation:

*"No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him"* (John 6 v44a).

*"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit ...."* (John 15 v16a).

This does not deny or rule out the sinner's responsibility to repent and trust Christ, but he can only do so as God the Holy Spirit works in his heart.

As I see this great truth I pray for the salvation of others, trusting God to save them. I do not become frustrated or impatient, and I believe that nothing or no one is too hard for my sovereign God. And, at the same time, I trust Him for the strength and supplies for my ministry and for the salvation of boys and girls.

## **Day 4**

*"Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all"* (1 Chronicles 29 v11).

We have looked at the sovereignty of God over the last two days. Today and tomorrow we will look at one of the most important, yet most neglected, of God's attributes.

## **God Is Majestic**

Majesty is the Latin word for greatness and when we say that God is majestic we are acknowledging His greatness and we are voicing our respect for, and reverence of, Him – as David is doing in our verse for today.

David has come to see and understand this great truth about God which, together with His sovereignty, show forth His majesty. And he comes back to



this same truth over and over again in Psalm 145 v5 and Psalm 95 v3 when he wrote:

*“I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works.”*

*“For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods”.*

Our God is transcendent – which means that He is exalted and that He is far, far above us. He is exalted above the created universe – so far above it that human thought cannot imagine it. He is the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57 v15). He is not the highest in an ascending order of beings: animal → man → angels → God. He stands completely apart and at an infinite distance from His creation and His creatures; He is far above it; He dwells *“in the light which no man can approach unto”* (1 Timothy 6 v16).

And so in Isaiah chapter 40 the writer cries, *“Behold Your God”* (verse 9). Look at His works (verse 12); look at His control of the nations (verse 15); look at His creation and control of the world (verse 22); look at His power over rulers (verse 23); look at His creation and His naming of the stars (verse 26). Then listen to His words in verse 25:

*“To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal? says the Holy One.”*

We need a new vision of the greatness and majesty of our God. It is true that God is a personal God, that He is our Father, and that we can approach Him at any time through His Son Jesus Christ. It is true that He is, as Isaiah puts it in chapter 40 v11, our Shepherd and that He cares for us, feeds us and leads us. But we must at the same time see and understand that He is also our awesome, glorious, majestic, transcendent God, and while we can approach Him and come to Him at any time, we should always do so in reverence and godly fear.

*“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”* (Psalm 46 v10).

*“..... let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hebrews 12 v28).

## Day 5

*“Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name”* (1 Chronicles 29 v12, 13).

We need to have a vision of the majesty and greatness of God like the one Isaiah had in Isaiah chapter 6. And we should compare this to the visions

given to Ezekiel in chapter one of his book and to John in Revelation chapter one.

Dr. J I Packer writes with regard to the majesty of God:

“This is knowledge which Christians today largely lack and that is one reason why our faith is so feeble and our worship so flabby. We are modern men, and modern men have great thoughts of man but generally small thoughts of God. Today vast stress is laid on the thought that God is personal. This is true but we must not give the impression that He is a Person like us – weak, inadequate, ineffective. He is personal – gentle, tender, sympathetic and patient – but the Bible never lets us lose sight of His majesty and unlimited dominion over all His creatures.”

Dr. Tozer writes:

“We must practice the art of long and loving mediation upon the majesty of God. This will take some effort for the concept of majesty has all but disappeared from the human race. The focal point of man’s interest is now himself. This must be reversed by a deliberate act of the will and kept so by a patient effort of the mind.”

When you and I have this vision of the majesty of God – or even just a glimpse of it - there will be several consequences:

- We will be reverent in His presence.  
I like the old-fashioned quietness and awe before a church service starts – with the rustling of Bible pages and the quiet playing of an organ – rather than the hustle, bustle and gossip which precedes so many of our services. It seems that the more evangelical we are the noisier we become. Personally, I appreciate an atmosphere of reverence and silence in the presence of God.  
*“But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him”* (Habakkuk 2 v20).
- We will not be casual and offhand as we speak to God in prayer, but we will speak to Him reverently – as the disciples did in the Acts of the Apostles, rejoicing and fresh from the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Yet they spoke to God with reverence and awe.  
*“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, Who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them”* (Acts 4 v24).
- Above all we will worship Him – our great, awesome and majestic God as David continues to do – in today’s Bible verse.

## Day 6

***“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8 v28).***

As we understand the sovereignty of God we will trust Him completely. As we see the majesty of God we will come to Him in reverence and awe. Today and tomorrow we will look at a third of God’s attributes and try to understand what it means and how it can best be applied to our lives and ministries.

### ***God Is Wise***

The Bible teaches over and over again that God is wise:

*“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11 v33).*

*“To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen” (Romans 16 v27).*

What is the wisdom of God? Wisdom is not knowledge. It is more than that. Wisdom is the application of knowledge to a particular situation.

God is omniscient - He knows everything. But God is also wise. He knows perfectly how to apply His knowledge to every situation – and that includes your situation. God’s wisdom is His ability to know what is best for you, to know how to achieve what is best, and then to work so as to achieve it.

Three steps are therefore involved as God in His wisdom deals with us:

- God knows what is best for us, and that which will most glorify Him:
  - ✓ He has a plan for your life. He wants to make you more like the Lord Jesus.
  - ✓ He has a plan for your service. He knows how and where He wants to use you as a part of His plan and purpose to bring an innumerable multitude of people to obey and glorify Him.

God knows what is best. You don’t. You are limited in both your knowledge and your wisdom. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55 v8, 9).*

God’s plan and purpose for you is not a trouble free life and the avoidance of anything which is painful or upsetting. These could, according to Romans 8 v28 (our verse for today), be part of His plan. If you were planning to bake a cake you would first of all assemble the ingredients – the flour,

the eggs, the cocoa, the baking soda and so on. You would not want to taste these ingredients on their own. But when they are mixed together and cooked, the taste will be wonderful. In the same way God, in His wisdom, mixes and “bakes” the different and often difficult situations in your life to produce the best result.

- God knows how to achieve His plans for your life and service. He sees the whole way ahead, and the various steps which will be needed to make you more like His Son and bring you to the place where you can best serve Him and glorify Him. You do not know how to achieve these plans, and so you need to trust Him to do that which is best for you and that which will bring Him most glory.

## ***Day 7***

***“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11 v33).***

God is wise.

- He has a plan for your life and service.
- He knows how to achieve that plan.
- He works through circumstances, events and people to achieve that plan. He knows what is best for you and He has the power to achieve it. He works with flawless precision. He sees everything in focus, everything in relation to everything else. You are not able to do this! Today’s verse tells us that His wisdom is far greater than ours – and that He knows best. Wisdom is active. God not only knows and plans but He works to achieve in you what He has determined to do even if, like Jonah, you try to run away from Him. His purposes and plans cannot be frustrated. We know also that God’s wisdom and power are closely related.
  - ✓ Wisdom without power would be pathetic.
  - ✓ Power without wisdom would be frightening.
  - ✓ Boundless power and infinite wisdom unite in God.

God is wise. He knows and chooses the best and highest goal for you, and He then achieves that goal by the best and highest means. We can see many examples of this divine wisdom in the lives of men and women in the Bible:

- ✓ God used the trials and difficulties of Joseph’s life to refine his character and to bring him to a position where he could save the lives of many people (including his own family).

- ✓ God used the testimony of Stephen to speak to Saul and to begin a process which would lead to his conversion.
- ✓ Above all God used the death of Jesus Christ to bring salvation to countless millions.

All of these events seemed so dark and discouraging – but God was working out His plans according to His wisdom. And He is doing the same in your life.

**How should you react when you understand that God is wise?**

- You should believe with all your heart that He is in complete control – no matter what has happened.
- You must put your hand into His Hand and trust Him completely – even if you are bewildered and in the dark. God knows what He is doing. He is using all these things to make you what He wants you to be.
- You must accept whatever comes with joy and peace – and without complaining or bitterness.
- You must worship Him, the all wise God – with all your heart.
- You should ask God to help you to be wise in your relationships with others and in your ministry. Don't forget God's promise in James 1 verse 5: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."*



Revelation 4 v11

*"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created"*

## Week 2:

# Theme - The Faithfulness Of God

---

### Day 1

*“They are new every morning; great is Your **faithfulness**”*  
(Lamentations 3 v23).

One of the greatest truths I have ever learned is the truth that God is faithful. I believe that an understanding of this truth has been a key factor in my life and ministry – over and over again.

Consequently I would like to spend this whole week meditating upon God's faithfulness.

Before going into detail on this theme I would like to remind you of the basic biblical principle which we dealt with last week and which we all need to understand.

How we live, how we pray, how we serve, how we handle problems, all depend upon how we see and understand God. Dr. Tozer writes, “A right concept of God is basic to practical Christian living.”

Our prayer life for example depends upon and is conditioned by our understanding of key truths about God:

- If we believe that God is **sovereign** we have BOLDNESS in prayer.
- If we believe that God is **majestic** we have REVERENCE in prayer.
- If we believe that God is **wise** we have PATIENCE in prayer.
- If we believe that God is **faithful** we have CONFIDENCE in prayer.

Faithfulness is one of God's greatest attributes.

#### **What does the word “faithful” mean?**

The dictionary meaning of the word faithful is “loyal, constant, true”. However the very opposite of this, namely unfaithfulness, is very common in our world today.

- Many are unfaithful in their **actions** to those who love them.
  - ✓ Husbands are unfaithful to their wives.
  - ✓ Wives are unfaithful to their husbands.
- Many are unfaithful in their **words** and make promises which they don't keep:
  - ✓ Sometimes they forget their promises.
  - ✓ Sometimes they are not able to keep them.
  - ✓ Sometimes they break them deliberately.

But God is not like that. The Bible tells us that He is faithful, as our verse for today reminds us:

- He is faithful in His **actions** – what He does. He never lets us down.
  - He is faithful in His **words** – what He says. He never breaks a promise.
- God can be trusted – completely, absolutely and eternally – because He is FAITHFUL.

## **Day 2**

***“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God Who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments”***  
(Deuteronomy 7 v9).

During this week we are thinking of, and meditating on, the great truth that God is faithful.

The Bible teaches us three truths about God’s faithfulness. He is faithful to His people, to His promises and to His plans.

### **God Is Faithful to His People**

God is trustworthy; we can put our confidence in Him at all times; He will NEVER let us down.

God is faithful to the people of His covenant as we can see in today’s verse.

- ✓ The nation of Israel were the chosen covenant people of God in the Old Testament and God was faithful to them. And so we read in Deuteronomy 7 v6-9 the following:

*“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God Who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments”*  
(Deuteronomy 7 v6-9).

- ✓ The church of Jesus Christ is now the covenant people of God and God is faithful to us.



A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons. Back in eternity there was a covenant or agreement between God the Father and God the Son. In this eternal covenant God the Father gave God the Son a work to do, the work of redemption (John 17 v4), and God the Son gave His commitment to do that work (Hebrews 10 v5-9; Psalm 40 v6-8). In return God the Father gave His Son a people, a covenant people (John 17 v2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24) and all believers are part of that covenant people from the moment they trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Peter describes us as follows:

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy"* (1 Peter 2 v9 and 10).

We are the people of God. He is our God; He is our Father; and He is completely and eternally faithful to us - His covenant people.

### **Day 3**

*"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread"* (Psalm 37 v25).

God is faithful to His people.

This means that He will never let us down; He will never fail us; He will never forsake us. No one has ever trusted Him in vain – and if you trust Him He will look after you at all times.

I love our verse for today (Psalm 37 v25). It is one of my favourite verses. Like the Psalmist I used to be young and I am now old. But also like the Psalmist I have never seen anyone who trusted God let down by Him or forsaken by Him and I have never seen his family without food. He has committed Himself to us because He loves us so much.

- He was faithful to call us to salvation:

*"God is **faithful**, by Whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Corinthians 1 v9).

- He is faithful to help us when we are tempted:

*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is **faithful**, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10 v13)

- He is faithful to strengthen and protect us:  
*"But the Lord is **faithful**, Who will establish you and guard you from the evil one"* (2 Thessalonians 3 v3).
- He is faithful to help us in our service for Him:  
*"He who calls you is **faithful**, Who also will do it"* (1 Thessalonians 5 v24).
- He is faithful to look after us when we suffer:  
*"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a **faithful** Creator"* (1 Peter 4 v19).
- He is faithful to forgive us when we sin:  
*"If we confess our sins, He is **faithful** and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1 v9).

God is faithful to His people.

Do you believe this? Do you trust Him? Do you believe that He will look after you and your needs? Are you willing to take that extra step He has laid upon your heart?

What a difference it makes to understand and really believe that God is faithful and that He is faithful to all those who love Him and serve Him. This knowledge takes away all our worries and fears. When we worry and fret about the future and about our problems and when we allow our fears to take control we are really doubting and denying the faithfulness of God.

GOD IS FAITHFUL. HE WILL NEVER LET YOU DOWN.

## **Day 4**

*"If we are faithless, He remains **faithful**; He cannot deny Himself"*  
 (2 Timothy 2 v13).

- God is faithful to His people and He will never let us down.
- God is faithful to His promises. He is faithful to His Word. He always does what He says and He always keeps the promises which He has made in His Word, the Bible. He cannot deny Himself as our verse for today reminds us.

### **God Is Faithful to His Promises**

There are several kinds of promises in the Bible:

- ✓ God's promises to all those who are unsaved:  
*"For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved"*  
 (Romans 10 v13).

God promises to save those who call to Him for salvation – and He always keeps that promise.

- ✓ God's promises to all those who are saved:

*“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4 v19).

There are many such promises for believers in the Word of God – and God wants us to know them, to believe them, to claim them and to venture our all upon them.

- ✓ God's specific promises to individual Christians:

There are special times when God gives to you and me a specific promise from His Word. That promise suddenly becomes alive and we know it is for us at that moment.

One CEF worker felt God had called her to go to France as a missionary. She was nervous and hesitated to obey. Then she read:

*“He Who calls you is faithful, Who also will do it.”* (1 Thessalonians 5 v24):

And she knew that this was God's special promise to her, that He would look after her and solve all the problems she faced. On the strength of that promise she started to move in the direction of France and was a missionary there for many years.

When God called us into full-time ministry with CEF I hesitated because of family responsibilities. It would be a step of faith. How would we live? And then God gave me a specific promise in Psalm 34 v10:

*“The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.”*

This was God's specific promise to us and on the strength of that we moved into full-time ministry and have been in it for many years. God has kept His promise and we have never lacked anything.

Has God given you a promise on the basis of which He wants you to do something? Go ahead. Trust Him. He is faithful.

## ***Day 5***

***“And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints”*** (Psalm 89 v5).

When God gives us promises, we can pray on the basis of those promises and have confidence that He will answer our prayers.

We can pray: “Dear Father, You have promised to do this. I believe You and trust You and I know You will do this.”

This is how many of the great men of God prayed in the Bible. For example Nehemiah prayed:

*“Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name’” (Nehemiah 1 v8, 9).*

We live on the basis of God’s promises and we pray on the basis of God’s promises.

When God gives a promise in His Word what happens?

There are six possible results but only one of these is completely correct. Can you choose which one?

- He cannot keep it.
- He will not keep it.
- He might keep it.
- He can keep it.
- He will keep it.
- He must keep it.

The last three are correct but only the very last statement is completely correct. God is faithful, therefore He **must** keep His promises. He **cannot** deny Himself (2 Timothy 2 v13).

Perhaps there is a personal promise which God has given you and it has not yet been fulfilled. Keep trusting Him. If that promise is from Him He can keep it - He will keep it - He must keep it.

We often teach our children to sing these words:

*He cannot fail for He is God  
He cannot fail He’s pledged His Word  
He cannot fail He’ll see you through  
He cannot fail He’ll answer you.*

And when God does keep His promises He is glorified by His people, the saints here on earth, and today’s verse also tells us that Heaven rings with praises to Him Who is faithful to His people and to His promises. The faithfulness of God brings blessing and security to us His people – but it also brings glory and praise for Himself – and that is the most important result.

## **Day 6**

***“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator”*** (1 Peter 4 v19)

- God is faithful to His **people** – He will never let us down.
- God is faithful to His **promises** – He always keeps them
- God is faithful to His **plans** and His **programme** and to the definite **purpose** He has for this world.

### **God Is Faithful to His Plans**

God is faithful to His plans and purposes. He can never be defeated, distracted nor disappointed. What He starts He finishes. He never gives up. He has committed Himself to fulfil His purposes in our lives and in our world.

*“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him Who works all things according to the counsel of His will”* (Ephesians 1 v11).

We can see this exemplified in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. He said in John 17 v4:

*“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”*

He was faithful to the task which had been given to Him – to redeem lost sinners.

God is also faithful to enable us to do whatever He has called us to do as part of His programme.

*“He Who calls you is faithful, Who also will do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5 v24).

*“But the Lord is faithful, Who will establish you and guard you from the evil one”* (2 Thessalonians 3 v3).

He is faithful to His plan and His programme and commits Himself to help us do what He has called us to do. Therefore we can trust Him for all we need to fulfil our part of that plan and we can commit ourselves fully to Him and His faithfulness as today's Bible verse encourages us to do.

Do you believe that God is faithful? Do you believe that He is faithful to His people, to His promises and to His plans and programme? If you do then there will be three results:

- It will keep you from worrying. Worry is a denial of God's faithfulness. He has cared for you so far; so can you not trust Him to continue to do so?

- It will keep you from complaining. When troubles come, rest on His promises and His faithfulness. He does all things well!
- It will enable you to have more confidence and trust in Him and will strengthen your prayer life. You will be able to commit everything to Him, when the “going is hard and tough” and you are suffering in any way. Our verse for today (1 Peter 4 v19) exhorts us, in such difficult circumstances, to commit or give ourselves, and the keeping of our souls, to Him Who is “a faithful Creator”. You can leave everything in His hands.

### **Day 7**

***“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”*** (Revelation 2 v10).

But there is yet another personal application of the faithfulness of God to our lives and ministries. This attribute of faithfulness is one of the many which God wants to reproduce to some extent in our lives. We have seen that some of God’s attributes are noncommunicable. We cannot reflect attributes such as majesty, sovereignty or omnipresence. But we can reflect attributes such as His faithfulness and today’s verse exhorts us to be faithful. We live in a world which is so unfaithful – married people are unfaithful to their partners; people who make promises don’t keep them; and few are able to keep going in the ways of God. We Christians should not be like that. We should be faithful and we should shine out in a world where there is a scarcity of faithfulness in relationships and business.

We can be faithful in three ways which resemble the three ways we have seen God to be faithful and we should shine out in a world where faithfulness abounds in relationships and business :

- We should be faithful to **people**

Loyalty to our pastor, or church, or Mission and to fellow Christians should always be evident in all we say and do. Of course it goes without saying that we should be completely loyal and faithful to our husbands or wives. We should never let others down – just as God doesn’t let us down.

- We should be faithful to our **promises**.

When a Christian makes a promise he should keep it. We should always be open, honest and truthful in all we say. We should be seen as people who keep our word and our promises – just as God does.

➤ We should be faithful to our **programme**.

When God calls us into a ministry we should do what He tells us to do, with diligence and with perseverance. We should never give up.

Paul was able to say towards the end of his ministry in 2 Timothy 4 v7:

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”.*

He never gave up, he was a good and faithful servant. He was faithful, as our verse for today says, unto death.

When we stand before the judgement seat of Christ our service will be judged on the basis of our faithfulness. We will not be judged on the basis of our ability, or our gifts, but on the basis of how faithfully we used these gifts and how well we stuck to our task. And we all hope and trust that on that day we will hear these words from the Lord Jesus Christ:

*“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and **faithful** servant; you have been **faithful** over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Matthew 25 v23).*



1 Corinthians 10 v13

*“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*



## Week 3:

### Theme – Abraham The Pilgrim

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#### *Day 1*

*“Beloved, I beg you as strangers and **pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”* (1 Peter 2 v11).

One of the most famous books ever written was John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress”, published in 1678. It is said to have been read by more people than any other book, except the Bible. It is the story of a man called Christian. It describes his journey and progress as a pilgrim through this world – from the time he trusted Jesus Christ until he was taken to Heaven – and outlines all his adventures, difficulties and blessings during his pilgrimage.

What is a pilgrim? One definition in the dictionary reads “a pilgrim is a person who journeys to a sacred place as an act of religious direction.” That was not what John Bunyan meant when he used the word. Another definition in the dictionary is better – “a pilgrim is a person regarded as journeying or travelling to a future life” – and that was what the word meant to John Bunyan.

One of the best examples of a pilgrim in the Bible was Abraham. The writer to the Hebrews says of Abraham “*By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents .... He looked for a city which has foundation whose Builder and Maker is God*” (Hebrews 11 v9 and 10). He goes on to say that Abraham and the others mentioned earlier in the chapter “*confessed that they were strangers and **pilgrims** on the earth*” (Hebrews 11 v13).

During this week we will look at Abraham the pilgrim and seek to learn from him the lessons which will help us in our pilgrimage. I believe that there is no better example in the Bible of someone who was a pilgrim and who had learned “to live in the light of eternity”. We, like Abraham, are pilgrims. Peter exhorts us in his first letter, as we see in today’s verse, “*as strangers and **pilgrims**”* to “*abstain from fleshly lusts*”.

- We, like Abraham and John Bunyan’s pilgrim, have been called by God to leave the city of destruction and start our journey to the Heavenly city.
- We recognize that we are strangers and pilgrims, and that we are different from others in what we do, how we speak and how we dress.
- We should always be moving forward and making progress in our knowledge of God, our love for souls, and in our devotion to our Saviour.
- We should travel “light” and try not to accumulate too many possessions.

- We live and die by faith – and not by sight.
- We have a sense of urgency in all we do – especially towards those who are unsaved. We are not part of them – but we love them and try to help them to join us.
- Like Abraham we look for that eternal city which, unlike this world through which we are passing, has foundations (Hebrews 11 v10).

## ***Day 2***

***“And he said, ‘Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you’” (Acts 7 v2 and 3).***

Every journey must have a beginning. Every pilgrimage must have a start. How did Abraham’s journey and pilgrimage begin? How does ours begin?

### ***The Preparation of a Pilgrim***

There are two key preparatory steps which start a pilgrim off on his journey – and without those steps no journey or pilgrimage is possible. For a person to be a pilgrim he needs to be CONVERTED and he needs to respond to God’s CALL.

Abraham lived in Ur and it would seem that the inhabitants of that city were idol worshippers. Abraham and his family also worshipped idols (Joshua 24 v2).

Then two things happened to Abraham which were to change him and his future:

- God appeared unto him.  
We read in our Bible verse for today that Stephen said, *“Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia”* (Acts 7 v2). How God appeared to him we are not told. But surely the revelation of God’s glory would have shown Abraham the vanity and folly of the idol worship in Ur. Who wants to worship a dead idol when he has met the living God (1 Thessalonians 1 v9)?
- God spoke to him.  
We are told in our second verse (Acts 7 v3) what God said. God called him to leave his country and family and go to a land which He would show him.

The Word spoken by God brought about the miracle of faith in Abraham's heart (Romans 10 v17). He believed and put his faith in the God Who had spoken to him. At that moment he was justified or converted (Romans 4 v3), and as an outworking of that faith he obeyed God's call to leave his country and go to the place God had chosen (Hebrews 11 v8; Acts 7 v4). So Abraham became a pilgrim and started on a journey which would last for the remainder of his life.

God has also called each of us, who have trusted Jesus Christ as our Saviour, to be pilgrims. He spoke to us through His Word, and enabled us to put our faith in Jesus Christ. He justified us. He called us to "leave" the world and its attractions, and travel towards the celestial city, with the promise that we would arrive there in safety and security.

Some of us are also called, in addition, to take special steps of faith. Some are called to leave their home and country, or to give up many of the comforts we now enjoy.

May we, like Abraham, put our trust in God and obey Him. God never failed Abraham or let him down – and He will never fail us – as we follow and obey Him.

### ***Day 3***

***"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going"*** (Hebrews 11 v8).

And so Abraham became a pilgrim and started his pilgrimage as Hebrews 11 v8 tells us. But he was soon to learn that a pilgrim has problems!

### ***The Problems of a Pilgrim***

Throughout his pilgrimage, and especially during the early years of that pilgrimage, Abraham faced five problems – and you and I as pilgrims will often face the same problems.

#### **➤ The problems in his family**

Abraham had been called to leave his family in Ur. But, while he obeyed God's call in leaving Ur himself, he also disobeyed God by taking his father Terah and his nephew Lot with him, both of whom would cause problems at a later date:

- ✓ Terah caused delay. Instead of travelling to Canaan Abraham stopped half way at Haran and remained there until his father died. Then God

called Abraham a second time, as recorded in Genesis 12v1– and at last he moved on towards Canaan.

- ✓ Lot caused division and disgrace. After they arrived in Canaan, Lot had prospered and his herds had grown. The result was strife between his herdsmen and Abraham's, and it was only through the intervention of Abraham and his willingness to graze the less favoured land, that the problem would be solved (Genesis 13) but Lot continued to cause problems (Genesis 19).

How Abraham's heart must have grieved.

➤ **The problems of foes and fighting**

Entering and conquering Canaan was not to be an easy task. The Canaanites were in the land (Genesis 12 v6) and they obviously would not take kindly to Abraham's arrival. In fact Lot, his family and all his goods were taken captive and Abraham had to fight to rescue them.

➤ **The problem of famine**

When Abraham arrived in Canaan his first experience was FAMINE. There was no food! This was a strange and unexpected experience for one who had trusted and obeyed God. But God sometimes allows such things to happen to pilgrims to test them, and to bring out the best in them.

Abraham failed this test. Instead of staying in Canaan and trusting God he went down to Egypt (Genesis 12 v10).

Can you see any of these problems in your life and ministry? Have you learned to deal with them?

## ***Day 4***

*"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15 v1).*

Abraham's problems continued and even became greater:

➤ **The problem of failure**

Abraham had already failed God by going to Egypt instead of staying in Canaan and trusting Him. And so often one failure leads to another, and sometimes greater, failure.

In Egypt Abraham told lies about his wife Sarah and pretended that she was his sister instead of his wife. Pharaoh discovered his lie and expelled them from Egypt. What a bad testimony! What a sorry mess (Genesis 12 v11-20)!

But before we become too critical let us examine ourselves. Haven't we failed God at times in our pilgrimage?

And while it is sad to fail in ways like this, it is even more sad if we don't learn from our failures and make them right. Abraham, we read, went back "*to the place of the altar*" and "*called on the name of the Lord*" (Genesis 13 v4). God is always ready to forgive our failures.

➤ **The problem of friction**

Friction from inside the ranks can be a greater problem than foes from outside. Yesterday we saw the problem which Lot caused after they arrived in Canaan. He wanted the best land for his animals and this resulted in friction. It is impressive to see how Abraham handled this problem. He could have insisted on his right, as boss, to having first choice. But he didn't. He gave way and let Lot have first choice – a choice which, unfortunately, would result in disaster for the younger man and his family. However, Abraham believed that God would meet his needs and give him all he required. If you and I face friction in our families, churches and missions we could well imitate Abraham in his wise and gentle response.

We have seen the problems of a pilgrim as faced by Abraham (and by ourselves), but now we move on to our special verse for today (Genesis 15 v1).

### ***The Promise for a Pilgrim***

After Abraham had faced these problems God spoke to him again. The Word of the Lord came to him and it included both a command and a promise:

➤ The command – "*Do not be afraid!*"

"Do not be afraid of anything which has happened or will happen to you."

➤ The promise – This was the reason why he should not be afraid.

✓ "*I am your shield*" – "I will PROTECT you from your foes."

✓ "*I am your exceeding great reward*" – "I will PROVIDE for you when there is famine, friction and family problems, and even when you fail."

This is a promise for you also, whatever kind of problems you may face. And, like Abraham, you can conquer because of God's promises.

## **Day 5**

*“Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the LORD, Who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD”* (Genesis 12 v7 and 8).

Today, as we take an overall view of his life and pilgrimage, we see three vivid **pictures** which the Bible paints of Abraham:

### ***The Pictures of a Pilgrim***

- Abraham was an altar builder. In the Old Testament an altar was firstly a place of worship, and secondly a place of sacrifice, because worship is only possible through the shedding of blood. The altars Abraham built show his relationship to GOD:
  - ✓ When Abraham arrived in Canaan we read in today’s verse that *“he built an altar to the LORD, Who had appeared to him”* (Genesis 12 v7).
  - ✓ When he moved to another part of the country he once again built an altar (Genesis 12 v8).
  - ✓ After his failure in Egypt, and when he came back to Canaan, he returned to the altar, and there *“called on the name of the Lord”* (Genesis 13 v4).

Abraham’s first priority was to worship God, and this should be our first priority also. We do not build altars today but we *“have an altar”* (Hebrews 13 v10) and we come to the Cross and worship the One who died there for our sin.

- Abraham was a tent dweller. The writer to the Hebrews emphasizes the fact that Abraham *“dwelt in tents”* (Hebrews 11 v9). Tents have two qualities:
  - ✓ They are temporary dwelling places.
  - ✓ They are mobile dwelling places.

So when the Bible records that Abraham pitched his tent in Canaan (Genesis 12 v6, 8; 13 v3; 13 v9) it gives a picture of a pilgrim’s WALK and his relationship to the WORLD. The pilgrim is just passing through; his home is **temporary** and he has his eyes fixed on those things which are eternal. As a consequence he is **mobile** and he never really puts his roots down. He is in the world but not part of it.

- Abraham was a well digger. Later in the book of Genesis, and after Abraham's death, it is recorded that he and his servants dug wells (Genesis 26 v15, 18). The altar speaks of his WORSHIP. The tent speaks of his WALK. The wells speak of his WORK. He wanted to supply water for himself, his animals and **for others**. His work would help others in the future. His wells would be there when he wasn't.  
There is a thirsty world out there! God wants us also to be well diggers, to bring the water of life to others, including the children. This work is a work which will last and benefit many.

## **Day 6**

***"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense"*** (Hebrews 11 v17 and 19).

When you were at school did you like examinations? I am sure you didn't! But examinations are necessary and have two main functions:

- They are a help to the student PREPARING for them, and they encourage study.
- They are also a help to the teacher or person who conducts the examination because he can better understand what the student has learned and understood. Examinations provide a measure or gauge to show how well the student is developing. They are a means of PROVING or testing a student.

The Bible records a number of ways by which God proved or tested Abraham to see how he was developing spiritually.

### ***The Proving (Testing) of a Pilgrim***

God's examination, or tests, of Abraham are outlined in the Bible:

- Test No. 1. God called Abraham to leave his country and his family to go to the land of Canaan.  
Result – 70% - a pass but without distinction. He did leave his country but he took all his family with him.
- Test No. 2. There was famine in Canaan when he arrived.  
Result – 20% - a failure. He left Canaan and went to Egypt.

- Test No. 3. He was afraid of being killed by the Egyptians.  
Result – 0% - a complete failure. He told lies and left Egypt in disgrace. However, this failure was followed by success. He returned to the altar and called on the Lord.
- Test No. 4. Lot wanted the best land.  
Result 90% - pass with credit. He graciously let Lot have what he wanted – because his eyes were on God and he had complete faith in Him.
- Test No. 5. God promised a son when he was old.  
Result 90% - pass with credit. He believed God (Genesis 15 v6) – but he tried to move too quickly by having a son from Hagar, instead of his wife Sarah. This would create many problems in the future.
- Test No. 6. This was the biggest test and final proof of Abraham's spiritual growth and development. God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22) – and we read in today's verse that Abraham obeyed without any hesitation.  
Result – 100% - a pass with distinction.  
Abraham showed that, as a pilgrim, God and His Will had first place in his life. And we as pilgrims should demonstrate that same faith and obedience when God proves and tests our faith.

## ***Day 7***

***“For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God”*** (Hebrews 11 v10).

Our journey with Abraham is almost complete. We have looked at Abraham the **pilgrim** and we have seen his **preparation**, his **problems**, his **promises**, his **pictures** and his **proofs** (or tests). There are two more points to consider:

### ***The Prospects of a Pilgrim***

The “secret” of Abraham's pilgrimage and the reason why his pilgrimage was a means of blessing to himself and many others was because he had his eyes fixed on the finishing line. He had learned to live in the light of eternity and not in the light of time:

- There was, as outlined in our verse for today, the prospect of the PLACE he was going to, and its PERMANENCE:  
*“He looked for a city ... whose builder and maker is God”* (Hebrews 11 v10).  
*“They desire a better country ... for He has prepared for them a city”* (Hebrews 11 v16).



- There was also the prospect of the PERSON he would be with and in whose PRESENCE he would dwell forever. The builder and maker of this city was God. He had prepared the city for Abraham and for others, and in that heavenly country God would be called his God (Hebrews 11 v16). And so Abraham had continually before him the prospect of being personally and permanently in the presence of the God he loved and served.

And when the time came for his departure to that city and to his God, Abraham “gave up the ghost ... and was gathered to his people” (Genesis 25 v8). His death, like his life, was a victorious one; his pilgrimage was ended and he had a glorious entrance into eternity.

### ***The Principles for a Pilgrim***

But as we approach the end of this week we need to remind ourselves of the two basic principles of Abraham’s life and pilgrimage:

#### ➤ His FAITH

In Hebrews 11, the greatest chapter in the Bible on the subject of faith, the largest section of the chapter is devoted to Abraham and his faith:

- ✓ How he left Ur to go to Canaan – by faith (verse 8)
- ✓ How he lived in Canaan – by faith (verse 9)
- ✓ How he and Sarah received a son – by faith (verse 11)
- ✓ How he offered up Isaac – by faith (verse 17)

#### ➤ His OBEDIENCE

In every case his faith led him to obey the Word of God.

And faith and obedience should always be the two principles of our pilgrimage. “Trust and obey; for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”



Hebrews 11 v13

*“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

## Week 4:

# Theme – The God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

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### *Day 1*

*“Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3 v6).*

We Christians differ so much from each other. If we were to divide ourselves into different categories we could, perhaps, visualize at least three groups:

- Those Christians who are living close to the Lord and who are enjoying much of God's blessing on their lives and ministries.
- Those Christians who live quietly and steadily and who never really see very much happen in their lives or ministries.
- Those Christians who live “up and down lives”. Sometimes they are really close to the Lord and enjoying His blessing; at other times they seem far from the Lord and even get involved in sin of some kind.

Would you agree? Would you see yourself fitting into one of these categories? Or it is possible for some of us to be in one category at one time and another category at another time?

God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3 v6 and said to him:

*“I am the God of your father; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*

The Lord Jesus repeated these words in Matthew 22 v32:

*“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”*

These three men – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were very different from each other:

- Abraham would fit in, I believe, to the first category above. He was spiritually strong, very active and a real pioneer who enjoyed much of God's blessing on his life and ministry – even if he did make some mistakes.
- Isaac was quite different from his father. He was quiet and steady and remained very much in the background. He accomplished no great deeds;

he was not a pioneer; and he made mistakes – especially in his later years. He would fit easily into the second category.

- Jacob was certainly an up and down believer who scaled great heights and also plumbed great depths. He would be an example of the third group.

And yet – and this is the wonderful truth for us today – God was the God of all three of them. He was not just the God of mighty Abraham; He was also the God of quiet, steady Isaac and unstable Jacob.

This encourages us for, no matter which group you fit into, He is your God also.

## **Day 2**

*“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him”* (Genesis 18 v19).

We often hear about Abraham, his life and his mighty deeds. He was truly a great man; indeed one of the most outstanding men in the Bible and in the history of the world.

Isaac, Abraham’s son, was not a pioneer like his father, and yet we can learn a number of valuable lessons from him. It is noteworthy that God specifically stated He was also the God of Isaac.

I should point out, first of all, that Isaac was like his father in some ways and had obviously been greatly influenced by him. One of the greatest testimonies to Abraham were the words of God in our verse for today:

- **He** will command his children after him.
- That **they** should keep the way of the Lord.
- That the **Lord** may bring to Abraham that which He has spoken of him.

God knew that Abraham would be a good father, and his children would, in many ways, follow his example and be like him.

And so Isaac was like his father in several good ways:

- He lived in tents like his father (Genesis 26 v25).
- He built altars like his father (Genesis 26 v25).
- He dug wells like his father (Genesis 26 v18, 25).

It is interesting to see that all three of these activities are recorded in Genesis 26 v25 and are in the correct order of priority.

However Isaac was also like his father in several bad ways:

- When there was a famine in the land he started for Egypt (just as his father had done). But God stopped him (Genesis 26 v1, 2).
- When he went into the land of the Philistines he pretended that his wife was his sister (as his father did) – in case he would be killed (Genesis 26 v7).

There is no doubt that a father can have a great influence on his children – either for good or bad; and even though a child may differ from his father in many ways, the father's influence is always obvious.

Nevertheless Isaac was very different from his father:

- Abraham was a man of **action** and **activity** and the main feature of his life was his **strength**.
- Isaac was a man of **acceptance** and **passivity** and the main feature of his life was his **submission**. He lived longer than Abraham or Jacob, but less is recorded of him.

Isaac was involved in no spectacular ventures of faith, he never went outside the land where he was born. He was quiet, retiring and meditative (Genesis 24 v62,63). But God blessed him. He is also the God of Isaac and that is an encouragement for those of us who may be similar in temperament and character.

### ***Day 3***

*“Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood”* (Genesis 22 v9)

While we read comparatively little about Isaac in the Bible, compared to his father Abraham and his son Jacob, there are three incidents which are recorded in detail giving us a clear picture of him, and outlining the lessons we can learn from him.

I said yesterday that Isaac was a man of SUBMISSION and this truth comes out clearly in all three incidents.

The first incident is the well known story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 referred to in our verse for today. We often read and speak about Abraham's part in this incident but overlook the vital role of Isaac. After all he was the one who was going to be sacrificed!

### **What happened?**

God spoke to Abraham and tested him. He asked him to sacrifice his only son Isaac, the son for whom he had prayed for many years. Abraham immediately obeyed and set off with his son and the wood for the burnt offering. They arrived three days later and ascended the mountain.

### **How old was Isaac?**

He was young, probably a teenager, because Abraham was able to bind his son **before** laying him on the altar (Genesis 22 v9).

### **Where did this event take place?**

In the land of Moriah, on the mountain where the temple was to be built many years later, and also, it is believed, the mountain or hill where the Lord Jesus would be crucified. It was on this mountain Isaac was to be sacrificed, but it was only when they arrived at the summit that Abraham told his son that he was the burnt offering.

### **How did Isaac react?**

We see this incident as a test of Abraham's faith and rejoice at the way he obeyed God. But we also need to see how Isaac reacted – because he was the one who was going to die! Isaac's attitude to this command from God was one of complete submission. He did not object, resist or try to run away. He allowed his father to bind him and place him on the altar and he lay with bated breath and closed eyes waiting for the knife to be plunged into his breast.

And so here, when he was young, Isaac displayed his SUBMISSION to God's PRECEPT or COMMAND.

How we long that our young people would display that same submissive attitude to what God demands of them and expects from them.

But we need to remember that it is our responsibility to set them a good example by our SUBMISSION. Isaac was only doing what his father was doing. Abraham was obeying God's command.

Submission and obedience are not just taught; they are also "caught".

## ***Day 4***

*"Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death"* (Genesis 24 v67).

The next big event in Isaac's life is recorded in Genesis chapter 24. Incidentally this is the longest chapter in the Bible, and in this account we see again the submissiveness of Isaac.

**How old was he?**

He was now almost 40 years old. Nothing has been recorded of him since the incident in the land of Moriah. But he was not married and it was essential for him to have a wife and children so that the Messianic line would be continued.

**Where did this event take place?**

Isaac himself remained in Canaan but Abraham's servant was sent back to Mesopotamia (Genesis 24 v10), back to the country and city from which Abraham had come.

**What was Isaac to do?**

Isaac was to be married. It was obvious that this was God's plan for him. But he himself played no part in his choice of a bride. Four others were involved:

- Abraham decided it was time for Isaac to be married and so he sent his servant to find his bride.
- The servant obeyed, but was not sure how he would do this.
- God guided the servant to the bride of **His** choosing – Rebekah, the cousin of Isaac.
- Rebekah was willing to go with the servant to marry Isaac.

**How did Isaac react?**

Isaac's reaction again was one of SUBMISSION. He accepted joyfully God's PROVISION of a lifelong PARTNER for him – and he loved her – all of which we can see in today's Bible verse.

We would not expect others to decide who we should marry, and we would not want to submit to their decision (although the advice of others will always prove helpful). But the fact that Isaac submitted to God's choice of a bride for him is an important example to us to follow. The procedure we follow in marriage may be different; but the principle is the same. We should only want God's choice of a lifelong companion – and we should submit to and rejoice in that choice.

It is also interesting to see the typical teaching given in this incident in Isaac's life and in the incident from yesterday:

- Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac was a picture of that greater sacrifice when God the Father poured out His wrath for sin upon His Son. But there was no escape for Him.
- Abraham sending his servant to find a bride for Isaac is a picture of God the Father sending God the Holy Spirit to find a bride for His Son the Lord Jesus. And we are part of that bride – the Church of Jesus Christ (Revelation 21 v2).

## Day 5

*“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”* (Hebrews 11 v20)

Isaac **submitted**, when young, to be a burnt offering and to obey God’s **precept** or **command**.

Isaac **submitted**, when middle-aged, to receive God’s **provision** of a bride and **companion** from Mesopotamia.

The third and last picture we have of Isaac is when he is old.

**How old was he?**

He was 140 years old and approaching the end of his life.

**Where did this event take place?**

At home, in his tent – at meal time.

**What did Isaac do?**

He gave his blessing. He thought he was dying and he wanted to give his blessing to his son before he died. This was commendable. The only problem was that Isaac wanted to give his blessing to the wrong son, Esau, rather than to Jacob the son whom God had chosen. God had already made it clear what His will was (Genesis 25 v23), and Isaac’s action was therefore against God’s will. Isaac was more interested in food than in finding the will of God.

Rebekah and Jacob knew what Isaac planned to do, and they deceived him so that Jacob received the blessing instead of Esau. When Isaac discovered what had happened and that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau he *“trembled exceedingly”*.

**How did Isaac react?**

Isaac did not try to change or withdraw the blessing he had given to Jacob but ratified it as part of God’s PLAN (Genesis 27 v33) and SUBMITTED to that PLAN, despite Esau’s anguished plea for him to change it.

We can see Isaac’s full acceptance and SUBMISSION to God’s PLAN in Genesis 28 v1-4 when he again blessed Jacob and sent him back to his mother’s home to find a bride.

The Bible indicates that God forgave the mistake Isaac made and in Hebrews 11 v20 (our verse for today) he commended him for his faith.

*“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”* – and Jacob’s name comes first as God intended it to be.

And so Isaac **submitted** himself again – this time to God’s **plan** and **control** – and he finished his life well and victoriously.

Isaac was a man of submission:

- He **submitted** to God's **precept** and **command** – and accepted God's **Will**.
- He **submitted** to God's **provision** of a **companion** – and accepted God's **wife**.
- He **submitted** to God's **plan** and **control** – and accepted God's **way**.

I trust that we too will learn to SUBMIT as Isaac did.

## *Day 6*

*“And Esau said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’” (Genesis 27 v36).*

Jacob is a completely different person from either his father, Isaac, or his grandfather Abraham. The main feature of Abraham's life was his faith, and this is referred to many times throughout the Bible; the main feature of Isaac's life was his quiet submissive attitude; but the main feature of Jacob's life was his changeableness, his vacillation and his “ups and downs”.

On the one hand we see Abraham, a man who was in close touch with God; and on the other we see Jacob, a man who was capable of all kinds of crookedness.

Today we will look at the “downs” in Jacob's life and tomorrow the “ups”:

- In Genesis 25 v30-34 Jacob the younger brother persuaded Esau the older brother to give away his birthright by catching him at a weak moment and appealing to his hunger and desire for food. While this was a trick on Jacob's part, it should be pointed out in his favour that he, unlike Esau, appreciated the birthright and its significance.
- In Genesis 27 v18-29 Jacob deliberately deceived his aged father into thinking he was Esau, as today's verse explains. He disguised himself as Esau and he also told lies in response to his father's question. There was no excuse for this deception, and it showed a complete lack of faith in God and in His promises – both on the part of Jacob and also his mother Rebekah.

The immediate results for Jacob of these two acts were fear of what Esau would do, and a hasty flight from his home and family. This would mean separation lasting 30 years, and loneliness. He would never see his mother again. Sin has serious repercussions - whatever a man sows he also reaps (Galatians 6 v7):



- In Genesis 29 and 30 is recorded the long and sordid struggle between Jacob and his father-in-law Laban. It was a case of one trickster against another. Jacob had met his match. Each tried to outwit and outfox the other – and neither came out of those years with credit.
- In Genesis 33 Jacob anticipated meeting his brother Esau and is afraid of what will happen. So he sent the servants and a number of his children first to meet him to prepare the way for his approach. Then followed Leah and her children and after them Rachel and Joseph (who were his favourites). He then brought up the rear, occupying the safest place in case there should be any trouble. Jacob's canny mind was still at work!
- In Genesis 37 the favoritism he displays towards Joseph leads to the jealousy of his other sons and to Joseph being sold into Egypt. He had not learned from his parents' display of favoritism that this could only result in problems.

Yes, Jacob was a twister and a crooked man. But the good news is that God can make the crooked straight (Isaiah 42 v16), and over a period of time this was what He did for Jacob. Praise God that He is also the God of Jacob and those believers who are like him.

## *Day 7*

*“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff”* (Hebrews 11 v21).

Jacob's life was certainly a life of “ups and downs” – and in that way he mirrors the lives of many of us. Yesterday we looked at the “downs” and today we look at the “ups”.

It is significant that as Jacob become older the “downs” became less and less deep, and the “ups” became more and more high. In other words the general direction of his life was upwards; and that is a good picture of sanctification. He, like us, had a long way to go spiritually, but he made slow and steady progress:

- His first “high” and his first recorded spiritual experience can be found in Genesis 28 v10-22. After leaving his home, he lay down to sleep. And then several things happened:
  - ✓ He **saw** a vision of a ladder to Heaven with angels on it.
  - ✓ He **heard** the voice of God promising His presence and possession of the land.

- ✓ He **vowed** a vow that God would be his God.
- In Genesis 31 v13 God spoke again to Jacob and told him to return to his family and land, promising that He would be with him. And Jacob obeyed. Then, later in the chapter God made it possible for Jacob and his father-in-law to become reconciled.
- On his way home in Genesis 32 Jacob had several special experiences:
  - ✓ He was met by angels (verse 1).
  - ✓ He prayed and asked for safety and deliverance (verses 9-12) – and in that prayer demonstrated a humility which was not obvious before.
  - ✓ God wrestled with him, blessed him and gave him a new name (Genesis 32 v24). This was probably the high point of Jacob's life as a believer.
- Esau and Jacob were reconciled and Jacob built an altar (Genesis 33 v20).
- Jacob returned to Bethel at God's request, built an altar, and removed all the strange gods from his household (Genesis 35 v1, 2) – and God blessed him.
- God used Joseph to look after Jacob and his family during the years of famine and gave them a new, but temporary, home in Egypt.

And the writer to the Hebrews testifies to Jacob's faith in the closing days of his life in the words of Hebrews 11 v21, our verse for today. Genesis 49 outlines Jacob's dying benediction and his prophecies before he was "*gathered unto his people*".

And so Jacob learned eventually to live victoriously, and certainly he died victoriously.

May we as believers also learn, step by step, the same lessons and may we be assured that the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob is also our God – no matter how far short we fall of His standards.



Hebrews 11 v1,2

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony."*

## Week 5: Theme – Praise

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### *Day 1*

*“I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever” (Psalm 145 v1).*

Psalm 145 is one of the best examples of praise and worship in the whole Bible, and this week we want to learn from it how we can best praise and worship our God.

In this Psalm David outlines what he had learned about God, he expresses what he had learned to God, and he praises and worships God on the basis of what he had learned and what he has said.

The Lord Jesus tells us twice in John 4 verses 23 and 24 that we are to worship God the Father IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH.

➤ We should therefore worship God IN TRUTH – on the basis of the truths He has revealed about Himself in His Word:

- ✓ So we should, first of all, find out from the Bible a truth or truths about God and then we should worship Him on the basis of that truth. This truth might be one of His attributes – such as His greatness, His faithfulness or His sovereignty. Or it might be something about one of His actions – such as in creation, or in providence or in redemption.

And we will see in this Psalm how David’s praise and worship are based upon what he has learned about God.

- ✓ Then, secondly, we should say what we have learned to God. He already knows it, of course, but He wants to hear it from us because such expression is essential when we worship God in truth. What we see we should say. Examination should lead to expression. Contemplation should lead to verbalization.

And we will see in this Psalm how David puts into words what he has learned about God in his praise and worship of Him.

➤ We should then worship God IN SPIRIT on the basis of what we have learned and expressed:

- ✓ This means that in our hearts and spirits we will love and adore Him. Our love and adoration are the inward responses of our hearts to what we have learned about Him. And so from David’s heart comes

his praise and love as he writes in the words of today's verse. *"I will extol (exalt) You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever."*

- ✓ And the final result of worship is a bowing of our hearts in submission to God as a final outworking of the three previous steps. And in this Psalm David refers to God, as we have seen in our verse for today, as the King and he comes back to that same thought in verses 11-13.

May we, like David, praise and worship our God IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH.

## **Day 2**

***"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable"*** (Psalm 145 v3).

Psalm 145 is a Psalm of pure praise and worship:

- In the first two verses David commits himself to praise and worship of his God.
  - ✓ He commits himself to praise God every day (verse 2).
  - ✓ He commits himself twice to praise God for ever (verses 1 and 2).
  - ✓ He commits himself twice to praise the Name of God (verses 1 and 2), and he returns to the same thought in the concluding verse of the Psalm.

The Name of God according to Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones means "all that is true of God and all that has been revealed concerning God. It means God in all His attributes, God in all that He is and of Himself, and God in all that He has done and all that He is doing." The Jews often referred to God as "The Name" to avoid using the actual term "Jehovah" which they felt was too sacred to be uttered. To praise the Name of God therefore simply means to praise God and His attributes and actions.

- **In verses 3 to 6 David praises God for His greatness.**

This was a truth concerning one of God's attributes which David had learned about God and which he now expresses as he praises Him:

- ✓ He praises God first of all for the greatness of His Person in our verse for today. The first focal point of his praise and worship is upon God Himself and his first expression of praise in "Great is the Lord." And He is so great that we human beings cannot really grasp it or understand it. The NIV translates it as *"His greatness no one can fathom."* No one can get to the depth (or heights) of that greatness.

The problem so often with us as Christians today is that “our God is too small.” We bring Him down to our level instead of seeing Him as a great God Who is sovereign, in control and able to do anything. And seeing that greatness leads us to worship, to say and to sing the words of that beautiful hymn “How Great Thou Art.”

- ✓ In verse 4 he praises God for the greatness of His works and actions. God’s “*mighty acts*” include, for us, acts such as creation and miracles, the crossing of the Red Sea, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the every day acts of providence as God controls and regulates the universe and, of course, the miracles of the new birth performed in the hearts of sinners. And so we also praise God for all that He has done – in our world and in ourselves.

But let us remember too that, as David reminds us in verse 4, that it is the responsibility of one generation to proclaim and praise these works of God to the next generation – to our boys and girls.

### ***Day 3***

***“I will meditate on the glorious splendour of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works” (Psalm 145 v5).***

In this Psalm David is praising God for His greatness – the greatness of His Person (verse 3) and the greatness of His works (verse 4):

- ✓ In verse 5, our verse for today, he praises God for the greatness of His majesty – for the honour (or splendor) of His majesty.

David had seen something of the wonderful majesty of His God – and he wants to speak about it to God and worship Him for it. Dr. J A Packer writes that “The word ‘majesty’ when applied to God is always a declaration of His greatness and an invitation to worship.” And he continues, “This is knowledge which Christians today largely lack and that is one reason why our faith is so feeble and our worship so flabby. We are modern men and modern men though they cherish great thoughts of man have as a rule small thoughts of God.”

But this was not true of David. He does not record having ever actually seen a literal vision of the majesty and glory of God as Moses did in Exodus 33 verses 12-23, or Isaiah in Isaiah 6 verses 1-4, or Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1 verses 26-28. Very few have done so – and none fully. But through study of the Word of God, through consideration

of creation and nature, through meditation and personal fellowship with God he had come to see His majesty and he now expresses what he has seen.

We can do the same as David. We can see God's majesty, especially in His Word, and worship Him on the basis of it.

- ✓ In verse 6 he praises Him for the greatness of His judgment. The terrible acts spoken of here would appear to be in reference to how God in His greatness punishes sin. Verse 5 speaks of the "*wondrous works*" of a God Who is majestic. Verse 6 speaks of the "*terrible works*" of a God Who is the Judge of the whole earth. The former works delight believers; the latter terrify the wicked. And God shows His greatness through His holiness, righteousness – and His judgment of sin.

And so David worships and praises God because of His greatness – the greatness of His Person, the greatness of His works, the greatness of His majesty and the greatness of His judgment. And we should follow David's example and do likewise.

- **In verses 7-10 David now proceeds to praise God for His goodness.** How awful it would be to have a God Who was great but not good. And how pathetic it would be to have a God Who was good but not great! But David's God, and our God, is both great and good. We need to have a fresh vision of both His greatness and goodness. These twin truths remind us that He not only wants the best for us, but that He has the ability to accomplish it.

And tomorrow we will study His goodness as outlined here by David.

## ***Day 4***

***"They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness"*** (Psalm 145 v7).

God is great, and we praise Him and worship Him for that greatness as outlined in verses 3-6.

- **But we also praise and worship Him for His goodness** as outlined in verses 7-10:
  - ✓ **The abundance of His goodness**  
Verse 7 tells us that God's goodness is a great goodness. The NIV calls it His "abundant goodness", and we are called in the NIV to

celebrate this goodness, to rejoice in it and praise God for it. It is unlimited, unsearchable and, at the same time, undeserved.

But this verse also reminds us that God's goodness and love are righteous. All His acts of goodness are based upon His holy character and are just and righteous.

✓ **The elements of His goodness**

Verse 8 tells us how that goodness is displayed and what it consists of.

*"The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy."*

There are four main elements and we praise God for all of them:

- Grace. We do not deserve His goodness and love.
- Compassion. But He loves us all the same.
- Patience. He is slow to judge and condemn.
- Mercy. We deserve condemnation but in mercy He withholds it – and it is great mercy.

✓ **The universality of His goodness**

Verse 9 tells us that God's goodness is extended to everyone.

God is, according to the NIV *"good to all; He has compassion on all He has made."* There are no exceptions. God is good and generous in bestowing life and natural blessings to everyone. But He demonstrates His goodness to everyone by providing, in His Son, a sacrifice for the sin of the world which is available to everyone without exception; and it is the desire of God that no one be lost but that everyone should put their trust in Jesus Christ and be saved. If anyone is lost it is their fault and not God's. He in His goodness wants them to be saved and has provided a way for them.

➤ **Praise Him**

It is not surprising therefore that when David comes to verse 10, and as he reflects on the greatness and goodness of God, he encourages all that God has made, and all His people to PRAISE HIM.

*"All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You"* (Psalm 145 v10).

And may we join that throng.

## Day 5

***“Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations”*** (Psalm 145 v13).

David in Psalm 145 is praising and worshipping God for His GREATNESS and His GOODNESS:

➤ **In verses 11-13 David proceeds to worship God for His GOVERNMENT**, for His Kingdom and for His absolute control of everyone and everything:

- ✓ Verses 11 and 12 describe His kingdom as a glorious kingdom. It is not like an EARTHLY kingdom.
  - Earthly kingdoms rule over few subjects; God's kingdom over all.
  - Earthly kingdoms depend upon their subjects and their wealth; God's kingdom is subject to none and abounds in everything.
  - Earthly kingdoms can be overthrown; God's kingdom cannot and never will be overthrown.
  - Earthly kingdoms are sinful, and self-seeking; God's kingdom is glorious and majestic.

David speaks of *“the glory of your kingdom”* and *“the glorious majesty of His kingdom.”*

God is exalted on the throne of His kingdom both now – and in the future, when that exaltation will be acknowledged by everyone.

- ✓ Verse 13, our verse for today, describes God's kingdom as an EVERLASTING kingdom.

This is the main difference between earthly kingdoms and God's kingdom. All of earthly kingdoms – even the most powerful of them – are temporary and transient. They last, and prosper, for a while – and then they disappear. The history of the world is littered with their wrecks and relics. But God's kingdom is for now and forever.

- ✓ Verse 11 describes God's kingdom as a POWERFUL kingdom. *“They shall talk”* David writes *“of Your power.”* God is the King of His kingdom and He is in complete control of it. Nothing can happen in it without His permission – and that fact is not just for the future. It is also for today. **CHRIST IS LORD.**

In a day like today and in a world like ours, we as believers need to be reminded that God is King, that Christ is Lord; and that His kingdom is **glorious, everlasting and powerful.**



The greatest truth which any believer can really get hold of is that God is sovereign and in complete control of everyone and everything. Nothing can happen unless it passes through the window of His control.

This means personally, dear believer, that that problem you face has either been sent, or allowed, by a sovereign God. But your God is also good and loving and He has allowed it for your good (Romans 8 v28). Trust Him and ask Him for the grace you need to endure it and profit from it (2 Corinthians 12 v9).

## ***Day 6***

***“The LORD upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down”*** (Psalm 145 v14).

So far in this Psalm David has praised God for His greatness (verses 3-6). His goodness (verses 7-10) and for His government (verses 11-13). In this fourth and last portion of the Psalm David praises God for something he perhaps values and appreciates more than anything else because of the major part it has played in his own life. From verse 14 to verse 20 David praises God for HIS GRACE. Grace is God’s favour to those who do not deserve it. Grace is receiving that which we don’t deserve and that which we cannot earn. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2 v8,9; Romans 3 v24). And it is grace which helps us to live the Christian life (2 Corinthians 1 v12), to serve our Lord and Master (1 Corinthians 3 v10) and to help us with our problems (2 Corinthians 12 v9). So we have every reason to praise God for His grace – and join in David’s praise for that same grace.

### ➤ **Grace to those who fall**

Our verse for today tells us how God upholds or “sustains” (NIV) everyone who falls. Who better to write about such grace than David. He had fallen grievously and had experienced the upholding, sustaining and restoring grace of God in a wonderful way.

And this grace is also available to those who are depressed and oppressed because He raises up those who are bowed down – with care, worries and difficulties of all kinds. And He would say to any of us who are in this position, *“My grace is sufficient (enough) for you for My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12 v9).

➤ **Grace to those who hunger**

*"The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing"* (Psalm 145 v15, 16).

These verses use three words or verbs to describe God's ministry to His children:

- ✓ **He opens** His hand. What a wonderful picture of His generosity and grace.  
*"You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing"* (Psalm 145 v16a).
- ✓ **He gives** us the spiritual food and nurture we need and He does this *"in due season"* – just when it is needed.  
*"The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season."*
- ✓ **He satisfies** our every legitimate desire and longing.  
*"You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."*

And, like David, we can praise God for His wonderful and amazing grace to us – lifting us when we fall, and satisfying our deepest needs.

## **Day 7**

*"The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The LORD preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy"* (Psalm 145 v18-20).

With David we praise God for His greatness, goodness, government and grace:

- He demonstrates that grace to those who fall (verse 14).  
*"The LORD upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down"* (Psalm 145 v14).
- He demonstrates that grace to those who are hungry (verse 15, 16).  
*"The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing"* (Psalm 145 v15, 16).
- He demonstrates that grace to those who call upon Him as our verses for today tell us.

God's grace opens a way to His presence and makes it possible for those who fear Him (verse 19) and love Him (verse 20) to come to Him and call upon Him (verse 18) concerning whatever need or problem they face.

And in these verses there are a number of gracious promises extended to those who do call upon Him:

- *"The Lord is near to all who call on Him"* (verse 18) What a gracious promise! He is not distant. He is close by. We don't need to raise our voices. We don't even need to speak out.
- *"He will hear their cry"* (verse 19). He graciously listens to our every word.
- *"He will fulfil the desire of those that fear Him"* (verse 19a) *"He will save them"* (verse 19b). Not only is He near; not only does He hear us; but in His grace He answers our prayers and He saves us.
- *"The Lord preserves all that love Him"* (verse 20). We are safe in His Hands.

And so as David concludes his Psalm of praise he makes a statement and a commitment.

- A statement in verse 17:  
*"The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works."*  
He acknowledges the righteousness and holiness of God.
- A commitment in verse 21  
*"My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever."*

In the light of all he has written he commits himself to praise the Lord – and, not only that, he encourages everyone to do the same.

Will you and I make that same commitment today? Let each one of us praise God for His greatness, His goodness, His government and His grace. Amen!



Psalm 34 v1

*"I will bless the LORD at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my  
mouth."*

## Week 6:

### Theme – Knowing God

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#### *Day 1*

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent “ (John 17 v3).*

Our theme for this week is the most important theme of all!

The first and greatest desire of every Christian is to know God – and to know Him in a more personal and intimate way – and throughout this week we are going to see how we can do this.

Our focus this week will not be on ourselves, our salvation, our service or our sanctification. It will be completely on – our Saviour.

Let us, today, establish four basic introductory truths:

- Knowing God is a **PRINCIPLE** to follow  
Our verse for today associates and links the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ with eternal life. We need to know God to possess and have eternal life; and so when we first come to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ we receive that eternal life.
- Knowing God is a **PURPOSE** to aim at  
While the initial first step in the knowledge of God comes at conversion, it is the purpose and goal of every Christian to know God more and more fully and more and more intimately. And this is a process which continues throughout the Christian life. Paul expresses the knowledge of God as his primary purpose in life in Philippians 3 v8 and 10. His prayer and primary purpose was “to know Him”. That should be our purpose also.
- Knowing God includes a **PROMISE** to claim  
David writes in Daniel 11 v32 that “*the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out exploits.*” This is a two-fold promise. The person who knows God is strong within himself; he has spiritual strength. But, secondly, he is active and he does things. He stands fast and he demonstrates his strength by his deeds.
- Knowing God brings a **PLEASURE** to experience  
The greatest joy and glory a believer can have comes from communion and fellowship with a God whom he increasingly knows:

*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9 v23 and 24).*

Oh that God would help us and enable us to know Him more and more!

## ***Day 2***

***“And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (John 10 v4).***

How can we know God? That is the big question. It is interesting that God in the Bible has deliberately chosen this word “know” to express what He wants us to do in relation to Him. He wants us to “know Him” – as a child knows his Father (Hebrews 12 v10), as a wife knows her husband (Ephesians 5 v25), as a subject knows his king (John 20 v28), and as a sheep knows his shepherd (as in our verse for today).

How do we get to know another person – a friend, a co-worker or a child?

If the house next door is empty, and I hear that someone has bought it, I look forward to getting to know my new neighbour. But how can I do this?

- Even before he comes and also after he comes, I try to **learn** as much about him as possible. How old is he? What does he do? What church does he go to? Is he married? How many children does he have?
- I need to spend time just **looking** at him. As I watch him and what he does I come to know him more and more.
- It is of course important that I **listen** to him and hear what he says. This can tell me so much about him and help me in my knowledge of him.
- Then when he comes and when I have seen him and listened to him, I start to **live** beside him. I spend time with him, I have fellowship with him and as I do so I get to know him better and better.

Did you get those four key words which show what I must do to get to know my neighbour? They also apply to my knowledge of God:

- I need to **LEARN** all I can about God – from His Word.
- I need to **LOOK** at Him as He has revealed Himself in bodily form in Jesus Christ.
- I need to **LISTEN** to what He says to me in His Word.
- I need to **LIVE** with Him in fellowship and communion.

There is one thing which needs to be emphasized before we finish. Knowing God is something which we do first of all with our minds and our intellect. We learn all we can about Him. But knowing about Him with our heads is not enough. God wants us to know Him personally with our hearts. First of all the head and then the heart. And it is that personal heart knowledge which counts! Have you heard, and sung, the little chorus which has these words?

*“To know Christ and then to make Him known  
His blessed Word obey  
To know Christ and then to make Him known  
Today – and every day”*

This was the goal of the Apostle Paul: *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ..... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”* (Philippians 3 v8a .....v10).

This should be our goal also.

### ***Day 3***

***“Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places”*** (Psalm 135 v6).

If we want to know a person we need to find out everything we can about him. The first step in knowing God is, therefore, to do just that – to find out and discover what He is really like. The problem for many Christians is that they have an incomplete, or even a wrong, view of God. Yet God has revealed Himself in His Word, the Bible. In that book He tells us what He is like, and He expects us to study what He has written about Himself. The first and most important question we should ask ourselves when we are reading the Bible is – “What does this passage (or this verse) teach me about God?”

God has revealed many truths about Himself:

- He is sovereign.
- He is holy.
- He is loving and gracious.
- He is faithful.

And many more.

When we really understand these truths about God's attributes, our lives and our attitudes to problems will be completely transformed.

For example the day when I first came to see and understand the wonderful truth that God is sovereign was a day when my life and ministry were changed – forever. To realize that God was in control of everyone and everything (as our verse for today tells us), to be sure that every circumstance and every difficulty were either sent by Him or allowed by Him gave me a new sense of peace and security. Why should I worry when my God is sovereign and in complete control?

I must have felt something similar to Joseph who in the midst of all his many problems and difficulties had come to exactly the same understanding. He now knew something about God which he may not have previously known. He knew that through all that had happened and because of all that had happened, God had actually used problems and circumstances to send him into the place where God wanted him to be (Genesis 45 v5-8); and he could now testify that his sovereign God had meant it all and planned it all for his good – and for the good of many others.

This is where our knowledge of God starts. We need to see Him as He really is, and as He reveals Himself in the Bible. This search for truth about God should be our first priority. Is it your priority?

And as we get to know God more and more we will find new strength for our lives and ministries – as Joseph and many others have done.

*“The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace”* (Psalm 29 v11).

## ***Day 4***

***“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 by the Spirit of the Lord”*** (2 Corinthians 3 v18).

If I want to know someone, such as a future friend or neighbour, I need to learn, first of all, all I can about him – and much of this can be done even before I meet him. Similarly if I want to know God I must learn as much as I can about what He is really like, and I can do that by studying what His Word, the Bible, tells me about Him. He reveals Himself in His Word.

But it will help me in my knowledge of my friend or neighbour if I can see him, and see what he is like. And if I could see God it would certainly help me to know Him.

But how can I see Him? The Bible tells me that He is Spirit (John 4 v 24), that He is invisible and has no body (John 1 v18; 1 Timothy 1 v17). Therefore I cannot see, nor will I ever be able to see, God the Father or God the Holy Spirit. But God has been seen – and I will be able to see Him. How?

Because God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the visible image of the invisible God (John 14 v8,9; Colossians 1 v15). When we see God the Son we can see exactly and perfectly what God the Father is like (John 1 v18; 14 v9; Hebrews 1 v3).

So the second step in knowing God is to see Him – and to do so in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. We can see Him as He is portrayed in the Bible, and one day we will actually see Him with our eyes in Glory.

In our verse for today we learn several simple yet profound truths:

- The glory of the Lord can be seen in a glass or mirror. This mirror is the Word of God (James 1 v23-25).
- We are responsible to “*behold*” that glory in the Word of God. Our Lord is portrayed there – and we need to really look at Him. But we are to do so “*with an open face*” or unveiled form – hiding nothing from God.
- When we, as believers, behold Him we are changed, not all at once – but little by little (“*from glory to glory*”).
- The result of that change is that we become more and more like the One we look at. We are (“*changed into the same image*”).
- This change or transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit (“*Even as by the Spirit of the Lord*”).

And so, as we look at, behold and watch God the Son in the Scriptures two things will happen:

- We will grow in our knowledge of God as we see, in Him, the attributes of the Godhead.
- We will at the same time become a little more like Him each day.

We need to ask ourselves the question: “Am I more like the Lord Jesus today than I was one year ago?”

## ***Day 5***

***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*** (Matthew 11 v28).

I get to know God by learning about Him from His Word, and by looking at Him as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ in His Word.



But just as I get to know my friend or my neighbour by listening to Him so I get to know God better by listening to what He says. Words mean so much. Knowledge grows with communication – not with silence.

God opens His heart to us in His Word. He has given us His Word for three main purposes:

➤ **For information**

The Bible contains the information we need to know on many subjects:

- ✓ About God Himself. We have already seen how God reveals Himself in the Bible.
- ✓ About ourselves. The Bible tells us and teaches us about what we are really like – sinners, rebels and needing a Saviour.
- ✓ About the way of salvation. The Bible shows us that we can only be saved by trusting Jesus Christ as our Saviour – the One Who took the punishment for our sin on the Cross.
- ✓ About the Christian life. The Bible tells us how we can grow spiritually and become more like Jesus Christ.

Without all this information we would be lost, confused and in despair. But we need to read and listen to the information which God gives us. And then we need to **believe** that it is true. We cannot know Him if we don't believe Him.

➤ **For instruction**

God does not just outline truths in His Word as He speaks to us. He tells us what to do. He gives us instruction. He gives us commands in His Word:

- ✓ “Read My Word” (1 Peter 2 v2).
- ✓ “Walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5 v25).
- ✓ “Talk to Me” (Matthew 7 v9).
- ✓ “Tell others about Me” (Acts 1 v8).

And so on.

And then we need to OBEY. We cannot know Him if we don't obey Him.

➤ **For invitation**

God wants us, above all, to come to Him as our verse for today tells us, to enter His presence, and to fellowship with Him.

*“Come now let us reason together”* (Isaiah 1 v18).

*“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat”* (Isaiah 55 v1). *“Come to Me”* (Matthew 11 v28).

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’”* (Revelation 22 v17).

And so we need to COME. We cannot know Him if we don't come to Him.

## **Day 6**

***“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night”*** (Psalm 1 v2).

Learn about God; look at God; listen to God.

These are the first three steps in our desire to know Him. But the fourth step is perhaps the most important, and the one which is based upon the other three.

You will never really know your friend, your neighbour, your wife or your husband unless you LIVE WITH THEM. And the closer we live, the more we will know them.

There are three steps to take if we are going to live with God and get to know Him in a more personal and experimental way:

- We need, as we have already seen, to learn as much as we can about Him from His Word. Our heart knowledge must be based on head knowledge. Consequently as we read God's Word we continually ask ourselves, “What does this teach me about God?”
- We need then to meditate upon what we have learned. Meditation means to think about, and consider carefully, the truth we have seen. Just as a cow chews the cud so should we “chew”, taste and savour whatever truth we have learned about God.

Psalm 1 v2 (our verse for today) describes the blessed man as the one who *“in His law does meditate day and night”* and Joshua was commanded at the commencement of his ministry as leader of the children of Israel to *“meditate therein day and night.”*

Meditation has been described as a “lost art for modern men” and if we are really going to know God we need to take time in the middle of all the busyness and stress of modern life (including the busyness of our ministry) – to meditate on and think about God.

- We need then, thirdly, to express what we have learned and meditated on to God. God likes to hear us tell Him what we have learned and thought about Him– and this verbal expression is an essential part of our worship of Him.
  - ✓ “Oh God, You are sovereign and powerful – and I bow before You.”
  - ✓ “Heavenly Father, You care for me and look after me – and I thank You.”
  - ✓ “Dear Lord Jesus, You died for me on the Cross and I love You.”

My knowledge ABOUT GOD, led on to my meditation BEFORE GOD and now I am expressing what I have learned and thought about TO GOD. And as I do

so I am getting more and more to KNOW GOD. Jeremiah tells us that this should be our most important goal:

*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD”* (Jeremiah 9 v23, 24).

## **Day 7**

***“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth”*** (Psalm 86 v15).

Psalm 86 is the prayer of a man who really knew God.

As David had studied God’s Word and as he had seen the mighty acts of God in his own life, he had learned three great truths about God:

- The goodness of God.
- The greatness of God.
- The grace of God.

In this Psalm he expresses those three truths to God – in verses 5, 10 and 15.

- **Verse 5** – *“You, Lord, are good”*

He has seen the goodness of God and on the basis of that goodness David makes a number of petitions to God in verses 1 to 4, asking God to listen to Him, to preserve him, to save him, to be merciful to him and to give him joy.

***“I KNOW THAT YOU WILL HEAR – BECAUSE YOU, LORD, ARE GOOD.”***

God is good; He loves us; and He will do what is best for us.

- **Verse 10** – *“You are great”*

He has learned something of the greatness of God. There is no god like his God and no one can do works like Him (verse 8). All nations shall come and worship Him (verse 9). He alone is God and He alone does wonderful things (verse 10).

And David now bases his prayer and his petitions on the greatness of God. “Listen to me Lord”, he prays in verse 6 and then he prays, *“I will call upon You.”* For *“You will answer me.”* (verse 7)

***“I KNOW THAT YOU CAN AND WILL ANSWER – BECAUSE YOU, LORD, ARE GREAT.”***

God is great; He controls everything; He can do anything we need.

➤ **Verse 15** – “*You, O Lord, are gracious.*”

This third section of his prayer is very personal and in it he prays for himself and his problems – his need for teaching (verse 11), his divided heart (verse 11 and 12), and his enemies (verses 14, 16, 17).

And he bases these personal petitions on what he had learned, as we see in today's verse, about the grace of God. God is gracious to us – even when we don't deserve it.

***“I KNOW THAT YOU WILL HELP – BECAUSE YOU, LORD, ARE GRACIOUS.”***

God is gracious; He cleanses; He works in my life and helps me.

Consequently his prayer is based on the three great truths he has learned about God - His goodness, His greatness and His grace. He knew these truths, first of all, in his head and as he meditated upon them they dropped down into his heart, and then he expressed them to God. And as he did so he based his prayer and his whole life on his head and heart knowledge of His God.

May we do the same.



Jeremiah 9 v23,24

*“Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.”*

## Week 7:

### Theme: The Hand Of God

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#### Day 1

*“Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth”* (Psalm 31 v5).

God is Spirit and does not have a body – apart, that is, from the incarnation of God the Son. Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who *“was made flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1 v14). Now He lives in His glorified body. But God the Father and God the Holy Spirit do not have bodies. They are Spirit. However, to help us understand more about God, and especially about God the Father, the Bible uses human words and concepts to describe Him and His activities:

- His EAR is open to our cry:  
*“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry”* (Psalm 34 v15). God doesn’t have an ear, but this expression shows His interest and concern.
- His EYE is upon us:  
*“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy”* (Psalm 33 v18). God doesn’t have an eye, but this expression shows His knowledge and oversight.
- His ARM saves and protects us:  
*“I will redeem you with an outstretched arm”* (Exodus 6 v6). God doesn’t have an arm, but this expression shows His strength and power.

All of these expressions are known as anthropomorphisms. This word means to ascribe to God a human characteristic that He does not have. But it helps us in our understanding of what He is like and how He works.

Our theme for this week is a further anthropomorphism – the HAND of God. God does not have a hand, but this expression teaches us many truths about God, His work and His relationship with ourselves.

Today in our verse we see that the Hand of God represents a place of safety and security in a world which is not safe and not secure.

#### **The Hand of God keeps us safe**

In Psalm 31 David is very conscious of his enemies and their attacks against him (verses 4, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 15) and he longed for deliverance. He knew that only God could help him and deliver him. So, as we see in today’s verse he committed his spirit into the Hand of God. He knew that he would be completely safe and secure there.

And it is interesting that this is the very verse which the Lord Jesus quoted as He died on the cross. These were His last words, *"Father, into Your Hands I commend my spirit"* (Luke 23 v46).

And you and I can commit ourselves into the Hand of God – especially when we face problems and difficulties. We will be absolutely safe and secure there (John 10 v28, 29).

## Day 2

*"That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."* (Joshua 4 v24).

We saw yesterday that the Hand of God is a hand which keeps us safe and secure. We can commit ourselves and all we have to Him and be at rest. No one can touch us there (John 10 v28, 29). Today's verse tells us that His Hand is mighty.

**The Hand of God is powerful and miraculous. It strengthens and helps us.**

The children of Israel had just seen one of the greatest miracles ever. God had opened the waters of the river Jordan and they had crossed over on dry land. As a result God asked them to build a pillar of twelve stones which had been taken from the river bank. This pillar was to be a witness to the children and future generations of how God had dried up the waters of Jordan with His mighty Hand. They were always to remember the powerful Hand of God which is able to do miracles.

You and I need to be reminded of this great truth also – especially when we are facing a difficult situation. Perhaps you have a problem to overcome, a river to cross, a step to take – and you are fearful. Trust God and His mighty Hand. His Hand gives us the strength and help we need in every difficult situation. He will, in His own time display His power and solve the problem.

**The Hand of God corrects and chastens us.**

David was a man after God's own heart and yet he sinned grievously. As a result God chastened him and His Hand of correction was upon him until he acknowledged and confessed his sin.

He wrote in Psalm 32 v4 *"For day and night Your Hand was heavy upon me"*.

The result was that David was experiencing serious physical and health problems. And these had come from, or had been allowed by, the Hand of God. But they were for his good, because they led him, or helped to lead him to, the place of confession, forgiveness and restoration.

The Bible makes it clear that God chastens His children to correct them and help them to grow. This truth is especially dealt with in Hebrews 12 verses 5-13 where we read that God chastens and corrects His children – for “*our profit and that we might be partakers of His holiness*”. This chastisement is a proof of God’s love – because His Hand chastens us for our good and for our growth. If you are going through difficulties at present these may be the product of the Hand of God as He seeks to correct you and help you to be more like Himself. Do not allow yourself to be discouraged, and above all be sure that you don’t become bitter (Hebrews 12 v15). It is vital to learn from what has happened so that you can GROW.

But you always need to remember that difficulties, problems, illnesses and disappointments when they come are not necessarily punishments from God for something we have done wrong. God does allow them and use them for our good and for our correction, not necessarily because we deserve them but because we need them.

### Day 3

*“And a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.” And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me”* (Nehemiah 2 v8).

It is a great joy to realise that God is our Father and that we are His children. The children in any family are always well acquainted with their father’s hand:

- His hand provides them with safety and security.
- His hand holds them and helps them to stand and be strong.
- His hand corrects them when necessary.

And, as we have seen, the Hand of God operates in these three ways in our lives.

Nehemiah was called by God to do a big job for which he had no experience, as he had never built walls before. It was a job which would take him many miles away from home and would involve him in enormous responsibilities. He felt completely inadequate and inexperienced. In addition His journey to Jerusalem would be a long journey – and very dangerous. Also he did not know where all his building material would come from.

Are you in a similar position? Has God called you to do something which is beyond your abilities; something for which you do not have the materials and

resources needed? Do you have some fear about what lies ahead and about the dangers you will face? Then learn from Nehemiah's experience and see how the Hand of God operated in his life and circumstances.

As Nehemiah prepared to leave the palace in Shushan for his journey to Jerusalem, the king asked him what he would need (Nehemiah 2 v4a).

Nehemiah's first reaction to this question was to "*pray to the God of heaven*" (Nehemiah 2 v4b). He probably asked God quickly for wisdom to know what to ask the king for – and also that the king would respond favourably to his requests. He then asked the king if he would give him letters to two groups of people:

- Those who would **protect** them on his journey (Nehemiah 2 v7). A long and dangerous journey lay in front of him and he needed protection.
- Those who would **provide** him with the building materials (Nehemiah 2 v8). He would need enormous quantities of timber and other building materials.

And the king granted him both requests. Why? Because as we read in today's verse, "*according to the good hand of my God upon me.*" It was God's good Hand which used the king to grant both **protection** and **provision**. And He will do the same for you.

Have you a big project or challenge in front of you? Is there some step which God wants you to take and you feel nervous?

There are two great truths which you need to remember and rely on:

- God will keep you safe and **protect** you from that which would harm you.
- God will supply all you need to do His Will.

You can depend upon **His provision**.

**The Hand of God protects us and provides for us.**

## *Day 4*

*"So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me"* (Ezra 7 v28).

We see the Hand of God especially active in the life and ministry of Ezra. And we will examine this in more detail, today and tomorrow, under five headings:

- **Supply was assured by God's Hand**

Ezra had been called, like Nehemiah at a later date, to go from Babylon to Jerusalem – but with a different purpose.



Zerubbabel, and the people who had accompanied him, had already travelled from Babylon to Jerusalem and had built the temple. There was now a need for a man who would teach them the Word of God and show them how they should worship God in the temple. That man was Ezra.

It was a big responsibility and like Nehemiah he must have felt nervous and inadequate. He had many needs – he needed people to accompany him, a means of transport, food, and of course wisdom and ability for the task. And all the requests he made from the king of Babylon were granted him.

*“This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him”* (Ezra 7 v6).

Why? Because of the Hand of the Lord upon him.

God’s Hand ensured that all he needed for his ministry was supplied.

And you can also rest assured that when God calls you to do something or go somewhere His good Hand will supply all you need.

➤ **Special workers were sent by God’s Hand**

Ezra could not do this work on his own. He needed co-workers and helpers. How or where would he find these helpers? The Hand of God would supply and send them as today’s verse tells us.

*“So I was encouraged as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me”* (Ezra 7 v28).

Not just men – but leading men! God gave him co-workers and we read that this greatly encouraged him.

Then as he was assembling “his team” and recruiting all the workers he saw that there were gaps in the ranks. He realised that there were no Levites to conduct the worship of God; and he knew that not everyone could do this. But in a wonderful way God supplied his need and sent Levites. How? God’s good Hand sent them.

*“Then, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men”* (Ezra 8 v18).

We all need helpers for the work God has given us, but we can trust God’s Hand to supply these workers. And when God supplies the necessary workers we will be greatly encouraged as was Ezra.

## **Day 5**

*“For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, “The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him” (Ezra 8 v22).*

We have seen how God's Hand has supplied all Ezra's needs so far. But many other needs still lay ahead.

➤ **Security was granted by God's Hand.**

It is interesting and challenging to note that Ezra did not take the Hand of God for granted. It is recorded (Ezra 8 v21) that as they prepared for their journey to Jerusalem they had spent much time in prayer and fasting – praying especially that God would guide and protect them and their children as they journeyed. They did not want to ask the king for protection, because they wanted him and others to see that the good Hand of God was sufficient for them and was all they needed. They knew that their God would guide and protect them, as expressed in our verse for today. And so it proved to be. What a testimony it was to others when they saw God's hand of blessing upon them and how they experienced a real sense of security and peace in the midst of change.

➤ **Safety was provided by God's Hand.**

But the journey was a dangerous one; they had much valuable treasure with them and there were those who “*lay in wait by the way*” (Ezra 8 v31). Yet we read that “*the hand of our God was upon us and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy*” (Ezra 8 v31b). God's Hand was mightier and stronger than the enemy's hand, and He kept them completely safe throughout their journey.

➤ **Steadfastness was possible through God's Hand.**

They left Babylon on the first day of the first month and exactly four months later they arrived safely in Jerusalem.

*“On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him” (Ezra 7 v9).*

They kept going, never giving up, and the journey took four months – four difficult months. But they persevered. They remained steadfast. How could they do this? Because God's good Hand was upon them.

And you can also say ..... “Oh God, I pray that your good Hand will be upon me and my ministry”:

- ✓ You need finance – He will **supply** your needs
- ✓ You need co-workers – He will **send** helpers
- ✓ You have many problems – He will **give** you peace
- ✓ You are afraid – He will **protect** you
- ✓ You get discouraged – He will **keep** you going

And all of these come – BY HIS GOOD HAND.

## **Day 6**

*“And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them”* (Luke 24 v50).

The Hand of the Lord Jesus is the Hand of God. It was a real visible Hand, not the “anthromorphism” or symbol which is used so often to describe what God does. We can see, in the Bible, the Hand of the Lord Jesus at work when He was here on earth, and it is wonderful to know that His hand, though not visible or tangible to us, still operates today as it did throughout His earthly ministry. Indeed those Hands are active today more widely than when He was here on earth, because they are no longer restricted to one place and to those with whom He came into physical contact.

His Hands now operate everywhere on everyone who needs them:

➤ **His healing Hand:**

*“Then Jesus put out **His hand** and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed”* (Matthew 8 v3).

➤ **His controlling Hand**

*“The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into **His hand**”* (John 3 v35).

➤ **His securing Hand**

*“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of **My hand**”* (John 10 v28).

➤ **His judging Hand**

*“His winnowing fan is in **His hand**, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire”* (Luke 3 v17).

➤ **His blessing Hand**

*“But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And He laid **His hands** on them and departed from there”* (Matthew 19 v14, 15).

➤ **His comforting Hand**

*"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid **His right hand** on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last" (Revelation 1 v17).*

➤ **His assuring Hand**

*"Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at **My hands**; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20 v27).*

Do you have a special need for the Hand of the Lord Jesus upon your life and ministry just now? That Hand has never lost its power and can meet your need whatever it is. He still heals, controls, secures, judges, blesses, comforts and gives assurance.

Trust Him and He will lift up His Hands and bless you as He blessed the disciples in today's verse (Luke 24 v50).

## **Day 7**

***"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"*** (1 Peter 5 v6).

The early church recognized their need for the Hand of God upon their ministry. It was a Hand to which they should submit, as today's verse reminds us, and a Hand upon which they could depend. They knew that without Him they could do nothing:

- They were at peace in the midst of persecution because they knew that the Hand of God controlled what had happened on the Cross, and that He was still in control:

*"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever **Your hand** and Your purpose determined before to be done"* (Acts 4 v27, 28).

- They prayed that that same Hand would heal and do miracles:

*"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out **Your hand** to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus"* (Acts 4 v29, 30).

- They knew, like Moses, that God's Hand could deliver:

*“For Moses supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by **His hand**, but they did not understand” (Acts 7 v25).*

- They saw God’s Hand at work in the salvation of many souls in Antioch: *“And the **hand of the Lord** was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11 v21).*
- They saw God’s Hand in the judgment of those who oppose the Gospel: *“And now, indeed, the **hand of the Lord** is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand” (Acts 13 v11).*

The young prophet Ezekiel **saw** visions of God in Ezekiel chapter 1. In chapter 2 he **heard** the Word of God, sending him to his own people to preach the Word to them. This would be a difficult work and was only possible because he **felt** the Hand of God on him and his ministry. So we read in chapter 1 verse 3, and chapter 3 verses 14 and 22 that *“the hand of the Lord was upon him”*, and it was that hand which enabled him to be faithful in His work and ministry (verses 15-21), and helped him to see the glory of the Lord (verse 23), to listen to the word of the Lord (verse 24) and to receive strength and power for the work of the Lord (verses 25-27).

We need the Hand of God upon our lives and ministries today. First of all we need to humble ourselves under His Hand – and then we need to pray that His Hand of power will strengthen us, control our circumstances and save our children.



John 10 v28,29

*“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.”*

## Week 8:

### Theme: The Call Of God

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#### *Day 1*

*“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God” (Ezekiel 1 v1).*

In our reading yesterday we read about a man called Ezekiel. He will be the central point of our theme for this whole week as we consider how God called him into his ministry.

We read about this young man in the book of Ezekiel, which he himself wrote. In many ways it is a “mystery book” and difficult to understand. However, the first three chapters are easy to read and contain many valuable and understandable truths about the call of God.

➤ **Who was Ezekiel?**

- ✓ He was a young man, probably thirty years old (Ezekiel 1 v1).
- ✓ He was in captivity, a long way from home (Ezekiel 1 v1).
- ✓ He was a priest (Ezekiel 1 v3) representing the people before God.
- ✓ He was a prophet (Ezekiel 2 v5) representing God to the people and speaking God's words to them.

➤ **What happened to Ezekiel?**

A summary of the first three chapters is given in the first three verses of chapter 1.

- ✓ In verse 1 he saw **visions of God** as we see in today's Bible verse. This is explained in detail in the remainder of the first chapter. God also wants to reveal Himself to us so that we will know Him better. Our ministry starts with a vision of God.
- ✓ In verse 3 he heard the **Word of God**, and this is explained in detail in chapter 2. God wants to speak to us today through His Word.
- ✓ In verse 3b of chapter 1 he experienced the **Hand of God** and this is explained in detail in chapter 3. God wants us to experience His power in our lives and ministries. God is preparing His servant Ezekiel for the call which he will receive and the ministry which he will commence.

And God is also preparing us for His call, or His further call, and for the ministry in which He will use us and bless us. We can learn so much which will help us in understanding and responding to God's call from His call to Ezekiel. We need to see Him, in His Word, to hear Him speak to us through His Word and to experience His Hand upon us and our ministry.

## **Day 2**

***“And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went”*** (Ezekiel 1 v12)

How does God call men and women into His service? We can find the answer to this question by studying God's call of Ezekiel in these first three chapters.

### **What He saw**

The first step in God's call of His servants is not just to speak to them but to reveal Himself to them. Before we can really hear His voice we need to see Him and know Him.

That is why God, first of all, reveals Himself to Ezekiel. We read at the end of the first verse of the first chapter, *“I saw visions of God.”*

In this chapter God reveals Himself to Ezekiel in three ways:

#### ➤ **The cloud**

First of all (v4) God reveals Himself in a great cloud, in a whirlwind and then fire. It is difficult to understand what this means, but it could be interpreted by saying that God often reveals Himself to us in a cloud. He allows, or sends, clouds or difficulties into our lives that through them we might come to know Him better:

- ✓ The clouds in Joseph's life made him a better man and helped him to know God better (Genesis 45 v8).
- ✓ The clouds in Job's life were great and dark, but through them he came to know God in a better and deeper way (Job 42 v5).

Is there a cloud in your life just now? God has allowed it to be there so that through it you will come to know Him better.

#### ➤ **The creatures**

From verse 5 to 25 there is a description of *“four living creatures”*. These verses are difficult to understand and explain; and yet they were part of the *“visions of God”* mentioned in the first verse.

Could I suggest that God sometimes reveals Himself through others; He uses dedicated people to teach us about Himself. We see the dedication of these creatures in verses 9, 12 and 20. We read in today's Bible verse that "*they went straight forward*", that "*they went wherever the spirit wanted them to go*" and "*that they did not turn when they went*". This seems to have impressed Ezekiel and may have helped him to see that God is immutable – unchangeable – and that He always keeps going in the same direction. This encouraged Ezekiel to do the same when God spoke to him and led him into a ministry which was to be very difficult.

You and I need to learn from God and from these living creatures that just as our Lord kept going and never gave up (Luke 9 v51-53), and just as these living creatures kept going straight forward that God wants us never to quit.

### **Day 3**

*"This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking"* (Ezekiel 1 v28b).

God revealed Himself to Ezekiel in the cloud and through the living creatures. But the most important part of His revelation was when God revealed Himself directly (v26-28) to Ezekiel and enabled him to know and understand what He was really like. God also wants to do the same with us so that we can know Him better and respond to His call.

In these verses God gave four pictures or visions of Himself and we can learn something about Him from each picture.

It would seem that Ezekiel struggles and gropes for the words to describe what he saw, and over and over again uses words such as "*like*" or "*the appearance of*":

#### ➤ **A throne**

Ezekiel first of all sees the likeness of a throne! How important it was for him to understand, at the beginning of his ministry, the **power of God** - that God is sovereign, that He is on the throne and He is in control of everyone and everything.

#### ➤ **A man**

On the throne was someone "*like a man*". This reminds us that the sovereign God became man in the Person of His Son, and reveals something of the **grace of God**.



➤ **Fire**

The appearance of fire around the throne and the One Who sat on it represents a picture of the **holiness of God**.

➤ **A rainbow**

This vision refers to the **faithfulness of God** (Genesis 9 v12-16) - a reminder that He always keeps His Word and His promises.

All four of these together – the throne, the man, the fire, and the rainbow – were an expression of the glory of God, as today's verse tells us. God's glory is best displayed through His attributes, and that glory is displayed in this vision by a picture of His sovereignty, His grace, His holiness and His faithfulness.

What were the reactions of Ezekiel to God's revelation of Himself? The answer is in today's verse.

*"I saw – I fell – I heard."*

He saw the glory of the Lord; he was so overcome by what he saw that he fell flat on his face; and then he heard the voice of God speaking to him.

There is no other way that he could have reacted! He was completely overcome by the splendor of that vision of the glory of God.

We also need to react in the same way.

God wants us to see His Glory and His attributes as revealed in His Word – as the first step in His call to us. And as we do we will humble ourselves before Him, and we will hear Him speaking to us through His Word.

## ***Day 4***

***"For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD."*** (Ezekiel 2 v4)

God is calling Ezekiel into a new area of service and ministry. First of all He revealed Himself to Ezekiel through the vision of the cloud, the vision of the creatures and the vision of Jesus Christ.

Yesterday we studied WHAT HE SAW.

Today we look at WHAT HE HEARD. In chapter one God reveals and Ezekiel sees. In chapter two God speaks and Ezekiel listens. Ezekiel heard four things:

### **Where He Was to Go**

This was a question which was very much upon Ezekiel's heart.

God gave Ezekiel three pieces of information:

- He told him to whom he was to go. “Go to your own people (chapter 2 v3), who use the same language as yourself” (chapter 3 v5, 6). God often calls us to go to our own people. I’m sure it would be more dramatic and even romantic to go to a foreign field – but it is often God’s desire that we “reach our own” – at least first of all.
- He told Ezekiel what they were like. They were a rebellious people (chapter 2 v4, 5, 7) who in their hearts did not want to love and obey God. They were “impudent and stubborn”.
- He told him what they would do. They would not listen to him (chapter 2 v7). This was not a very good introduction to Ezekiel’s ministry and he could easily have felt discouraged.

Is God also calling you into a difficult ministry?

### **What He Was to Do**

God told Ezekiel how he was to prepare for this difficult ministry:

- He was to eat the Word (2 v8-10; 3 v1-3). This is an interesting picture, and one which is valid for you and me as we respond to God’s call and prepare for God’s service. Eating involves three activities:
  - ✓ Biting. We need to read and study God’s Word.
  - ✓ Chewing. We need to meditate on God’s Word.
  - ✓ Swallowing. We need to obey God’s Word.
- He was to speak the Word (2 v4, 5, 7; 3 v4, 11). God told Ezekiel to speak His word to these people, whether they would listen or not, or whether they would respond or not. And God emphasized this again after Ezekiel had gone to minister to the people (chapter 3 v16-21).

God still speaks through and works through His Word. It is our responsibility to study it, to preach it wherever God has called us, and to rely on God working through it in the hearts of those who hear it.

*“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isaiah 55 v11).

## **Day 5**

*“Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.”* (Ezekiel 3 v8, 9).

As God called Ezekiel into his prophetic ministry He told him:

- Where he was to go – to his own people.
- What he was to do – preach God’s Word to them.

He also told him:

### **What He Was Not to Do**

How would you feel if you received a call from God similar to that of Ezekiel – to go to your own people, a people who were rebellious and who would not listen to you. There are two possible reactions:

- **Fear** - Such a prospect would be enough to make anyone afraid. God even compared his future listeners to briars, thorns and scorpions. The prospect was certainly fraught with fear. And so God said to Ezekiel. “Don’t be afraid of them, of their words and of their looks” (chapter 2 v6).
- **Rebellion** - God saw that Ezekiel might be disobedient and rebellious to His call and that his reaction might be similar to that of the people he would be ministering to, so He commanded him, “*Be not rebellious like that rebellious house*” (Ezekiel 2 v8).

What are your reactions to the call of God?  
Are you afraid? Are you tempted to disobey?

### **What God Would Do**

But God also showed Ezekiel the divine resources which would be available for his ministry:

- **THE STRENGTH** from God to stand firm despite their opposition:  
“*Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads*” (Ezekiel 3v8).  
God would give Ezekiel the strength he needed and He will do the same for us today.
- **THE SCRIPTURES** within him to give him sweetness.  
“*And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.’ So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness*” (Ezekiel 3 v3).
- **THE SPIRIT OF GOD** to operate in his life and ministry.  
“*Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: ‘Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!’*” (Ezekiel 3 v12).

Why should we hesitate to obey God’s call when He provides us with the same three resources for our ministry – no matter how difficult that ministry is. We can rely on His strength, His Word and the Holy Spirit Who makes us strong and blesses His Word.

## Day 6

*“So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days”* (Ezekiel 3 v14 and 15).

God had called Ezekiel to a prophetic ministry to his own people, and had at the same time showed him the problems he would face and the divine resources he would have for that ministry. How would Ezekiel react to God's call?

There are three basic ways to respond to the call of God:

- We can respond obediently, immediately and joyfully. That was the way Philip responded to God's will in Acts 8 v30, and Paul in Acts 16 v10. “I will go gladly and immediately.”
- We can respond negatively and with a spirit of disobedience. That was how Jonah responded in Jonah 1 v3. “No, I won't go.”
- We can respond obediently, but hesitantly, to God's call and with no joy. “Yes, I will go, but I am not happy about it, and I don't really want to.” This was how Ezekiel responded. He was like the boy who was asked by his mother to stand up. He obeyed her and stood up. Then he said, “I am standing up but inside I am still sitting down!”

We read in today's Bible verse that Ezekiel obeyed the call of God to go to his people but we also read three more qualifying facts:

- He said, *“I went in bitterness”* (chapter 3 v14).  
In his heart he was bitter and was probably asking himself questions like:
  - ✓ Why should **I** go?
  - ✓ Why should I go to **them**?
  - ✓ Why should I leave what I am doing **here**?
 It is possible for us also to become bitter in this same way when God calls us to what seems an unpleasant task.
- He added, *“I went in bitterness and in the heat of my spirit”* (Ezekiel 3 v14).  
Not only was he bitter about what God had told him to do, but he was angry at God.
- In addition we read that when he came to the people to whom he was to preach, he sat among them for seven days, in a state of shock, without saying a word. He had obeyed God in going to them, but he had not yet fulfilled the commission he was given - to speak to them.

We should not be too critical of Ezekiel. Firstly, because God had given him a very difficult task; and secondly, because each of us can remember times when our response to God's call was the same as that of Ezekiel. Have there not been times when we have questioned God's call and leading, and have even, in our hearts, rebelled against Him? Have there not been times when we have even disobeyed God and His plan for us?

How thankful I am that Ezekiel did eventually obey God's call completely and joyfully. How? We will see that tomorrow.

### Day 7

*"Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: 'Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!'"* (Ezekiel 3 v12).

During this week we have been studying and meditating upon God's call to Ezekiel:

- We have seen how God revealed Himself to Ezekiel, and how he had **seen** "*visions of God*".
- We have seen how God spoke to Ezekiel and how he **heard** the Word of God.
- We now want to see how God touched Ezekiel, and how he **experienced** the Hand of God upon him and his ministry.

The Holy Spirit played a major role in God's call to Ezekiel and in his response to that call.

- Ezekiel saw visions of God in chapter 1, and then the Spirit of God entered him in chapter 2 v2. It was the Holy Spirit Who spoke to Ezekiel and commissioned him to go to his own people. The Holy Spirit is the Lord of the Harvest, the One Who speaks and sends to where we are needed.
- It was the Holy Spirit Who continued in His ministry to Ezekiel by giving him the Word of God to eat (chapter 2 v8-10).
- It was the Holy Spirit Who promised to strengthen Ezekiel when he went to his people (chapter 3 v8).
- It was the Holy Spirit Who "*took him up*" as we read in today's verse, and brought him to the people to whom he should minister (chapter 3 v14). The Holy Spirit was the One Who "*set him up*" (2 v2), "*took him up*" (3 v12) and "*lifted him up*" (3 v14). But Ezekiel still was bitter, angry and silent.

- At that moment we read in verse 14b that “*the Hand of the Lord was strong upon me*”, and in verses 16 and 17 that the Word of the Lord came again to Ezekiel to command him to speak. The context would indicate that it was the Holy Spirit Who intervened again and touched Ezekiel and spoke to Him.
- And it would seem to be the Holy Spirit Who touched him again in verse 22, and told him to go. He was the One Who revealed the glory of the Lord to him in verse 23, and entered into him in verse 24, setting him upon his feet and giving him his final “marching orders” (verse 24-27).

We can only respond to God's call as the Holy Spirit enables us to do so. We need to see God through His Word; we need to listen to God in His Word, and we need to experience the hand of God upon us as the Holy Spirit enables us to obey what we have seen and heard. He is the One Who touches, Who speaks, Who applies and Who gives the ability to obey. As you obey the call of God you will not be on your own. The Holy Spirit Who calls you will also give all you need for your future ministry.

*“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1 v8).



John 16 v7,8

*“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”*

## Week 9:

# Theme – God's Call To Isaiah

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### Day 1

***"I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go **in and out**, and find pasture"*** (John 10 v9).

We read in the Bible that God calls people, that He speaks to them; and that He asks them to do something.

God's call, or the call of Jesus Christ, is primarily, an invitation to COME to Him – and to come to Him for a specific purpose.

God's call can be seen in three different ways:

- He calls sinners to come to Himself for SALVATION  
*"When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to **call** the righteous, but sinners, to repentance"* (Mark 2 v17).
- He calls believers to come to Himself for SATISFACTION  
*"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"* (Isaiah 55 v1).
- He calls believers to come to Himself for SANCTIFICATION  
*"For God did not **call** us to uncleanness, but **to** holiness"* (1 Thessalonians 4 v7).
- He calls believers to come to Himself for SERVICE  
*"Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had **called** us to preach the gospel to them"* (Acts 16 v10).

He calls us to COME to Him for salvation, satisfaction and sanctification and He calls us to GO to others in service. He calls us IN and He sends us OUT. We breathe air INTO our lungs and then we expel it FROM our lungs. If we just breathe in and not out we will suffer; if we just breathe out and not in we will suffer. The healthy person does both – he breathes in and he breathes out.

The healthy Christian also responds in two ways to God's call – he comes in for salvation, satisfaction and sanctification; he goes out in service.

Our verse for today tells us that first of all we must enter through the door (which is Jesus Christ) and that, if we do that, we will be saved. But the second part of the verse tells us that the saved sheep "come in" and "go out". We keep coming to Him for all we need; but we are then responsible to go out.

In Mark 3 v13 and 14 the Lord Jesus CALLED His disciples to HIMSELF and they came to Him. In response to His call they came IN. He then appointed twelve: to be with Him for fellowship, and then to go forth and preach. They came IN and stayed. They went OUT and served.

He still calls us to COME, and He still calls us to GO. He still wants us to come IN and He still wants us to go OUT.

## **Day 2**

*“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6 v1).*

One of the best examples of God's call is found in His calling of Isaiah, and we can learn many valuable lessons from this call.

Isaiah was probably quite young at this time, but he was to become a prophet and one of the greatest preachers of all time. He would have a ministry lasting over 40 years, and become the writer of one of the longest and most important books in the Bible.

And his ministry began with the call of God as recorded in Isaiah chapter 6:

➤ **When did this happen?**

*“In the year that king Uzziah died” (Isaiah 6 v1).*

- ✓ It was a time of sorrow. Uzziah had reigned many years and had been, on the whole, a good king. Isaiah was probably close to him.
- ✓ It was a time of realization. This death showed Isaiah that kings and powerful men die - but was also a reminder that God doesn't die. The earthly throne is vacated but God is still on the throne.

➤ **What did he see?**

*“I saw also the Lord” (Isaiah 6 v1).*

Isaiah saw God. God revealed Himself to this young man. We know from John 12 v41 that he specifically saw God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – just as John did in Revelation 1 v13.

*“These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him” (John 12 v41).*

The Lord Jesus Christ is *“the brightness of His (God's) glory and the express image of His Person”* (Hebrews 1 v3a). He is *“the image of God”* (2 Corinthians 4 v4) and *“the image of the invisible God”* (Colossians 1 v15). Those who saw Him saw the Father (John 14 v9).

And it is here that we learn our first lesson about the call of God. As this young man was preparing to SERVE GOD his first need was to SEE GOD and



to KNOW GOD. So God revealed Himself to Isaiah. It was as if God said, "Isaiah you are not yet ready to serve Me. You must, first of all, see Me and get to know Me and understand what I am like. Then I will send you out to serve Me."

Isaiah, as we saw yesterday, needed to COME before he could GO. He needed to COME IN to the presence of God before he could GO OUT with the message from God.

To see and know God is the first and most important step in Christian service. We are not ready to go out and serve God until we have obeyed His call to come to Him. God's call to service starts with our relationship to Him, which means knowing Him, understanding Him and obeying Him.

As God prepares you and me for His work He first of all wants us to take time to COME to Him, to talk to Him, to listen to Him, to see Him (as revealed in His Word) and to get to know Him.

Then, and only then, will we be ready to GO and serve Him.

### ***Day 3***

***"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"*** (Hebrews 4 v16).

God wanted Isaiah to serve Him as a prophet, a preacher and a writer. So first of all He called Isaiah to Himself and revealed Himself to him. He wanted this young man to see Him and get to know Him before he started to serve Him. What did Isaiah see? What were the truths about God which He wanted Isaiah to understand?

- He saw God's POSITION. *"sitting upon a throne."* (Isaiah 6v1)
    - ✓ It was a THRONE OF GOVERNMENT – *"High and lifted up"* (Isaiah 6 v1).
- Isaiah needed to see that God was sovereign and in complete control of all circumstances.
- This was especially important because of the difficulties he would face in his ministry, about which God speaks in Isaiah 6 v9 and 10. When problems came Isaiah could remember God's throne of government and be at peace because He was sovereign.
- This truth of God's government and God's sovereignty, which Isaiah saw that day, comes out time and time again in his writings, especially in chapters 40 to 50.

There will be times when things go wrong in your life and ministry, and if you don't understand this great truth of the sovereignty of God you will be shattered.

- ✓ It was a THRONE OF GLORY- *“and His train filled the temple”* (Isaiah 6 v1).

Isaiah needed to see how important it was to worship the Lord of glory – and to realize that his worship of God was of greater value and pleasure to God than his service for Him.

You and I also need to understand that our first priority must always be to take time to worship the God Who has revealed Himself and His Glory in His Word.

- ✓ But we need to remember also that it is for us, as it was for Isaiah, a THRONE OF GRACE, a throne to which ..... *“we are to come boldly that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4 v16).

Our first need is for mercy – so that we will not receive the punishment we deserve for our sin. Our second need is for grace – so that we will receive the help, salvation and blessing which we don't deserve. And we receive both of these when we come to the throne of grace.

How important it is for you and me today to see our Lord on the throne, to obey the One Who sits on a throne of government, to worship the One Who sits on a throne of glory, and to come to the One Who sits on a throne of grace.

### ***Day 4***

***“Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”*** (Isaiah 6 v2, 3).

God was calling Isaiah into His service to be a prophet, a preacher and a writer. But before Isaiah would be ready for His service he needed to see God – and so God revealed Himself to His servant:

- First of all he saw God's POSITION – on a throne (Isaiah 6 v1).
- Secondly he saw God's PURITY (Isaiah 6 v2, 3).

Above the throne stood the seraphims:

- ✓ Isaiah saw WHAT THEY WERE. They were “burning creatures”. That is what the word “seraphim” means. They burned in the presence of a PURE and holy God.

- ✓ Isaiah saw WHAT THEY DID. They covered their faces with two wings, covered their feet with two wings, and they flew with two wings. Four wings showed their awe and reverence for a PURE and holy God - only two wings were used for service.

We need to have that same order of priority.

- ✓ Isaiah heard WHAT THEY SAID. *"Holy, holy holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory"* (Isaiah 6 v3).

Why did they repeat the word "holy" three times?

- To emphasize God's PURITY and holiness – the greatest of His attributes.
- To show that this holiness was linked to the past, the present and the future.
- Because all three members of the Trinity are holy.

Isaiah never forgot what he saw and heard, and throughout his ministry he made constant reference to the PURITY and holiness of God.

The holiness of God shows unsaved people their need of salvation. But it also shows believers that they daily need to heed the exhortation. *"Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1 v16).

- He saw God's POWER in verse 4
  - ✓ He felt the movement of the posts of the door.
  - ✓ He heard the voice of God.
  - ✓ He saw the smoke which filled the house.

As Isaiah prepared to go out to serve His Lord he needed to have a new and fresh vision of the Lord because his ministry would be a particularly difficult one:

- He needed to see that God was on the throne.
- He needed to see that God was pure and holy.
- He needed to see that God was powerful and able to do the impossible.

Our prayer must, therefore, be "Give me a new vision, dear Lord, of Yourself—where You are seated, what You are like and what You can do, Amen."

## **Day 5**

*"So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts'"* (Isaiah 6 v5).

The first and most important step in Isaiah's call was to SEE God.

- The second step was to see himself as he really was (verse 5). None of us can really see and understand ourselves if we don't first of all see God. Consequently, in the light of what Isaiah learned about God, two results followed concerning himself which we can see in today's verse:

✓ CONVICTION

*"Woe is me", he cried, "for I am undone."*

He saw and was convicted of his uncleanness and sinfulness contrasted with *"the King, the Lord of hosts."*

And he was convicted specifically about his lips and words.

How could he ever serve God with such a sinful nature and such unclean lips? It is interesting to see how many of God's choice servants had a similar experience to Isaiah when they saw the Lord:

- Job – *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* (Job 42 v5 and 6).
- Peter – *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord"* (Luke 5 v8).
- John *"fell at His feet as dead"* (Revelation 1 v17).

It is not a happy experience to see ourselves as we really are. But conviction of sin in a believer's life is the result of being in the presence of God and hearing His Voice. The closer we are to the light the more we see the impurities in our own lives.

✓ CONFESSION

But it is not enough just to see our sinfulness. When God convicts us about sin in our lives we should be ready, like Isaiah, to confess it. He did not try to hide it from God. God knew about it anyway. But he cried out, *"I am a man of unclean lips."*

We are not ready for God's service if there is deliberate and unconfessed sin in our lives:

- We need to confess it to God:  
*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1 v9).
- We need to confess it to anyone we have hurt by our sin.  
*"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (Matthew 5 v23, 24).

In both cases we need to name it as it is – and not try to cover it or excuse it. That is what confession means.

## Day 6

*“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged’” (Isaiah 6 v6, 7).*

How did God call Isaiah into His service?

- He revealed Himself to Isaiah.
- He revealed Isaiah to himself.

How did Isaiah react to this two-fold revelation?

- CONVICTION. He was convicted of his sinful nature and especially of his sinful lips and words.
- CONFESSION. He confessed his sin to God. *“I am a man of unclean lips”* (Isaiah 6 v5).
- CLEANSING. God’s promise to believers is that *“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1 v9).

Consequently, we read in today’s verses that one of the seraphims took a live coal from the altar and laid it upon Isaiah’s mouth saying, *“This has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away; and your sin purged”*. Specific confession resulted in specific cleansing. The problem was solved and communion could now be restored between Isaiah and his God.

We as Christians need constant forgiveness and cleansing if we are to maintain our communion with Jesus Christ. We experienced the eternal forgiveness of all our sin when we trusted Jesus Christ and at the same time we were justified. As a consequence we will never be condemned, nor can we ever be lost. God is no longer our Judge, He is now our Father. But as children of God we still sin and we still need forgiveness. This is not eternal forgiveness; we have already received that. This is family forgiveness and we need it continually.

If as children of God we don’t confess our sins we lose our communion and fellowship with God. But we cannot lose our salvation for it is eternal.

- COMMUNION. We read two simple statements in verse 8 – *“I heard the voice of the Lord”* and *“Then said I.”* These together give a picture of communion and fellowship. God speaks and Isaiah hears. Isaiah speaks and God hears.

That is the way it should be for us also.

God calls us into communion with Himself – but it is a communion which is the end result of conviction, confession and cleansing. That communion will result in us taking time to hear God's voice as we read His Word; and also taking time to worship Him and speak to Him.

*"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1 v3b).

## **Day 7**

*"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.' And He said, 'Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive'"* (Isaiah 6 v8, 9).

Conviction – confession – cleansing – communion. This is how Isaiah reacted to the call of God. But there are two more steps:

- **COMMITMENT.** When God asked who would go for Him we see in today's verse that Isaiah was now in a position to respond eagerly and with enthusiasm. *"Here am I"*, he said, *"send me."* This is a picture of full commitment.

Anything! Anywhere! Anybody! Anytime!

Isaiah was an eager volunteer to do whatever God wanted him to do and to go wherever God wanted him to go.

Is that a picture of you and me also?

- **COMMISSION.** And now God called and directed Isaiah to his place of service. But please note again the steps God has used to lead Isaiah to this position:

- ✓ He revealed Himself to Isaiah.
- ✓ He showed Isaiah what he was like.
- ✓ Isaiah responded:
  - He was **convicted**
  - He **confessed** his sin
  - He was **cleansed**
  - He **communed** with God
  - He **committed** himself to God and His service

Now God tells him what He wants him to do:

- ✓ He was to go and tell his own people the Word of God (verse 9).
- ✓ This would be difficult because they would not listen to him (verse 10).

- ✓ This ministry would last for a long time and would need much patience (verse 11).

- ✓ But this ministry would eventually bring rewards and results (verse 13).

It would not be an easy ministry. But Isaiah was now ready to go.

He had been well prepared by God, and during the long and difficult years of his ministry he would be able to look back upon what he had seen and heard. He would be able to trust God Who had revealed Himself to him, Who had spoken to him and Who had called him into His service.

God may not call you and me into His service in the same way as He did Isaiah. For example we will not actually see God nor will we actually hear His voice as Isaiah did. But the basic principles which we have seen and examined in Isaiah's call will also apply to our call.

May we respond to that call as Isaiah did. There are many children who need to hear the Gospel. Is God calling you to go to them?



Isaiah 52v7

*"How beautiful upon the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good  
news, Who proclaims peace, Who  
brings glad tidings of good things, Who  
proclaims salvation,"*

## **Week 10:**

### **Theme – God's Call To Moses**

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#### ***Day 1***

***“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22 v6).***

I have always been fascinated by God's call to Moses, and the story of the burning bush, as outlined in Exodus chapters 3 and 4, and I felt it would be a good theme for our devotions this week.

Moses lived for 120 years and his life divides neatly into three parts:

- The first 40 years were spent at home and in the royal palace.
- The second 40 years were spent in “exile” in the wilderness of Midian.
- The remaining 40 years of Moses' life were spent leading the children of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

It was during these last 40 years that Moses fulfilled the task which God had called him to do, and become one of the great men of faith (Hebrews 11 v24-29). But before he was ready for this great task, he had to go through several stages of preparation. 80 years of preparation preceded 40 years of ministry and leadership, and it was during those 80 years that God worked in different ways to prepare him for his life's work.

Similarly, God has a ministry for you and me, and He also works in us and through circumstances to prepare us for that ministry. God is wise and He knows what He is doing – even though we may not always understand.

The first stage in the preparation of Moses for his ministry was his birth into a home where his parents were believers. (Hebrews 11 v23). He was to remain in that home for several years. During those years Moses' parents did all they could to prepare him for what lay ahead. They would have taught him about God, and His works and actions through the patriarchs. They would have taught him that he belonged to the nation of Israel which God had raised up; and they may even have shared with him their hope that he would, one day, lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. And they would have taught him about the faith, life and prayers which God expects from His children.

Moses never forgot those early years – and the full effect came 40 years later. We learn two lessons from those early years of Moses' life:

- The importance and value of the training and example of godly parents,



- The capacity of children, even little children, to absorb and learn truths about God and themselves which will stand them in good stead when they are young and also when they grow up.

It was Solomon who wrote our verse for today (Proverbs 22 v6) – and its promise was fulfilled in the life of Moses.

## **Day 2**

***“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds”*** (Acts 7 v22).

The first four or five years of Moses' life were spent in his own home in Egypt under the influence and teaching of his parents.

The next 36 years or so were spent in Pharaoh's palace as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and the possible heir to Pharaoh's throne.

These years were also to prove a very necessary part of the preparation of Moses for his future ministry. God was in control of the situation and all that was happening was ordained by Him. God is wise. He had a plan for Moses and was working to achieve that plan in Moses' life. It was God's plan that he should receive his early years of training from his parents, and his later training in Egypt, which would prepare him for his future leadership role.

Consequently, during the years which followed, Moses had the finest education available in his day from the greatest nation, as today's verse tells us. His education must have included science, music, mathematics, astronomy, engineering, military science and the study of languages. Moses became a man of letters and was a genius from the standpoint of human ability. His writings were unequalled and his five books would eventually form the basis of the Word of God. Above all, he was trained to become a leader of men – and this was to stand him in good stead later in his life.

Then two events happened which were to change the whole situation:

- First of all he made a DECISION. Moses turned down his right to become Pharaoh of Egypt right at the height of his career. He *“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter”* (Hebrews 11 v24). This decision could well have been the result of those early years spent under the influence and teaching of his parents. He **chose** rather *“to suffer affliction with the people of God (his own people) than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Hebrews 11 v25). Why did he make this choice? Because He **esteemed** (considered) *the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*” (Hebrews 11

v26). He made this decision that he might obtain a greater prize and receive a greater honour.

- Secondly he made a MISTAKE. After he had made his decision he went out to visit “his brethren” (Exodus 2 v11) and when he saw their burdens and witnessed an Egyptian hitting one of them, he killed him and hid him in the sand. He probably expected the praise and thanks of his brethren, but the next day he discovered that they were critical of what he had done (Exodus 2 v14). And then, to make matters worse, Pharaoh heard about it and wanted to kill him. So Moses fled from the land of Egypt.

He may have meant well by doing what he did – but he was wrong. Firstly, he killed a man and, secondly, he decided to push ahead with his own plan rather than seeking the will of God.

Is there a lesson here for us to learn?

### ***Day 3***

***“And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (Deuteronomy 8 v2)***

Moses’ mistake in becoming impatient and angry, resulting in the death of an Egyptian, was to lead to the third stage in his preparation for the ministry God had for him.

- His early years at home had laid the spiritual basis for the future.
- His 36 years or so in Egypt as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter had given him the education and preparation he would need as a leader of his people, as a victorious general, as a legislator and as a writer. But he was not yet ready for the ministry into which God would call him.
- The 40 years which followed in the desert of Midian were to teach him qualities which he would need in his leadership position and which he did not yet have:
  - ✓ He needed to learn that he should follow God’s plan – and not his own.
  - ✓ He needed to learn that victory would come from God – and not from his power, genius or ability.
  - ✓ He needed to learn how to wait upon the Lord – and not be impatient.
  - ✓ He needed to learn the importance of being disciplined.

- ✓ He needed to learn that people are like the sheep he would shepherd for forty years – and that they too would need to be cared for.
- ✓ He needed to develop a servant's attitude through these years of obscurity.

And the wonderful truth is that during the 40 years in the wilderness when he worked as a shepherd in Midian, Moses learned those lessons and in the end became a different man from what he was at the beginning.

Our verse for today reminds us that God often uses the wilderness or desert to humble us and to test us - as it did Moses.

- The children of Israel were later to spend 40 years in the desert where they were prepared for entry into the Promised Land.
- John the Baptist spent most of his life and ministry in the wilderness and deserts of Judea, and became better prepared for his key ministry of preparing the way for his Lord and Saviour.
- God used Paul's three years in the deserts of Arabia to reveal His truth and prepare him for the ministry which lay ahead (Galatians 1 v17 and 18).
- God often leads you and me into a desert place so that He can prepare us for our ministry. It may be ill health, a broken romance, the death of a loved one, failure at work – or even failure in His service. But we need to learn, firstly, that He has allowed this to happen for our good, and secondly, that He will bring us safely through the desert as we put our trust in Him.

### ***Day 4***

***“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt”*** (Exodus 3 v9, 10).

Moses has completed his schooling and the three stages of his preparation – in the home, in the palace and in the desert. Moses is now 80 years old and ready for the call of God to his life's work and ministry.

This call is recorded in Exodus chapter 3. This chapter can be summarized by looking at three word pictures in that chapter:

- The desert (Exodus 3 v1a) – This is the place where God TEACHES Moses and where he LEARNS discipline from God.

- The mountain (Exodus 3 v1b) – This is the place where God TRYSTS with Moses and where he LEAVES what he is doing to have a meeting with God.
- The burning bush (Exodus 3 v2) – This is the place where God TALKS to Moses and where he LISTENS to God while bowing before Him.

God's call to Moses, as outlined in today's Bible verses, is based on a triangle:

- God SAW the need of His children in Egypt:  
*"Now therefore behold this cry of the children of Israel is come up before Me"*  
 (Exodus 3 v9a).
- God SPOKE to Moses  
*"Come now therefore ...."* (Exodus 3 v1
- God SENT Moses to meet their need  
*"And I will send you"* (Exodus 3 v10b).



At the same time God assured Moses that He would be with him as he went  
*"Certainly I will be with you"* (Exodus 3 v12).

God also calls you and me to His service today on the basis of a triangle. God has, therefore, a triangle for you.

And He promises that He will be with you as you go.

- He SEES a need He wants you to meet.
- He SPEAKS to you about that need.
- He SENDS you to meet it.

But the big question is: How do we respond to God's call? It is possible to disobey God and His call. If we do, one of two things will happen:

- God will deal with us until we obey Him.
- God will send and use someone else – and they will take our place in the triangle.

I trust that each of us will respond to God's call with an obedience which is immediate and complete.

How did Moses respond? We will see tomorrow.

## Day 5

***“But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3 v11).***

We have already seen that there are at least three ways in which you and I can respond to the call of God:

- We may respond like Jonah and say “I won’t” (Jonah 1 v3).
- We may respond like Moses as described in our Bible verse for today and say, “I can’t” (Exodus 3 v11).
- We may respond like Philip and say, “I will” (Acts 8 v27, 30).

God revealed five great truths about Himself to Moses at the burning bush:

- He revealed that He was the living God (Exodus 3 v2).
- He revealed His holiness (Exodus 3 v5).
- He revealed His omniscience (Exodus 3 v7).
- He revealed His love for His people (Exodus 3 v8, 9).
- He revealed that He was eternal (Exodus 3 v14).

We have already seen that the first step in receiving God’s call is to have a vision of Him, and to see Him as He really is. This is still true today. God wants us to see Him and have a vision of Him as He reveals Himself in His Word – and this is the first step in hearing and knowing His call for our lives and ministries.

God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush: (Exodus 3v7,8)

- “I have **seen** my people.”
- “I have **heard** their cry.”
- “I have **come** to deliver them.”

And similarly God speaks to us through His Word, calls us and gives us the directions we need.

And so God spoke to Moses and told him to go to Pharaoh in Egypt and lead His people out of Egypt. But the Moses He spoke to was very different from the Moses who, full of self-confidence and anger, had slain the Egyptian 40 years earlier. This was a humble, self-effacing man who clearly saw his own deficiencies and shortcomings. How did he react? He said, “I can’t go, it’s not possible.”

Isn’t Moses also a picture of ourselves, when God speaks to us through His Word, showing us something He wants us to do, and a step He wants us to take? Don’t we see our weaknesses and shortcomings? Don’t we shrink back from obeying? Don’t we say in our hearts, “It is impossible. I can’t do it”?

Moses gave five excuses or five reasons why he could not go – and, in a wonderful way, God patiently and lovingly dealt with each of them. We will see those excuses in our next two devotions.

But we need to stop and ask ourselves if we are making some excuse concerning a step God wants us to make? “I can’t” is just a form of disobedience; and God’s desire for us is that we should OBEY HIM – immediately, completely and joyfully.

## *Day 6*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” Amen* (Matthew 28 v19, 20).

Moses’ first two excuses concerned HIMSELF and his shortcomings.

➤ **Moses first excuse** – “I have no ability.”

“*Who am I?*”, he asked in Exodus 3 v11.

Moses had a sense of inferiority; he had a problem with shyness; he lacked confidence. In this way he resembled Joshua when he was called to take over from Moses (Joshua 1 v6, 7, 9), Gideon when he was called to defeat the Midianites (Judges 6 v15), and Jeremiah when he was called to be a prophet (Jeremiah 1 v6).

Have you ever had this experience? Have you ever felt inadequate or unable to do what God has asked you to do?

**God’s response** – God promised HIS PRESENCE.

“*Certainly I will be with you*” (Exodus 3 v12).

It is interesting that God responded in exactly the same way to Joshua (Joshua 1 v5, 9), Gideon (Judges 6 v16) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1 v8).

And He responds similarly to us. When the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples in today’s Bible verse to “*Go ... teach all nations*” (Matthew 28 v19) He immediately added, especially for those of us whose response would be “I can’t”, “*Lo, I am with you always*” (Matthew 28 v20).

➤ **Moses’ second excuse** – “I have no knowledge.”

“*Who are You?*” he asked God in Exodus 3 v13.

Moses had a sense of ignorance concerning God. If the people would ask him what God’s name was he wouldn’t be able to answer. He felt a lack of knowledge and understanding about the One Who was calling him.

Have you ever felt like this? Have you ever hesitated to take a step in God's will because of your lack of education or understanding, and because you felt unable to answer people's questions?

**God's response** – God reveals HIS PERSON

*"And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"* (Exodus 3 v14).

God teaches Moses what he should say and shows him how he should answer their questions.

And similarly, God promises that if we obey Him He will show us and teach us what to say and what to do when the time comes. He will help us in every difficult situation to respond correctly. *"For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say"* (Luke 12 v12).

Have you ever pleaded lack of ability or lack of knowledge and training as an excuse for not obeying God's call? I am sure that we all have – at some time.

## Day 7

*"Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand"* (Exodus 4 v20)

Moses continues to give excuses and reasons why he could not go:

➤ **Moses third excuse** – "I will not be accepted."

"They will not believe me", he said (Exodus 4 v1). "They won't even listen to me. What can I do?"

He was afraid that the people would not accept him, and would pay no attention to him. He even feared that they would criticize him and accuse him of lying to them about his call to help them.

This is a fear we all have experienced when considering a new step. The basis of such a fear is the fact that we are looking at ourselves. It is true that they will not listen to us or believe us if we are only going in our own strength. But God has an answer.

**God's response** – God promised HIS POWER.

He promised Moses that He would bless and use what he had – his rod (Exodus 4 v2-5), his hand (Exodus 4 v6-8), and the water from the river (Exodus 4 v9). And He promises to use us and what we have.

➤ **Moses fourth excuse** – "I am not eloquent. What can I say?"

*"I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue"* (Exodus 4 v10).

He felt very much like Jeremiah when God called him to be a prophet (Jeremiah 1 v6) and he said, *"I cannot speak, for I am a child."*

**God's response** – God promised HIS PROVISION.

He said, *"I will be with your mouth and teach you what you should say"* (Exodus 4 v12). God made the same promise to Jeremiah *"I have put My words in your mouth"* (Jeremiah 1 v9). We need to remember that when God calls us into His work He always provides all we need.

- **Moses fifth excuse** – "I need a co-worker. I can't go alone. I need someone to go with me and help me" (Exodus 4 v13).

**God's response** – God promised a PARTNER

God became angry with Moses and his excuses. But He did promise a partner for Moses. He said that Aaron his brother would go with him.

And so Moses stopped making excuses – and went in obedience to God's call as our verse for today tells us and he became one of the greatest leaders of all time.

We need to stop making excuses and do what God calls us to do.

Are we making the following excuses to God?

I trust we will hear His response to each of them:

- I am **inadequate** – but God said *"I will **be** with you."*
- I am **ignorant** – but God said *"I will **teach** you."*
- I will be **ignored** – but God said *"I will **do** mighty things."*
- I am **incapable** – but God said *"I will **speak** through you."*
- I am **isolated** (alone) – but God said *"I will **supply** someone."*



Acts 7v36

*"He (Moses) brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years."*



## Week 11:

### Theme: God Uses Second Fiddles

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#### *Day 1*

*“And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Corinthians 12 v21).*

In Ireland a fiddle is another, more popular, name for a violin.

Do you know what a second fiddle is? In an orchestra the first violin or fiddle plays the main part of the music and the second fiddle always takes second place. The first fiddle gets the applause; the second fiddle gets little or no applause.

There were several men and women in the Bible who were willing to “play second fiddle” and God used them mightily.

One of the best known characters in the Old Testament was Joshua, the successor to Moses and the man who led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. For years he had been a “second fiddle”. But when Moses died he was promoted to become the “first fiddle”. And one of the reasons he was promoted to his new position was because he had been so faithful in his position as a “second fiddle”. Joshua had a co-worker and friend who was willing to take second place behind his leader and become a “second fiddle”. His name was Caleb! The name Caleb means a dog, and just as a dog shadows his master so Caleb shadowed Joshua. But the Bible makes it clear that God blessed and used Caleb in a special way. Paul makes it clear in our Bible verse that *“the head cannot say to the feet I have no need of you”* (1 Corinthians 12 v21b). God uses both the head and the feet. He uses “first” and “second” fiddles.

Throughout this week we will look at Caleb from three points of view:

The person he was - the prayer he prayed - the possession he enjoyed.

We will endeavour to learn the lessons which will help us to be good and useful “second fiddles”, if that is the place God has for us.

#### *The Person He Was*

##### ➤ **Caleb was chosen**

The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land had come to an end and the Israelites were looking forward to entering and occupying their new land.

God told Moses to select twelve men, one from each tribe, who would enter and spy out the land and bring back a report (Numbers 13 v6).

Caleb was the representative chosen from the tribe of Judah.

➤ **Caleb was commissioned**

And so Moses commissioned Caleb and the other eleven men and sent them into the land to accomplish their task. (Exodus 13v17)

You and I have been chosen and commissioned by a greater than Moses to accomplish a greater task. May we be found faithful.

## *Day 2*

*“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.”* (Isaiah 12 v2).

Caleb was a man who was prepared and willing to be a second fiddle and God used him mightily.

### *The Person He Was*

- He was chosen
- He was commissioned
- **He was convinced**

Forty days later the twelve spies returned from their expedition, with their report concerning the Promised Land.

All twelve were agreed on a number of facts:

- ✓ The land was very fruitful (and they brought fruit as a proof) – a land of milk and honey (Numbers 13 v26, 27).
- ✓ The people in the land were strong (Numbers 13 v28).
- ✓ The cities were walled and very big (Numbers 13 v28).

But the agreement stopped there.

- ✓ A majority of ten said, *“We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we”* (Numbers 13 v31).
- ✓ But Caleb said, “Let us go at once. We can do it.” He was **convinced** that they could conquer the land. But what was the basis of this **conviction**?

➤ **He was confident**

The reasons for his recommendation to enter the land appear in the next chapter which records what happened on the following day.

The children of Israel had accepted the pessimistic report of the ten spies and expressed their dismay and discouragement.

Then Joshua and Caleb spoke and gave three reasons why the Israelites should enter the land:

- ✓ He (the Lord) will bring us into the land (Numbers 14 v8).
- ✓ He will give the land to us (Numbers 14 v8).
- ✓ He is with us (Numbers 14 v9).

Therefore they said “we should not be afraid.” (Numbers 14 v9). They were completely sure that the land would be theirs – if they went ahead. Their confidence was not in themselves but in the Lord.

Is there a lesson you and I need to learn from Caleb?

Has God called you to do something or go somewhere? Others say it is impossible. But if it is God’s Will you can put your trust and confidence in the Lord and He will bring it to pass. You can echo the words of our verse for today (Isaiah 12 v2) and not be afraid.

### ***Day 3***

*“But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and **has followed Me fully**, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it”* (Numbers 14 v24).

We have seen how Caleb was **chosen** and **commissioned**; how **convinced** he was about the conquest of the land, and his **confidence** in the Lord to enable them to conquer it. We continue to study “the person he was”.

➤ **He was courageous**

The Israelites responded negatively to the report of Joshua and Caleb, and rejected their expression of confidence in God. Caleb undoubtedly expected such rejection, and may not have been too surprised when the people threatened to stone the two of them (Numbers 14 v10). But he had the courage of his convictions and was not afraid to express his confidence in God – despite the danger involved in doing so.

The people rejected his testimony and we know the result. God disinherited them (Numbers 14 v12), told them that none of the adults would enter the land (14 v29,30), that they would wander in the wilderness for forty years

(verse 33), and that the ten spies who brought the bad report from the land would all die (verse 37).

➤ **He was commended**

But God made it clear that faithful Caleb would enter the land and that his descendents would “possess it”. However, it also became clear at a later date that the man chosen to be the leader of the nation after Moses would be Joshua, the other member of this faithful pair. But this would be no problem to Caleb who was content to be “second fiddle”.

➤ **He was consecrated**

What was the “secret” of Caleb’s life? Why was he so faithful when others were not? How was he able all his life to play “second fiddle” to Joshua.

- ✓ First of all God answered the question in the words of today’s verse:
- ✓ Moses later added his testimony to Caleb and Joshua:  
*“they have **wholly followed the Lord**”* (Numbers 32 v12).
- ✓ Moses later underlined this truth about Caleb when he quoted the words of the Lord and the special promise He gave: *“He shall see it, and to him and to his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he **wholly followed the Lord**”* (Deuteronomy 1 v36).
- ✓ Over 40 years later Caleb himself bore witness to what he had done and repeated the words which God, and Moses, had spoken concerning him.  
*“I **wholly followed the Lord my God**”* (Joshua 14 v9).
- ✓ And later in the chapter Joshua gives the same testimony (Joshua 14 v14).

All these testimonies speak of Caleb’s consecration. This is still the secret of blessing. God still blesses the one who is consecrated to Him and His Will.

## **Day 4**

*“Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said”* (Joshua 14 v12).

We have seen the person Caleb was and now we look at the petition he presented.

### ***The Petition He Presented***

Forty years have passed by and the years of wandering in the wilderness have ended. The children of Israel including Caleb have entered the Promised Land. Joshua is dividing out the land among the different tribes. And now Caleb, the “second fiddle”, comes to Joshua, the “first fiddle”, with a request. He asked Joshua if he and his family could attack and possess the land of Hebron which was inhabited by the giant Anakims. He had visited and surveyed this area during the visit of the spies 40 years earlier. Caleb’s request to Joshua is our verse for today, “*Now therefore give me this mountain*” (Joshua 14 v12).

Although Caleb was eighty-five years old he saw the challenge of Hebron, (which had a special place in Jewish history), and wanted to conquer it. There are several truths about this petition we need to see:

- It was based on a **promise** from God (verses 9 and 12). In Deuteronomy chapter 1, verse 36 God had promised to give Caleb this portion of the country which he had personally visited and viewed during that first expedition as one of the twelve spies.
- He had waited **patiently** for over 40 years for this great day when he would see the realization of that promise.
- He understood the **problems** which would be involved (verse 12). The giant Anakims were there and the cities were “*great and fenced*”.
- He believed that he had the **power** and ability to conquer Hebron. He said, “*I am as strong this day as I was in the day Moses sent me*” (verse 11).
- But at the same time he knew that the Lord would **provide** all he needed to accomplish his task and that He would grant him His **presence** (“*if the Lord be with me*”) (verse 12). Just as He had provided for him during the past years (“*And now behold, the Lord has kept me alive*”) (verse 10), He would provide again.
- And so he had **peace** and the assurance of victory (“*I will drive them out*”) (v12).

Do you have a mountain before you to day? Are you willing to trust the Lord for Him to enable you to overcome it? Do you remember the words of the angel in Zechariah 4 v7, “*Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!*” How? The answer is in the previous verse “*Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts*” (Zechariah 4 v6).

## **Day 5**

***“Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength”*** (Isaiah 26 v4)

Caleb, the second fiddle to Joshua has been our theme during this week. We have seen the person he was and the petition he presented. The next logical step is to see the possession he enjoyed.

### ***The Possession He Enjoyed***

Although he was an old man he attacked the city and land of Hebron and we read in Joshua 15 v14 that he drove out from there the three sons of Anak. This was no mean feat for a man of 85 years!

At the same time he encouraged his nephew Othniel to conquer the other part of the area assigned to him, and arranged for him to marry his daughter.

Then lastly, as an act of generosity, he gave to her and her husband vital springs of water.

This city of Hebron was later to become for seven years the royal city – the capital and residence of David until he made Jerusalem his capital.

What a wonderful man Caleb was! He's a real example for us to imitate – especially if we find ourselves in the position of “second fiddles”.

Caleb was a man who truly believed and trusted in God. That made him stand out from many of his contemporaries. He appears in the Bible three times and on each occasion he demonstrated his faith in God. He trusted in the Lord at all times and our verse for today reminds us to do the same:

- As one of the twelve spies Caleb showed his faith by the **decision** he made. In Numbers 13 v30 we read that he quieted the people before Moses and said, *“Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”* He trusted completely in the Lord and therefore made the right decision.

Do you have a decision you must make? Be sure like Caleb, that your complete trust is in God.

- He showed his faith by his **patience**.

For 40 years Caleb disappeared from the pages of Scripture, but he was there waiting. Then the waiting time was over and he came to Joshua to claim his inheritance (Joshua 14 v6). During those 40 years Caleb believed and trusted God. God often asks His servants to wait. Moses waited 40 years; Paul spent 3 years in Arabia, Elijah 3 years at Zarephath; and John the Baptist many years in the wilderness.

Are you willing to wait and believe God for what He promised? Wait on the Lord – and trust Him.

- He showed his faith by his **conquest** of Mount Hebron:  
*“Give me this mountain”*, he cried (Joshua 14 v12). And God fulfilled His promise and gave it to him (Joshua 15 v14-20).

Trust Him. He will enable you to conquer whatever mountain lies ahead of you.

## **Day 6**

*“When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord”* (Acts 11 v23-24).

Caleb, as we have seen in the Old Testament, was a second fiddle whom God used mightily and who is an example for us all to follow. In the New Testament we find another second fiddle who has much to teach us.

Paul was the great missionary figure of the early church, but his companion whom God also used is not so well known. His name was Barnabas and he was content to be a “second fiddle”. He recognized the gifts and abilities possessed by his younger partner Paul and gladly accepted his leadership.

We will now study him and his ministry.

## ***The Man He Was***

The Bible tells us the kind of man Barnabas was:

- He was a **generous** man  
 The first reference in the Bible to Barnabas tells us that he sold the land he possessed and gave the proceeds to the apostles to help those who were poor (Acts 4 v37). He was truly a generous or “giving” man.
- He was a “**going** man”  
 The next reference to Barnabas tells us that the church in Jerusalem sent him to Antioch (Acts 11 v22) to examine the spiritual awakening which was going on there. They certainly believed him to be **dependable**. And Barnabas was **available** and willing to leave his home and travel to Antioch.

➤ He was a **glad** man

We read that when Barnabas came to Antioch and saw the grace of God demonstrated in the spiritual awakening which had taken place through the ministry of those who had travelled up from Jerusalem, he was **glad** (Acts 11 v23). He was not jealous of how God had used others in this ministry; he did not criticize the work which had been done; he just praised the Lord with joy and gladness.

➤ He was a **good** man

This is perhaps the greatest testimony of all and it is contained in today's Bible verse. The reason why he was a good man (Acts 11 v24a) was because he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11 v24b); and had faith and trust in God. He was like Caleb in many ways because he also "fully followed the Lord". These are the kind of people God uses.

And as a result of that goodness and fulness shown in Barnabas' ministry in Antioch "*a great many people were added unto the Lord*" (Acts 11 v24c).

Here is an example for you and me to imitate and follow – to be generous, to go where God wants us to go, to be glad and joyful for what He is doing and, above all, to be good and "*filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith*".

## **Day 7**

***"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus"*** (Acts 9 v27).

We have seen the kind of man Barnabas was. We now want to see his ministry.

### ***The Ministry He Exercised***

The ministry of Barnabas was one of encouragement. He wanted to help others to be what God wanted them to be. He was content to be a "second fiddle".

➤ His ministry is explained by his name

The word "Barnabas" means, as is explained in Acts 4 v36, "the son of consolation, or exhortation, or encouragement, or comfort." The same word is used with regard to the Holy Spirit in John 14 v16; 15 v26 and 16 v7 when He is described as "the Comforter". The word describes someone who is "called alongside to help" – that was the ministry of Barnabas.



- His ministry is displayed in what he did.  
Everything Barnabas did in his ministry was to help and encourage others:
- ✓ In Acts 11 v23 he encouraged the young church in Antioch “*to cleave unto the Lord*”. He knew that they needed this kind of help.
  - ✓ In Acts 9 v27, our verse for today, he saw the possibilities and potential in the young man Saul who had just been converted from a life of extreme opposition to the Gospel. So he introduced him to the church at Jerusalem. This was just the help and encouragement this young man needed at the beginning of his Christian life.
  - ✓ In Acts 11 v25 he went to visit Saul in his home city of Tarsus to invite him to come “into full-time ministry” along with him in Antioch. Saul came with him and began what was to be one of the most wonderful and spectacular ministries in church history.
  - ✓ In Acts 11 v26-30 Barnabas stayed with Saul, served with Saul and helped him to “find his feet”.
  - ✓ In Acts 13 v2 Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church at Antioch. But from verse 9 onwards Saul (now Paul) took over the leadership of the missionary group and Barnabas, the older and more experienced man, was content to recognize his leadership, to support him and be “a second fiddle”. Their partnership lasted until they parted company because of a disagreement over John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas (Acts 15 v36-39).
  - ✓ In Acts 15 v37 Barnabas invited John Mark to join him and come back into full-time ministry. He took him under his wing to help and encourage him. So John Mark became a second fiddle to another second fiddle!

The Lord Jesus called the Holy Spirit “another Comforter” (or Encourager). The Holy Spirit came to comfort and encourage us. But encouragement is also a gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12 v8). Barnabas had this gift. Has God given you this gift? Are there boys and girls and young people He wants you to help and encourage and invest yourself in?

## Week 12:

### Theme: God Gives Second Chances

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#### *Day 1*

*“So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying” (Acts 12 v12).*

Last week we considered the subject of “second fiddles”. This week we will think about “second chances”. And the link between the two is the young man we thought about yesterday called John Mark. He was a “second fiddle” who also got a “second chance”.

It is wonderful to know that we have a God of love, of mercy and grace. He delights in forgiving lost sinners when they trust Christ; and in forgiving His children when they sin, then repent and come back to Him.

John Mark is an example of someone who received a “second chance”.

➤ **John Mark's Background**

John Mark had an excellent background:

- ✓ He had a godly mother called Mary as we read in today's verse.
- ✓ His home was a house of prayer where many disciples met to pray for Peter when he was imprisoned (Acts 12v12). Some commentators think that the Lord Jesus and His disciples may have met in this home for the Last Supper (Mark 14 v15), and that it was also the home where the disciples met to pray (Acts 1 v13) before Pentecost.
- ✓ He had a godly uncle called Barnabas (Colossians 4 v10), and I am sure that Barnabas had a great influence on him.
- ✓ He seemed to have a close relationship with Peter who referred to him as “my son” (1 Peter 5 v13). Peter may even have led him to Jesus Christ.

➤ **John Mark's Service**

Paul always seemed to look for young people with potential for the Lord's service. When he and Barnabas returned from Jerusalem to Antioch they brought John Mark with them as part of their little team (Acts 12 v25). When they left on their first missionary journey John Mark went with them as their helper (Acts 13 v5). He would also have done some teaching

and follow-up work. I am sure he was a vital and important member of the team.

➤ **John Mark's Failure**

We read in Acts 13 v13 that he departed from Paul and Barnabas and returned home. Why? We don't know! All we know is that *"he went not with them to the work."*

How sad! But you and I need to be sure that we don't make the same mistake and leave the work God has called us to do.

## **Day 2**

*"But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 15 v38, 39).*

We have thought about John Mark's good background, his service with Paul and Barnabas and then his failure. He left the ministry he had been involved with and returned home to Jerusalem. It is obvious from Acts 15 v38 and 39 that Paul especially felt that John Mark had been a failure and had let them down.

Why did John Mark give up and return home? The Bible does not tell us:

- ✓ Perhaps he was homesick and concerned about his mother's welfare in Jerusalem.
- ✓ Perhaps he did not like to travel so much.
- ✓ Perhaps the difficulties and persecution were too much for him.
- ✓ Perhaps, and most likely, he was not ready for this type of ministry and was not mature enough.

However we should not be too critical, because I am sure that many of us have either been in the same situation, or have been tempted to leave the work into which God has called us.

But praise God for His grace, and for the fact that He gives a second chance – and, when needed, a third or fourth chance.

➤ **John Mark's Return**

John Mark received a second chance. One writer calls him the "man who came back".

Two years had passed by and Paul and Barnabas were planning their second missionary journey.

Barnabas wanted to invite John Mark to join their team again. Our verse tells us that Paul refused on the basis of what had happened before. Paul's concern was that the Lord's work might be hindered.

Paul was probably thinking of what John Mark could do to the work (hinder it by his undependability) while Barnabas was thinking of what the work could do for John Mark (strengthen and make him more dependable).

As a result the team divided. Paul left with Silas and went to Syria and Barnabas left with John Mark to go to Cyprus.

It is difficult to decide whether Paul or Barnabas was right. The Bible doesn't tell us.

However, the results of this decision were good. There were now, on the one hand, two missionary teams instead of one; and, on the other hand, there was the opportunity for John Mark to make a new start and a new beginning under the wise leadership of Barnabas, the man with the gift of encouragement.

Perhaps you need to make a new beginning. God is ready, I am sure, to give you a second chance and to say to you "*Behold I will do a new thing*" (Isaiah 43 v19).

### **Day 3**

***"Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert"*** (Isaiah 43 v19).

And so a new stage in John Mark's life had begun. God had given him a second chance and he had taken advantage of it. God was going to do "*a new thing*" in his life and in the words of today's verse, "*make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert*".

#### ➤ **John Mark's ministry**

What were the results of John Mark's return, and his second chance?

- ✓ His fellowship with Paul was restored.

When Paul wrote to the Colossians from Rome during his first imprisonment, he mentioned in Colossians 4 v10 that "*Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas was with him there*", and asked "*the church at Colosse to*

receive him” if he came to them. Again in Philemon verse 24 Paul writes that Mark is with him and describes him as a fellow labourer.

- ✓ His ministry with Paul was restored.

Paul writes from his prison cell in Rome during his second imprisonment and says, “Take Mark and bring him with them; for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4 v11).

Ten years had passed by since John Mark had returned home and retired from his ministry. But Paul had seen the change in him and how he had come back into both fellowship and ministry. It is probable that Mark was at this time ministering in Asia Minor (including Colosse) (Colossians 4 v10) and that Paul now wanted him to get involved in a ministry in Rome itself.

- ✓ His service with Peter was blessed.

Peter refers to “*Marcus my son*” in 1 Peter 5 v13. Some Bible scholars believe that Peter wrote this epistle from Rome. If so Mark would have been with him there and ministering there. There seems to have been a special relationship between Peter and Mark, and they seem to have both fellowshiped and ministered together.

- ✓ His authorship of the second Gospel has blessed many.

Perhaps the greatest and most lasting ministry of John Mark was his writing of the second Gospel, the Gospel of Mark, which has been a blessing to millions of people during the last 2,000 years. It is generally believed that John Mark received much of the information contained in his Gospel from his friend Peter.

Isn't it good that John Mark “came back”? Isn't it wonderful that God gave him a second chance? But what about you? Have you given up on something which God wanted you to do? The wonderful news is that you can “come back”, you can make a new start – and God will bless and use you as He blessed and used John Mark.

### **Day 4**

*“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’”* (Luke 22 v31, 32).

Falling is a very unpleasant experience and can be very painful and sometimes humiliating. But it is an even worse experience when we fall spiritually, especially in full public view.

However there is something worse than falling. Do you know what that is? For the next three days, as we continue our meditations on the God Who gives a second chance, we will look at a great man who fell in full public view – and we will also look at what happened after he fell. His name was Peter! His fall is recorded in Luke chapter 22. I will outline what happened to Peter by using five short simple words – told, bold, cold, sold and gold.

➤ **Peter was told**

In Luke 22 verses 31-34, the Lord Jesus **told** Peter that he was going to fall and that he was going to deny Him.

He told him four things, three of which are included in today's verses.

- ✓ “The devil wants to have you, so that he can ruin you” (verse 31).
- ✓ “You will deny that you know Me three times” (verse 34).
- ✓ “I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail” (verse 32).
- ✓ “When you turn back again, after your failure, help and strengthen your fellow Christians” (verse 32).

All four of these prophecies took place exactly as the Lord Jesus said.

These four statements could also be true of you and me. The devil wants to get his hands on us; but it is wonderful to know that the Lord Jesus is praying for us, (John 17 v9, 11, 15 and 20; Hebrews 7 v25), and that the difficult experiences we go through can enable us to help others.

➤ **Peter was bold**

Peter's reaction was typical. He reacted quickly and **boldly** saying he would never do such a thing (Luke 22 v33).

Peter often talked too much and said things that he had never thought through. He tended to have an inflated picture of himself and his ability. Humility was not Peter's strong point.

We can see that same pride, self-confidence and boldness of speech at other times in Peter's life – when he wanted to build tents on the Mountain of Transfiguration (Matthew 17 v4); when he walked on the sea and sank (Matthew 14 v28); when he used his sword in the garden of Gethsemane (John 18 v10); and when he went back into fishing (John 21 v3).

You and I need to be cautious in our assessment of ourselves and the problems we face. We should not quickly feel “I can do it” or “I don't need any help.” It is good to know ourselves and our weaknesses so that His “*strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12 v9).

## **Day 5**

***“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. So Peter went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22 v61 and 62).***

Peter had been **told** by the Lord Jesus that he would deny Him; and he was **bold** in his contradiction of such a possibility. But it happened exactly as the Lord Jesus had said – and Peter fell, and fell badly.

➤ **Peter was cold**

His body was **cold**, because it is recorded that Peter went into the palace, sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire (Mark 14 v54, 67).

His heart was **cold**. He forsook the Lord Jesus (Mark 14 v50) and fled when the Lord was taken captive in the garden. Peter followed the Lord Jesus “afar off” (Luke 22 v54; Mark 14 v54). He did not want to be seen in the Lord’s company and was afraid of what men would say and do.

At the same time we must be careful not to be too critical of Peter. In many ways Peter is a mirror of ourselves. Are there not times when we have been cold and afraid of what men would say and do?

➤ **Peter was sold**

That may seem a strange word to use. Who sold him? He **sold** himself. Elijah had said to Ahab in 1 Kings 21 v20, “*You have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD.*” As a price for safety Peter had sold himself and his witness and had abandoned his position as a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Peter was faced with three challenges and three chances to identify himself with the Lord Jesus. As a result he had three choices to make:

- “I don’t know Him”, he said to the girl beside the fire (Luke 22 v57).
- “I am not His disciple”, he said to another person later (Luke 22 v58).
- “I was not with Him”, he said still later. “I don’t know what you are talking about” (Luke 22 v59, 60).

What a contradiction these statements were of what Peter had earlier said so strongly to the Lord Jesus, “*Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death*” (Luke 22 v33).

Peter fell grievously. Do you remember the question I asked at the beginning of yesterday’s meditation? What is worse than falling? The answer is – not getting up again!

How thankful we are that our Lord is a gracious loving Lord, and that He is the God of the second chance. After his fall the Lord turned and looked upon Peter (Luke 22 v61). Then Peter remembered what the Lord had told him and he went out and wept bitterly. He realized the seriousness of what he had done, and was deeply sorry and repentant. He was on the way back; he was ready for a new beginning; and the Lord Jesus was ready to give him both a second chance and a new beginning.

### Day 6

*“That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1 v7)*

We have seen that Peter was **told**, Peter was **bold**, Peter was **cold** and that Peter had **sold** himself and his witness because of the fear of man. But we have also seen that our God is the God of the second chance. Instead of the Lord turning away from Peter and rejecting him, we read that He turned and looked at him (Luke 22 v61), and that look melted Peter's heart. It was the first step in a new beginning and a second chance for Peter which was to result in something very special.

#### ➤ Peter's faith became gold

Peter himself writes in his first epistle that when our faith is tried and tested, when it is put through the fire of difficulty and suffering, it becomes more pure. It is refined like **gold** – but it is more precious than gold, because gold perishes and our faith doesn't. And it is faith which is *“found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1 v7) as we read in today's verse – and this was true also in Peter's life.

The Lord Jesus picked Peter up again after his fall:

- ✓ He prayed for him (Luke 22 v32) – and His prayers are always answered!
- ✓ He looked at him (Luke 22 v61).
- ✓ He sent a personal message through the angel to him after His resurrection *“Go and tell His disciples – and Peter”* (Mark 16 v7).
- ✓ The Lord Jesus appeared personally to Peter. There is no record of what took place. The disciples told their friends *“The Lord is risen*



*indeed and has appeared to Simon*” (Luke 24 v34); and Paul adds *“He was seen by Cephas”* (1 Corinthians 15 v5).

- ✓ The Lord Jesus spoke to Peter “officially” and restored him to fellowship and usefulness (John 21 v15-17). Three times He asked him if he loved Him and Peter answered “Yes” to those three questions. His answers to these three questions were so different to those three asked previously beside the fire (Luke 22 v55-60). And the Lord Jesus commissioned him to feed His lambs and His sheep.

And now that he was restored Peter made a new beginning which was to result in his preaching at Pentecost, and his opening of the door of the Gospel to both Jews (Acts 2), and Gentiles (Acts 10). From now on he was going to carry on a very fruitful ministry to many, and this ministry would include the writing of two wonderful letters.

His faith had been refined like gold and he had become an example for each of us as to what God can do with a fallen person when he is willing to repent and confess, to ask for strength and then be available and usable to help others with their problems.

## ***Day 7***

***“Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you’*** (Jonah 3 v1 and 2).

Our God is the God of the second chance. We have seen already this week how John Mark and Peter were both given a second chance and restored to their fellowship and ministry.

But perhaps the best known of all those who received a second chance and who made a new start was the prophet Jonah.

The story of Jonah can be summarized under four simple headings:

### ➤ **The Call of Jonah**

God spoke to Jonah and told him to go to Nineveh. Jonah was a prophet (2 Kings 14 v25) through whom God had already spoken, so we would expect Jonah to obey and do what God asked him to do.

### ➤ **The Disobedience of Jonah**

But Jonah disobeyed God and fled in the opposite direction. Nineveh was to the east and Jonah got on a ship which was travelling westward – to *“flee from the presence of the Lord”* (Jonah 1 v3).

➤ **The Chastisement of Jonah**

When a child of God disobeys Him there are two possible results:

- ✓ God may just lay him aside and use someone else to accomplish His purposes.
- ✓ God may chastise and deal with His child until he obeys.

God followed the second path with Jonah. He sent a great wind (Jonah 1 v4) and when Jonah was thrown overboard He sent a great fish (Jonah 1 v17). God was determined that Jonah would obey Him and chastised him until he finally said "Yes".

It may be that God is chastening and correcting some of us just now because we have disobeyed Him. Would it not be much simpler and easier to say "Yes"?

➤ **The Obedience of Jonah**

When Jonah prayed in the belly of the great fish and said "*I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord*" (Jonah 2 v9) two things happened:

- ✓ God spoke to the fish and it threw Jonah onto the dry land (Jonah 2 v10).
- ✓ The word of the Lord came unto Jonah **the second time** as our Bible verse for today tells us (Jonah 3 v1).

God gave the obedient Jonah a second chance. He went to Nineveh and that city was greatly blessed through his ministry. Jonah's obedience did not just result in blessing on himself; it brought salvation to many, many thousands of needy sinners in that great city.

Is there someone reading this who is like John Mark, Peter or Jonah? You have moved out of God's will for your life. God wants to give you "a second chance" today. Make a new beginning and He will bless you – and He will bless your ministry and make you a channel of blessing to many.

## **Week 13:**

### **Theme - The Life Of The Lord Jesus**

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#### ***Day 1***

***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1 v14).***

The two big events in the Christian calendar are Christmas when we focus our hearts and minds on the birth and incarnation of Jesus Christ, and Easter when we focus our hearts and minds upon His death and resurrection.

However in between these two great events one third of the New Testament is taken up with and devoted to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His life is important. It is:

- not just a continuation of His incarnation
- not just a preparation for His death
- not just a relatively unimportant period between two important events.

A study of His life is absolutely vital for us, and will result in great blessing in our ministry.

Someone has said:

“Nothing is more important than a study of the character, work and teachings of Jesus Christ. It will be a great day for Christianity when Christians discover the grandeur of the Person they daily worship.”

Therefore our theme for this week will be – the life of Jesus Christ on this earth – that life which started, as our Bible verse tells us, when He “*became flesh*”.

The life of Jesus Christ is important to us for six reasons.

#### ***Jesus Christ Revealed God***

First of all through His life Jesus Christ revealed God to the world.

He came to SHOW us what God was like:

- Jesus Christ is “*the image of the invisible God*” (Colossians 1 v15).
- Jesus Christ is “*the brightness of His (God’s) glory and the express image of His Person*” (Hebrews 1 v3).
- Jesus Christ said, “*He that has seen Me has seen the Father*” (John 14 v9).

For the first time ever God could now be seen in human flesh.

So when we look at Jesus Christ in the Word of God and as we examine His life we can see God, and we can better understand what He is like. We can see in Jesus Christ the attributes of God – His love, holiness, power, patience and faithfulness.

*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3 v16).*

## **Day 2**

*“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1 v18, 19).*

### **Jesus Christ Obeyed the Law**

We have seen that the first purpose of the life of Jesus Christ was, and still is, to reveal God to us and to show us what God is really like.

Secondly, Jesus Christ lived for thirty-three years to fulfil the demands of the law and to qualify as a perfect sacrifice for sin.

To be our substitute He had to be perfect. His keeping of the law, and His active obedience to God's Will as a perfect Man, were the essential qualifications and preparation for His atoning sacrifice; and this keeping of the law and His perfect obedience could only be demonstrated by the life He lived.

Satan, the devil, did all he could to tempt Jesus Christ and get him to disobey God and His law. Right at the very beginning of His ministry he came to Him and three times tried to get Him to step out of His Father's Will – and disobey Him:

- He tempted Him physically by suggesting He turn stones into bread (Matthew 4 v3).
- He tempted Him mentally by suggesting He prove He was God's Son by jumping off the temple (Matthew 4 v6).
- He tempted Him spiritually by offering Him the world if He would worship Him (Matthew 4 v8).

If the Lord Jesus had yielded to any of these temptations He would have sinned – and would have been disqualified as our Substitute. But He did not. He was always obedient to God and His law throughout His whole life.

Paul wrote that just as “*by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*” (Romans 5 v19).

And again in 2 Corinthians 5 v21, Paul explains that “*He (God the Father) has made Him (God the Son) sin for us, Who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*”

Paul was explaining in these verses that the necessary qualifications for the Saviour from sin were that He, Himself, should be completely obedient to God’s law (Romans 5 v19) and completely without sin (2 Corinthians 5 v21) – and His obedient and perfect life showed that He fulfilled these qualifications. Peter says the same in our two verses for today when he describes the One Who redeemed us as “*without blemish and spot.*”

In the Old Testament all the animals which were sacrificed had to be “*without blemish and spot*”. For example, the Passover lamb needed to be “*without blemish*” (Exodus 12 v5) before it could die and take the place of the one who would otherwise die. How thankful we are that God’s lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, showed during His lifetime that He was without blemish and spot and therefore was qualified to be our Saviour.

### Day 3

*“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit”* (1 Peter 3 v18)

Our Lord Jesus Christ lived for over 33 years on this earth to fulfil perfectly the demands of God’s law, and thereby qualify as a perfect sacrifice for our sin. And throughout those years He completely obeyed the law of God, as outlined in the Old Testament, and never once sinned in thought, in word or in deed. His obedience was an essential part of the redeeming work He had come to earth to do.

The work which He finished (John 17 v4) was not just His work and His obedience on the cross which is called by the theologians His “passive obedience” but it encompassed the 33 years of His perfect life which preceded the cross, and which the theologians call His “active obedience”.

The Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem on “Palm Sunday”, four days before the Passover.

It was the tenth day of the month – the day when many thousands of lambs were being brought into Jerusalem to be slain on the Passover (Exodus 12 v3-

6). It is possible that even as He entered Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, many lambs were being brought into the city for sacrifice.

The Lord Jesus was the fulfilment of all these lambs; He was “*our Passover sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5 v7) and He, by His perfect life, fulfilled God’s condition of being “without blemish and sin”.

Before they were sacrificed on the day of the Passover, the lambs would be examined carefully to see if there was any blemish in them.

It is interesting to see how many people testified during that Passover week to the perfection and sinlessness of our “Passover Lamb”. Many of these people could be called His enemies and would have been happy to find some fault in Him. But they couldn’t:

- Pontius Pilate said, “*I find no fault in Him*” (John 19 v4).
- Pilate’s wife said, “*Have nothing to do with that just man*” (Matthew 27 v19).
- Judas Iscariot said, “*I have betrayed innocent blood*” (Matthew 27 v4).
- The Roman centurion said, “*Certainly this was a righteous man*” (Luke 23 v47).
- The thief on the cross said, “*This man has done nothing amiss*” (Luke 23 v41).

Consequently, even His enemies were able to testify that He had fulfilled the demands of the law and that He was qualified to die for sin as “*a lamb without blemish and spot*”. He died, as today’s verse reminds us, “*the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3 v18).

Our sin was transferred to Him, the Just One, as He hung on the cross, and He took our punishment for sin, the sin of us, the unjust, from His Father.

When we trusted Him as our Saviour He “brought us to God” by transferring His perfect righteousness to us.

### ***Day 4***

***“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’”*** (Matthew 17 v5).

We have seen that the Lord Jesus could only be our Saviour from sin if He Himself was without sin; and that He lived on the earth for over 33 years to show by His perfect life that He fulfilled His Father’s conditions, that He kept the law perfectly and completely, and that He was a lamb “without spot or blemish”.

We also saw how His enemies testified to His sinlessness, even though they would have liked to find “some fault in Him”.

- In addition even the demons testified to His sinlessness:  
*“I know Who You are, the Holy One of God”* (Mark 1 v24).
- It is also significant that the close friends of the Lord Jesus added their testimony concerning His sinlessness.

Our friends often know more about us than our enemies! Yet after many months, days and hours spent in close contact with the Lord Jesus they all unite to say “He is perfect”. And other followers who had not lived and served with Him during His years on this earth also added the same testimony from what they had heard and knew.

- ✓ Peter wrote: *“He did no sin”* (1 Peter 2 v22).
- ✓ John wrote: *“In Him is no sin”* (1 John 3 v5).
- ✓ Paul wrote: He *“knew no sin”* (2 Corinthians 5 v21).
- ✓ The writer to the Hebrews wrote: He was *“without sin”* (Hebrews 4 v15).
- Jesus Christ Himself claimed that He was without sin:  
*“Which of you convicts Me of sin?”* (John 8 v46), He said to His critics – and no one was able to do so.
- Along with all these witnesses and testimonies, most important of all we have the verbal testimony of God the Father to His Son’s sinlessness and perfection, showing that He had fulfilled every condition expected of a Saviour from sin.  
*“This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3 v17).  
*“This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”* (Matthew 17 v5).

The Lord Jesus could then say *“The Father Himself, Who has sent Me has borne witness of Me”* (John 5 v37).

- And there was, in addition, the action of God the Father in raising His Son from the dead.

This was His final act of approval concerning the qualifications and work of His Son:

*“Who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification”* (Romans 4 v25).

*“And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1 v4).

## **Day 5**

***“Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1 v2).***

We have seen that the life of Jesus Christ is vital and important for two reasons:

- His life revealed God to mankind.
- His life, without sin, qualified Him to be our Saviour.

Today we will see the third reason why a study of His life is so important.

### ***Jesus Christ Taught Truth***

During the last three years of His life here on earth Jesus Christ gave us the greatest teaching the world has ever heard.

*“No man ever spoke like this man” (John 7 v46)* was the testimony of all who heard Him.

*“And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority” (Luke 4 v32)* was the reaction of His listeners.

And Peter's response was that of many:

*“But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6 v68).*

In the Gospels at least 50 of His messages or discourses are recorded plus many parables. His teaching covered a vast array of subjects. He taught us about God, about the kingdom of God, about the Holy Spirit, about ourselves, about sin, about salvation, and about the future. Even Nicodemus, the Pharisee, had to acknowledge that He was *“a Teacher come from God”* (John 3 v2).

Just think of a world without the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7) without His teaching on the new birth (John 3), without His wonderful messages to His disciples just before He died. (John 14, 15 and 16), without His teaching concerning the future (Matthew 24 and 25) and without all those wonderful parables – the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the lost sheep, the sower and the seed. One of His main purposes in coming to this earth was to TEACH us.

The Lord Jesus has three main offices or ministries. He is our Prophet, our Priest and our King:

- As our Priest He died for us and intercedes for us. We must trust Him.
- As our King He rules over us. We must obey Him.



- As Prophet He teaches us. We must listen to Him.  
We must never neglect His teaching. One of the reasons He came to this earth was to TEACH and it was an important and essential aspect of His life when He was here on earth. Our verse for today tells us that God “*has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son*” (Hebrews 1 v2). And we find that teaching in the Word of God, the Bible. That is where He speaks to us, reveals truth and tells us what to do and what not to do. How wonderful it is that the teaching He gave in word form when here on this earth is preserved for us so that as we read it we hear His voice!

## ***Day 6***

***“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked”*** (1 John 2 v6).

The fourth reason why God the Son become flesh and lived for over 33 years on this earth was to give us an example and to demonstrate how a man should live.

### ***Jesus Christ Is Our Example***

Jesus Christ is not only a Saviour to trust, a Lord to obey and a Teacher to listen to; He is also an Example to imitate and follow. He shows us how we should live.

Therefore we need to study His life, as recorded in the Gospels to find out how we should pray, how we should love, how we should react, how we should serve, how we should relate to others, and how we should teach and preach. Our verse for today exhorts us “*so to walk even as He walked*”. Therefore we need to study His life.

We need to “*consider Him*” (Hebrews 3 v1, 12 v3) so that we can know how He lived, and in this way better understand how God wants us to live.

- In John 13 v15 the Lord Jesus said, “*I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.*”  
What had He done? He had washed His disciples’ feet. He had thought of others and their needs. Are we willing to be thoughtful like Him?
- In Philippians 2 v5 Paul writes “*Let this mind (or attitude) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*”  
What was His attitude? One of humility and unselfishness. He put others first and was prepared to suffer so that they could be saved and helped. Are we like Him?

- In 1 Peter 2 v21 Peter wrote, *“Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that you should follow His steps.”* And we can see those steps in the following verses *“When He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not.”* Instead He was silent and committed everything into His Father’s Hands. Are we willing to do the same if we are criticized, hurt and misunderstood?

God’s goal and purpose for each of us is “to be like Jesus”. He is our example. This should be a step-by-step process throughout our earthly lives. It is not easy because of the sinful nature we still possess. But if we have a real heartfelt desire “to be like Jesus”, and if we ask God to give us the power and ability, then the Holy Spirit Who indwells us will help us:

*“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 by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3 v18).

Then one day when we die and are glorified, we shall be completely like Him – forever (1 John 3 v2).

## ***Day 7***

***“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”*** (John 20 v30, 31).

There are two more reasons to explain the value and importance in God’s plan of the 33 years of the life of the Lord Jesus.

### ***Jesus Christ Did Miracles***

During the last three years of His life the Lord Jesus performed some of the greatest miracles the world has ever seen:

For example in John’s Gospel seven of these miracles are recorded:

- He changed the water into wine (chapter 2).
- He healed the impotent man (chapter 5).
- He multiplied the bread and fishes (chapter 6).
- He walked on the sea (chapter 6).
- He gave sight to the blind man (chapter 9).
- He raised Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11).
- He enabled the disciples to catch fish (chapter 21).

The purpose of these miracles was two-fold:

- To demonstrate His power and deity. Our Bible verse says that *“These (signs) are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”*
- To show us His love and compassion.

It would have been difficult for us to learn these lessons about Him if He had not lived here on earth and performed these miracles.

### ***Jesus Christ Understands Us***

By living in our world as a completely human person for 33 years, the Lord Jesus is able to understand us, the situations in which we find ourselves, and the problems we face. He was an infant, a child, a teenager and an adult – and He encountered the problems of each stage – but without sin.

So He understands our problems and is able to help us with them.

The Bible tells us that *“He had to be made like His brethren”* so that *“He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest”* (Hebrews 2 v17) and *“in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”* (Hebrews 2 v18).

*“For we do not have a High Priest Who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4 v15). An understanding of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to worship and obey Him. And as we study and understand more about the life of the Lord Jesus, it helps us to know Him better, to love Him more deeply, to follow Him more closely, to trust Him more fully, to worship Him more intelligently, and to obey Him more completely.



1 Timothy 3v16

*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”*

## Week 14:

### Theme – Jesus Christ, Our Prophet, Priest And King

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#### *Day 1*

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5 v8).*

The Bible gives us a clear outline and picture of the human race and what we are all like by nature. Fallen man, from Adam onwards, has had three basic problems:

➤ **Ignorance or blindness**

We have a complete lack of understanding concerning spiritual truth. Our minds are, by nature, in spiritual darkness – and even the greatest minds cannot, on their own, understand the truths about God.

*“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2 v14).*

As a consequence the human mind is, by nature, completely blind.

The first need of fallen man is, therefore, for **understanding** and **sight**.

➤ **Sin**

The sinful nature of mankind since the fall of man shows itself in two different ways:

✓ In our guilt. Our sin makes us guilty before a holy God.

*“that all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3 v19b).*

This is a legal problem. Our standing and position are wrong and God cannot accept us. We need **forgiveness**.

✓ In our pollution. Not only is our position wrong, but we ourselves are wrong. Our nature is polluted by sin. *“We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64 v6a).*

We cannot, on our own, live lives which are pleasing to God. We need **cleansing** and **power**.

➤ **Hostility**

This is the worst problem of all. We are also rebels and enemies of God. By nature we do not want to be under His control and authority.

*“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled”* (Colossians 1 v21).

We need to be **reconciled** to God and become His children and friends. How can these three problems be solved? What is God’s answer? There is only one answer – through Jesus Christ and His atoning Death, as outlined in today’s verse. On the basis of His death He gives us the understanding we need, He grants us the forgiveness and cleansing we need and He imparts the reconciliation we need, when we trust Him as our Saviour.

## **Day 2**

*“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, Who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”* (1 Corinthians 1 v30).

Yesterday we saw that fallen mankind had three problems:

- We are blind by nature and without spiritual understanding.
- We are sinful by nature.
- We are enemies of God by nature and hostile to Him.

We also saw that God has provided the answer to these problems in and through His Son Jesus Christ, and His atoning death for us.

The first chapter of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is a wonderful chapter on the theme of evangelism and tells us how God chooses and saves His people.

The climax to that chapter is verse 30, our key verse for today.

The previous verses have told us that we who have trusted Jesus Christ are His because God has chosen us. We were foolish (verse 27), weak (verse 27), base and despised (verse 28) and yet God chose us and saved us – so that the glory would belong to Him and not to us (verse 29).

As a result we are part of the body of Jesus Christ. We are no longer “in Adam”; we are “in Christ”.

Our salvation has four consequences:

- Jesus Christ has become our WISDOM from God. He solves our first problem.  
He takes away our blindness and we are now able to see and have spiritual understanding.
- Jesus Christ has become our RIGHTEOUSNESS. He solves the first part of our second problem.

He takes away our guilt. We are now justified; we are clothed with His righteousness; all our sins have been forgiven forever; and God sees us as righteous and as holy as His Son.

- Jesus Christ has become our HOLINESS or SANCTIFICATION. He solves the second part of our second problem.

He gives us a new nature; we are new people; we have started a new life of purity and holiness. God is daily cleansing us and dealing with the pollution of sin in our life. We are not perfect but God is working through the power of the Holy Spirit to make us more and more like Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ has become our REDEMPTION. He has solved the third problem.

By His almighty power He *has “delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in Whom we have redemption”* (Colossians 1 v13 and 14a). We are no longer enemies but subjects of a new King; and we have been purchased by, and belong to, a new Master.

Praise God for such a wonderful salvation which meets every need and solves every problem! Only Jesus Christ could do that.

### ***Day 3***

***“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”*** (1 Timothy 2 v5).

Yesterday we saw that God's answer to our need was in Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

One of the great words used to describe the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf is found in our Bible verse for today. Jesus Christ is the **Mediator** between God and man:

- The Bible shows us what God is like – pure and holy.
- The Bible shows us what we are like – blind, sinful and hostile.
- The Bible shows us how Jesus Christ came to be the Mediator between God and man, and to bring together God and man who had been separated by sin.

He came to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption.

The work of Jesus Christ as our Mediator has three aspects, ministries or offices – each dealing with one of the three problems we have, problems which resulted in separation from God.

### ***Jesus Christ Is Our Prophet***

The function of a Prophet is to reveal truth, to be the voice of God, to speak to men about God, and to bring things to light.

Jesus Christ is the great Teacher, Revealer and Prophet:

- It was He Who taught the Old Testament prophets (1 Peter 1 v10, 11).
- It was He Who spoke and taught in New Testament days (Hebrews 1 v2, 3), both by His words (Matthew 7 v28, 29) and by His deeds (John 10 v37, 38), John 20 v30, 31). His deeds verified His words.
- It was His teaching which the writers of the New Testament recorded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16 v13, 14).
- It is He Who teaches us and commands us today through His written Word and through the Holy Spirit (1 John 2 v3; Revelation 3 v8).
- He reveals God to us in His Person (Colossians 1 v15) and He teaches us about God in His Word (John 17 v8).

The first problem of fallen man is ignorance.

Jesus Christ came to dispel that ignorance – to be our wisdom. He came to reveal God to us, to teach us about God and to show us how we can be what God wants us to be.

He is our Prophet and our Teacher and He expects three responses from us:

- He wants us to LISTEN to what He says in His Word (Matthew 17 v5).
- He wants us to LEARN from Him and to apply what He says to our lives (1 John 2 v3).
- He wants us to LOOK at Him, and become more and more like Him (2 Corinthians 3 v18).

### ***Day 4***

***“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”*** (Hebrews 12 v2).

Jesus Christ is our Prophet and our Teacher. He is the One Who reveals God to us and He is the voice of God to our hearts. And through His Word, the Bible, we need to listen to Him, learn from Him and look to Him.

In the Old Testament the children of Israel were led, helped and blessed by three key people, each one holding an important office and carrying on a vital ministry:

- The prophet through whom God spoke to Israel. One of the best known and greatly blessed prophets was Moses.
- The priest through whom Israel approached God. The first of these priests was Aaron, the brother of Moses.

These two offices were complementary and closely linked.

God came to His people and spoke to His people through the prophet; His people came to Him through the priest. Both ministries were absolutely necessary.

- The king who, at a later date, ruled and governed the nation was the third key person. The best known example was David.

The prophet → the priest → and the king. These three men had vital and complementary ministries. And all of them played a vital part in God's plan for His people.

During the Old Testament days it was prophesied that there would one day be:

- A special Prophet (Deuteronomy 18 v15, 18, 19).
- A special Priest (Psalm 110 v1, 4) – but not in the same line as Aaron.
- A special King (Numbers 24 v17).

All of these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ; and all three of these offices, ministries or functions were combined in His Person and work.

He is our Prophet, our Priest and our King.

Can you see these three offices in our key verse for today – (Hebrews 12 v2)?

- He is the Great Prophet – greater than Moses (Hebrews 3 v3). He is “*the author and finisher of our faith.*”
- He is the Great Priest – greater than Aaron (Hebrews 7 v11-17). He “*endured the Cross, despising the shame.*”
- He is the Great King – greater than David (Matthew 22 v43, 44). He “*has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

Jesus Christ has three main offices or ministries – and we need all three of them:

- As Prophet He **reveals** God to man.
- As Priest He **reconciles** man to God.
- As King He **rules** over man.

He is all three for us.

Let us worship and adore Him – our Prophet, Priest and King.



## Day 5

***“But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood”*** (Hebrews 7 v24).

Jesus Christ is our Prophet. He reveals God to us. He speaks to us from God. He is our wisdom. And we need to listen to Him as He does so – in and through His Word.

### ***Jesus Christ Is Our Priest***

Jesus Christ is also our Priest – our Great High Priest. And as such he deals with our second problem which is sin.

Jesus Christ did not just come to earth to SPEAK and REVEAL (as our Prophet); He came to SAVE and RECONCILE (as our Priest).

He came to die – and He died for two purposes:

- He died that we might be forgiven (Romans 3 v24).  
He died to take away our guilt and give us a right standing before God (2 Corinthians 5 v21). He is our Righteousness.
- He died to cleanse us and make us new people (2 Corinthians 5 v17).  
He died to enable us to be holy and to live a sanctified life. He is our Sanctification.

But we also need to remember that Jesus Christ continues to exercise His priestly ministry. He died as our Great High Priest, once and for all, to forgive us and to change us. But He also lives for ever as our Great High Priest at the right hand of God the Father.

Our verse for today tells us that His priesthood is continuing and unchanging.

- He defends our justification and forgiveness.  
*“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God Who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also makes intercession for us”* (Romans 8 v33, 34).  
No one, including Satan, can condemn us.
- He helps us in our sanctification and growth in grace.  
*“For we do not have a High Priest Who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4 v15, 16).
- In addition He prays for us:  
*“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word”* (John 17 v20).

How should we react to these great truths?

- We should thank Him for His priestly sacrifice on the Cross for our sin and for His continuing ministry on our behalf at God's right Hand.
- We should ask Him for "mercy and grace to help" when we are in a time of need.
- We should trust Him completely and depend on Him at all times.

## ***Day 6***

***"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful"*** (Revelation 17 v14).

Jesus Christ is our Prophet and deals with our ignorance and blindness. He is our Priest and deals with our sin. He is also our King. Our verse tells us that He is the King of Kings. As King He deals with our third problem – our hostility, rebellion and enmity against God.

### ***Jesus Christ Is Our King***

We were by nature enemies of God (Romans 5 v10; 8 v6, 7). Jesus Christ, by a sovereign act of grace and power brought us to our knees in submission to Him, when we trusted Him as our Lord and Saviour and became friends of God (John 15 v15) instead of enemies. If He had not intervened in our lives we would have continued in our old state of hostility and rebellion. As Jesus Christ speaks to us and intervenes in our lives we cry like Saul on the road to Damascus, "*Lord, what do you want me to do?*" (Acts 9 v6).

It is important for us to understand that the kingship of Jesus Christ is not future. At this present time He is King and Lord of the universe, not only as God the Son but also as the Son of man, which He became at His incarnation. He lived, died, rose again and was exalted to the right hand of God as the God-man, and will always be our mediator and King of Kings.

*"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'"* (Matthew 28 v18).

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2 v36).

There are still many who do not acknowledge His kingship and lordship but they all will one day (Philippians 2 v9-11). The fact that they do not acknowledge Him as King does not deny the fact that He is.

He is our King, our Lord and our Master although we do not always submit to Him and obey Him as we ought.

As our King He rules over us (Colossians 1 v13) and He removes our hostility (Colossians 1 v20). He is our Redemption.

- We were His enemies (Romans 5 v10); now we are His friends.
- We were rebels (1 Timothy 1 v13); now we are His subjects (Acts 2 v33-37).

How should we react to His kingship and lordship?

- We must acknowledge Him as our King (John 1 v49).
- We must obey Him (John 14 v15; 1 John 3 v24).

These reactions are continuing and progressive. We grow in our acknowledgement of His kingship and our obedience to our King. It is only when we die and are glorified that these and our redemption will become perfect and complete.

## **Day 7**

*“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”*  
(Revelation 1 v5)

During this week we have been looking at the three offices or ministries of Jesus Christ – the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2 v5):

- God has provided in His Son a Mediator Who has three offices or ministries:
    - ✓ A Prophet to deal with our ignorance. He is our Wisdom.
    - ✓ A Priest to deal with our sin. He is our Righteousness and our Sanctification.
    - ✓ A King to deal with our enmity. He is our Redemption.
- Can you see all three of His offices and ministries in our key verse for today? (Revelation 1 v5).
- We need a Mediator Who is all three:
    - ✓ A Prophet to reveal God to us and teach us – *“Jesus Christ the faithful witness”*.
    - ✓ A Priest to reconcile us to God and save us – *“To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”*.

- ✓ A King to rule over us as God/man and control us – *“the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth.”*
- We respond to our Mediator in three ways:
  - ✓ We listen to our Prophet.
  - ✓ We trust our Priest.
  - ✓ We obey our King.
- His names and His titles tell us He is all three:
  - ✓ He is CHRIST – the WORD OF GOD (John 1 v1) – our Prophet.
  - ✓ He is JESUS – the LAMB OF GOD (John 1 v29) – our Priest.
  - ✓ He is LORD – the SON OF GOD (John 1 v49) – our King.

He is the LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- We teach the children about a Mediator Who is all three.  
 We cannot separate the three offices of Jesus Christ.  
 He is a Prophet to teach and instruct them; He is a Priest to save them; He is a King to rule over them.  
 And when the children trust Him He becomes their Teacher, their Saviour and their Lord.  
 Some people, unfortunately, teach that you can “separate” or “divide” Jesus Christ and His ministries; that you can trust Him as Saviour without Him being your Teacher or Lord. This is completely unbiblical and has no foundation in Scripture. We cannot divide Jesus Christ up and then decide which part of Him we want to receive or accept. Although our understanding and appropriation of each of His ministries needs to grow, He is either all three to us or He is none of them.



1 Corinthians 1v30

*“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus,  
 who became for us wisdom from God;  
 and righteousness and sanctification  
 and redemption;”*

## **Week 15:**

### **Theme – The Ascension And Present Ministry Of The Lord Jesus**

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#### ***Day 1***

*“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2 v36).

Great emphasis is given to the truth of Christ’s ascension, exaltation and lordship in the evangelistic preaching and in the writing of the apostles (Acts 2 v33-36; Acts 3 v13; Acts 5 v31; Acts 10 v36; Romans 10 v9, 12, 13). They wanted unsaved people to know that Jesus Christ had not only died for their sin; that He had not only risen from the dead and was alive; but that He was in a position of complete authority over the whole world as the Lord of the universe – and that this had happened as a result of His ascension into Heaven, and His exaltation as the God/Man by His Father to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

#### ➤ THE SOURCE OF THIS KINGSHIP

He was given this Kingship by His Father. Jesus Christ had always been the Lord and King of the universe because He was God, God the Son – and therefore He had always been in a position of complete and absolute authority and power.

But He had left Heaven and had become a Man. He lived a perfect life for 33 years, He died for our sins on the Cross, and He rose again from the dead. He was still God; but He was now also Man – perfect Man, and our Saviour. So when He ascended God exalted Him to His right Hand (Ephesians 1 v20) AS THE GOD/MAN to be Lord and Christ as our verse for today tells us – with a name above every name (Philippians 2 v9) with all things under His feet (Ephesians 1 v22 and 1 Corinthians 15 v27) and as King on the throne (Luke 1 v32, 33). He now had a new office and position as Mediator and God/Man which He did not have before and which did not exist before.

This giving of the Kingship to the God/Man, Jesus Christ, by God the Father had already been prophesied in Psalm 2 v6-9; and Daniel 7 v13-14. And the Lord Jesus referred to it in Matthew 28 v18 and John 17 v2.

➤ **THE BEGINNING OF THIS KINGSHIP – AS THE GOD/MAN**

As God the Son Jesus Christ had been King and Lord of the universe since all eternity (Philippians 2 v6; 2 Corinthians 8 v9; John 17 v5). But at the moment of His ascension and fifty days after His resurrection, He was exalted to be King of the universe – AS THE GOD MAN (Acts 2 v36; Ephesians 1 v20-23; Philippians 2 v9, 10; 1 Corinthians 15 v27).

How wonderful it is to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the perfect Man is NOW on the throne of the universe. His Kingship is not future; it is PRESENT. And we serve a King Who is in control of everyone and everything.

## ***Day 2***

***“Which He will manifest in His own time, He Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, Whom no man has seen or can see, to Whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen”*** (1 Timothy 6 v15, 16).

Today we see several more aspects of the Kingship of the Lord Jesus:

➤ **THE DURATION OF HIS KINGSHIP**

The Lord Jesus Christ, the God/Man, is as we see in today's Bible verse the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He will be – forever.

*“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom’”* (Hebrews 1 v8).

And our verses for today show that as a result His honour and power are everlasting.

➤ **THE REASON FOR HIS KINGSHIP**

It might sound strange to use the word “reason” in this context, and to ask the question, “Why did God the Father exalt His Son, the God/Man, to the position of absolute authority and Kingship?”

But Paul gives us the answer to such a question in the second chapter of Philippians. He presents three great truths about the Lord Jesus Christ in this chapter:

✓ He was God (verse 6).

✓ He became man (verse 7) and died on the Cross (verse 8).

- ✓ God exalted Him (verse 9) so that every knee should bow to Him (verse 10) and every tongue confess His Lordship (verse 11).

But note the word “Wherefore” or “Therefore” (NIV) at the beginning of verse 9. It was because the Lord Jesus was willing to leave His Glory, become man and die on the Cross that God the Father exalted Him.

This same truth is brought out in Psalm 45 verses 6 and 7 and Hebrews 1 v8, 9. This is the record of words spoken by God the Father to God the Son. He addresses His Son as God, speaks about His eternal throne, and then about the righteous life He had lived on earth as the God/Man. Then comes the same word “Therefore”. Because of that perfect human life (and, of course, the death it led up to) God the Father, has “anointed Him”.

#### ➤ THE PURPOSE OF THIS KINGSHIP

The Kingship of Jesus Christ has two main goals:

- ✓ To glorify God His Father  
This was also the overall purpose of His life and His atoning death:  
*“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do”* (John 17 v4).
- ✓ To save His people  
*“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”* (Ephesians 5 v25).  
And His administration and Kingship have our salvation always in mind.

Today we worship Him and obey Him – our great and wonderful King.

## **Day 3**

***“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”***  
(Hebrews 4 v16).

We are ready now to look at the NATURE OF THE KINGSHIP of Jesus Christ, as He rules now the universe as the God/Man. And we do so from two points of view:

- He is God  
Therefore His rule as God can be described in three ways:
  - ✓ It is powerful.

He can do whatever He wishes. All humanity, nature and circumstances are under His control. Nothing can happen to you or me unless He permits it. It is true that many do not acknowledge His Kingship but, even though they don't, they are still under His control. And the day is coming when they will have to recognize it.

*"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2 v10 and 11).

✓ It is wise

Power without wisdom would be dreadful. Wisdom without power would be pathetic. The rule of Jesus Christ is both powerful and wise. He knows what He is doing, He has plans and goals which He is executing. He knows what is best for you and me and only sends or allows those circumstances which will help us and be for our good (Romans 8 v28).

✓ It is righteous.

His rule is always fair, just and righteous. Because He knows everything, He always makes right decisions. He judges the ungodly in righteousness; He rewards the godly in righteousness.

How wonderful it is to have a King like this! But He was always powerful, wise and righteous. He always ruled the universe in this way. But at His exaltation and because of His life and death on the earth a new element came into His Kingship which was not there before – His humanity.

➤ He is Man.

Our King is not only the powerful, wise and righteous God, He is also the perfect Man. He is not only divine; He is human. And because He is human, He can be a completely and infinitely sympathetic King. He understands us His subjects because He, Himself, has been a man, and has been tempted like we have been (but without sin).

*"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted"* (Hebrews 2 v18).

*"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4 v15).



## **Day 4**

***“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ “ (Matthew 28 v18).***

So far this week we have been studying the present Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ – the God/Man. We have seen:

- ✓ The source of His Kingship. ✓ The beginning of His Kingship
- ✓ The duration of His Kingship. ✓ The reason for His Kingship
- ✓ The purpose of His Kingship. ✓ The nature of His Kingship

We are now ready to look back over what we have learned and summarize it all.

### ***The Three Descriptions of His Kingship***

His kingship can be described in three ways:

- ✓ His Kingship is a Kingship of Government (or Power)
- ✓ His Kingship is a Kingship of Grace
- ✓ His Kingship is a Kingship of Glory

#### **➤ A KINGSHIP OF GOVERNMENT OR POWER**

This is a present (as well as future) Kingship. He is the King of Kings NOW – and not just in the future. He IS LORD! There are those who place His Kingship by which He governs the universe in power in the future; but this is not what the Bible teaches:

- ✓ God the Father made Him Lord and Christ at the moment of His exaltation (Acts 2 v36).
- ✓ ALL authority has already been given to Him as He testifies in our verse for today (Matthew 28 v18). This is a universal and most comprehensive authority. Nothing or nobody is excluded.
- ✓ All things were put under His feet (Ephesians 1 v22) when He was exalted and when He was set at God’s right hand and above all powers and names (Ephesians 1 v20, 21).

As a result Jesus Christ reigns, as the executive authority of the Godhead, over the entire universe. Everything and everyone is under His control. In this capacity He controls events, guides circumstances, directs people, restrains evil, uses angels, and redeems sinners.

His absolute control may not be obvious at times. There is much evil and rebellion in the world, and many who, as it were, shake their fist at God and at the Lord Jesus Christ. But He is still in control and He allows these things to happen – for some reason which we do not understand.

But the two great goals of His Kingship of Government are firstly to bring glory to His Father and, secondly, to save and to promote the growth, gradual purification and final perfection of His own people. And He is accomplishing His plans and purposes in the midst of the world's sin and rebellion – and is even using them to achieve what He wants and has planned.

Have you seen the Lord Jesus Christ in this great and wonderful position as the powerful, sovereign King of Kings Who is in control of everyone and everything? Are you willing to trust Him in the midst of your troubles and worries? He knows what is best for you.

## ***Day 5***

*“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ “ (John 20 v28).*

### ➤ A KINGSHIP OF GRACE

Not only is the Kingship of Jesus Christ one of government and power it is also a Kingship of grace. This Kingship of grace like that of government is also present (as well as future) and it is exercised in several ways:

- ✓ Jesus Christ the King shows His grace by forgiving all the sins of those who come to Him in repentance and faith.

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1 v7).*

- ✓ Jesus Christ, the King demonstrates His gracious Kingship by ruling in the hearts of His people. The world does not recognize His Kingship but we do and, while we often fail Him and disobey Him, we see Him and acknowledge Him as our King (Romans 10 v9; John 20 v28).

- ✓ Jesus Christ reigns and rules in His Church as a whole (as well as in the individuals who compose it):

*“Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church” (Ephesians 1 v22,23a).*

Jesus Christ is exalted over the Church as its proper and greatly honoured Head; and the Church in turn endeavors to obey Him.

- ✓ Jesus Christ works as King today in the lives of sinners through His Word (Romans 10 v17) and through His Holy Spirit sent by Him into the world (Acts 2 v33).

### ➤ A KINGSHIP OF GLORY

But His Kingship is also a Kingship of glory – and this is still future.

The time WILL come when every knee WILL bow to Him and His Kingship – whether they want to or not, and every tongue will confess His authority: *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2 v10, 11).

He will at that time *“put down (or abolish) all rule, and all authority and power”* (1 Corinthians 15 v24b), *and put all enemies (including death) under His feet* (1 Corinthians 15 v25 - 27), and He will then as the One Who has been the Executive Member of the Godhead deliver up His Kingdom back to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15 v24). He will surrender to His Father the mediatorial Kingship which has been His as God/Man since His ascension, and which belongs to time and the temporal sphere. The eternal state will then be ushered in – the new heavens and the new earth – and *“God will be all in all”* (1 Corinthians 15 v28b).

### ***Our Response to the Truth of Christ's Kingship***

What should we do as we meditate upon all these great truths concerning Jesus Christ and see Him as our King and Lord:

- We should obey Him completely and immediately when He speaks to us through His Word and His Spirit.
- We should worship Him as Thomas did in our verse for today.

## ***Day 6***

*“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1 John 2 v1).

Our week is not yet over. We have been thinking about the Kingship of Jesus Christ – and in these last two days we would like to answer the question:

*“What is the Lord, our King, doing now?”*

When He died for us on the cross, rose again and ascended into Heaven His work of redemption was complete – once and for all. But He continues to have a present ministry – and one that we need to understand:

- He rules the universe as we have already seen (Matthew 28 v18; Ephesians 1 v20-22).
- He is preparing a place for us, His children:  
*“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”* (John 14 v2).

- He is building His Church (Matthew 16 v18) and calling sinners to Himself for salvation. Ten days after His ascension He sent the Holy Spirit with the express purpose of convicting sinners, regenerating them and baptizing them into His Body the Church (Luke 24 v49; Acts 2 v33).
- He continues His teaching and prophetic ministry to believers through the Holy Spirit (John 14 v26; 16 v7-15) – to aid their memories, teach them new truths, and guide them into all the truth. The first step was the inspiration of the New Testament Scriptures and then the illumination of those Scriptures to us.
- He is through the Holy Spirit guiding His people in their lives and ministries (John 16 v13; Acts 13 v2).
- He is interceding constantly and incessantly for His people at God's right hand.
  - ✓ He is our Advocate (PARAKLETOS) as our verse for today tells us.
  - ✓ He is also our Great High Priest:
    - “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession”* (Hebrews 4 v14).
    - “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, Who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”* (Hebrews 8 v1).
  - ✓ And He is our representative:
    - “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Hebrews 9 v24).

So often we concentrate our thoughts on what the Lord Jesus has done for us through His life and death on the Cross, and it is good to do so. But we also need to remember that He is still active; He is still at work. He has a ministry in which He is fully engaged; and that ministry means a lot for us as we shall see in more detail tomorrow.

## *Day 7*

*“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word”* (John 17 v9, 20).

Jesus Christ is today at the right hand of His Father and He is interceding constantly and incessantly for us.

What does this mean? In what way is He interceding for us?

- He represents us and defends us against the accusations of Satan the devil (or accuser):

*“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Hebrews 9 v24).

He is our Advocate or defending counsel (1 John 2 v1) pleading our cause judicially on the basis of His redemptive work (Romans 8 v33, 34). And the wonderful truth we can conclude from this is that no condemnation is possible for the believer (Romans 8 v1).

*“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Who died, and furthermore is also risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also makes intercession for us”* (Romans 8 v34).

Our Advocate has never lost a case yet – and He won’t ever.

- He prays for us, as our verses for today remind us. He prayed for Peter when He needed forgiveness and help (Luke 22 v32) and He does the same for us (Hebrews 7 v25).

He prays for all believers at all times and in all their difficult situations. He knows exactly what to pray for; and His prayers are always answered:

He prays that we will be kept (John 17 v11, 15), be joyful (John 17 v13), be sanctified (John 17 v17), be united (John 17 v11; 21-23), be with Him (John 17 v24) and behold His glory (John 17 v24).

- He helps us in times of need:

*“For we do not have a High Priest Who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4 v15 and 16).

Because He has lived on this earth for 33 years, He understands the difficulties and temptations we face. He is touched by what we are going through and sympathizes with us. At the same time He is ready to give us *“grace to help in time of need”* as we ask for it.

As we consider and understand the present High Priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus we have a new sense of assurance and confidence. Because of Him and His ministry no one can lay anything to our charge (Romans 8 v33); no one can condemn us (Romans 8 v34); and no one can separate us from Him (Romans 8 v35-39).

Thank Him and praise Him!

## **Week 16:**

### **Theme - Living In The Light Of Eternity**

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#### *Day 1*

*"While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal"*

(2 Corinthians 4 v18).

Some time ago the words of a hymn came to my mind:

*"Live with eternity's values in view."*

I began to think on this subject and would like to share these meditations with you throughout this week.

"Eternity" is one of the main themes of the Bible. I believe that God does not want us to see everything from the point of view of time, but He wants us to keep eternity always in view. This is not easy. Temporal things can be seen. Eternal things cannot be seen. But when we focus our thoughts and activity on those things which are eternal we can experience both encouragement and correction in our lives and ministry.

Let us commence our studies with some definitions:

Eternity according to one dictionary is "infinite time, past or future." Another dictionary defines it as "infinite or unending time." Eternity is infinite and unending, both looking backwards into the past and forwards into the future. Strictly speaking, eternity is not "time". "Time" is like a clock which has started and will soon stop, and it is but a very brief instant between these two limitless eternities:

- A past eternity, before time began.
- A future eternity, when time will cease.

Time is measurable, and we use watches, clocks and calendars for that purpose. Eternity is beyond measurement.

Time may often seem long, like a sleepless night, a wet day, a boring sermon or lecture. But in reality time is very short when compared to eternity which is of infinite duration.

We need to live in the light of eternity and not in the light of time.

Thomas Carlyle wrote, "He who has no vision of eternity will never get a true hold of time."

God wants us to concentrate on the things which are eternal rather than on the things which are temporal – as we are encouraged to do in our verse for today.

Our problem is that we usually focus on time rather than eternity. We need to learn that the temporal things, the things of time, the things which can be seen – are only temporary. They don't last. They will soon disappear. So we need to refocus our thoughts, attitudes and actions so that they are more in tune with *"the things which are eternal"*.

## **Day 2**

***"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men"*** (Ecclesiastes 3 v11 NIV).

If we are going to live in the light of eternity, we need to refocus our thoughts on five different but related aspects of our lives and ministries.

### ***We Need to See Ourselves in the Light of Eternity***

Our tendency is to see ourselves in the light of time, and to live in the light of time. Our focus is generally on yesterday, today or tomorrow – on the things of time. This applies to our thinking, our feelings and our decisions. And we need to change our focus.

We must, of course, be related to time in all that we do, but we need to learn to live primarily in the light of eternity. Often we do not realise and understand the implications of eternity and what it means. We do not make allowance for decisions which can have eternal value. It's so easy to get our values mixed up and see them only from the point of view of time and of the "here and now". If someone goes to the display window in a shop and changes the price tags all around, the result can be chaos. The valuable items may now have a low price and the inexpensive items a high price. We can experience the same confusion in our lives and we can easily get our values mixed up.

John Wesley said, "The real value of a thing is the price it will bring in eternity." In our attitudes, actions and decisions we need to ask ourselves the question, "What does this mean for eternity?"

The Lord Jesus encouraged us to be sure that our priorities are correct. He contrasted the value of *"treasures on earth"* and *"treasures in Heaven"*, and He encouraged us to aim for the treasures with eternal value.

*"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in*

*heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6 v19-21).*

God has made us, not like animals, as creatures of time, but as creatures of eternity. Animals are born, live and die and that’s the end. We are born, live and die – but we have eternal souls and our bodies will put on immortality at the resurrection.

We read in our Bible verse (Ecclesiastes 3 v11) that “*God has set eternity in the hearts of men.*”

Death is not the end for us. It is but the door to eternity. “*It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9 v27). Man has one of two eternal destinations: one blessed and joyful; one with suffering and separation. Our eternal destination depends upon our relationship with Jesus Christ (John 3 v36).

Where will you spend eternity?

### ***Day 3***

***“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5 v1).***

We need to see ourselves in the light of eternity, knowing that we will either spend eternity in bliss with God, or in sorrow and suffering without God. But during the time which elapses before our death and being ushered into eternity, we need to live, think, act and decide on the basis of, and in the light of, eternity rather than time.

### ***We Need to See Our Salvation in the Light of Eternity***

Our salvation is the greatest and most wonderful experience that anybody could have.

If we have trusted Jesus Christ as our Saviour we have received the greatest gift of all – eternal life.

“*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 6 v23).

Our souls will live for ever in perfect joy and peace. Surely salvation is the greatest blessing anyone can receive when it is seen in the light of eternity.



The seventy disciples had returned to the Lord Jesus with great joy (Luke 10 v17) having received many blessings on their ministry and having seen many wonderful things happen.

The Lord Jesus then said to them, “*Don’t just rejoice in what you have seen in your ministry; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven*” (Luke 10 v20).

The main joy for the believer is to know that he/she will be in Heaven for all eternity, and this HOPE brings real joy. Paul writes:

“*We ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (Romans 5 v2).

The Christian hope is not something which is possible or probable, it is a SURE HOPE. Paul saw his salvation in the light of eternity and writes in our key verse: “*We know ... we have ... a house not made with hands eternal in the heaven*”.

Our salvation, according to Paul, is therefore sure and certain (“*we know*”), it is in God’s Hands (“*from God*”) and it is “*eternal in the heavens*”. It will also result in the resurrection of our bodies when we will have bodies “*not made with hands*”.

How important it is to see our salvation in the light of eternity. We who are believers should have no fear of death. Because of our salvation we can say that it will be, “*absent from the body, present with the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5 v8). Thomas Watson wrote, “Eternity is to the godly a day that has no sunset; to the godless a night that has no sunrise.”

Augustus Toplady said, “The sky is clear, there is no cloud; come Lord Jesus; come quickly.”

In contrast, Voltaire the French atheist cried out as he approached death, “I am abandoned by God and man. I will give you half of all I have if you will give me six months of my life.”

How tragic!

## **Day 4**

***“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness”***  
(2 Peter 3 v11).

We need to see ourselves, and our salvation in the light of eternity.

### ***We Need to See Our Sanctification in the Light of Eternity***

God has a plan for each of our lives which is to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ:

- We need, first of all, to have an **understanding** of God's plan  
We need to see that this is a long time plan. It's not going to be accomplished today or tomorrow, in five or ten years' time. Sanctification is a long drawn out process and our growth in sanctification is very slow and gradual. We need patience.

God's long term plan has three steps:

- ✓ When we trust Jesus Christ we are regenerated and receive a new nature. This is the first step in our becoming like Jesus Christ – but we still have a long way to go.
- ✓ At that moment the process of sanctification commences and, little by little, step by step, we become more like Jesus Christ.
- ✓ When we die we will be in eternity, perfectly like Jesus Christ forever.
- We need, secondly, to **play our part** in God's plan  
One of the great encouragements to holy living is to think of eternity and see our sanctification or growth in likeness to Jesus Christ in the light of eternity:

- ✓ We need to be thankful for our regeneration and that God has started His transforming work in us.

His plan that we should be like Jesus Christ started when the Holy Spirit gave us new life and a new nature (2 Corinthians 5 v17).

- ✓ We need to look forward to that day in eternity when we will be perfect and like the Lord Jesus (1 John 3 v2).

As we reflect on that day we will receive encouragement in our struggles and the victory to overcome sin. The more we consider what we will be in eternity, the more we will become what we should be today.

Peter explains in 2 Peter 3 v11-14 that as we see the dissolution of earthly things in eternity, and as we look for that future day of God when there will be new heavens and a new earth we will then experience peace and holiness.

- ✓ So when our eyes are focused on eternal things we will know as our verse says "*what manner of persons we should be (today) in holy conversation and godliness*" (verse 11) and we will move forward in the process of sanctification day by day until we become more and more like Jesus Christ.

"*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God*" (Colossians 3 v2 and 3).

## Day 5

*“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”*

(2 Corinthians 4 v17).

### ***We Need to See Our Service in the Light of Eternity***

God’s purpose in our salvation is that first of all we should be sanctified and become more and more like Jesus Christ, and secondly that we should get involved in SERVICE for Him. We are saved to serve, but we must see and understand our service in the light of eternity.

There are five factors that will encourage us in our service:

- Our service is necessary so that boys and girls can hear the Gospel and be saved.
- God uses people like you and me, even if we are not greatly gifted, to lead children to Jesus Christ.
- We have only a fixed period of time during which we can serve Him – which may be 5, 10, 30 or 40 years.
- Our service ends at death.
- We will receive eternal rewards for our service.

If we understand and believe all of these factors we will then, like the Lord Jesus, want to be “about our Father’s business” (Luke 2 v49). The Bible teaches us that we must redeem (or use wisely) the time:

*“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5 v15, 16).

When we realise that people are lost eternally if they die without Christ, we will be encouraged to do all we can to reach them with the Gospel.

A Communist said concerning Christians: “If I believed that this was true I would go all over England on bare knees pleading with people.”

Also, when we become tired and discouraged in our service we should lift our eyes and think about eternity, and we will then realise that “it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.” *“Our light affliction”*, writes Paul, in our verse for today *“works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”*.

I have often been challenged by the story of those early missionaries who went to West Africa, which was called at that time “the white man’s grave.” They knew that they would endure all kinds of sickness and that they would live an average of six months before they died. And still they kept going and

serving. When one died another one took his or her place. Why? Because they saw their service in the light of eternity.

Their rewards would come later when they would hear the commendation of their Lord and Master *“Well done, good and faithful servant”* (Matthew 25 v21)

*“Only one life, soon it will be past.  
Only what’s done for Jesus will last.”*

## ***Day 6***

*“But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”* (1 Peter 4 v13).

### ***We Need to See Our Suffering in the Light of Eternity***

Many Christians have serious questions which raise doubts, cause worry and bring unhappiness.

“Why should this happen to me? Why does God allow this to happen?”

Life presents many questions and problems for Christians and non-Christians alike.

“Why have I failed? Why am I sick? Why did he die? Why am I misunderstood? Why can I not get a job? Why is there not enough finance? Why is my child so ill?”

Christians often need to go through deep valleys and it’s difficult to enjoy peace when in those valleys. Christians often face major problems such as those already mentioned and it seems impossible to find satisfactory answers. The best solution to these problems is to see our suffering in the light of eternity. Compared to eternity our time and our experience of suffering are very short and minor. The suffering will soon be over – but eternity is forever. We sometimes sing, “Further along we’ll know all about it. Further along we’ll understand why.”

It is very difficult for us to focus on eternity like this; and for us to understand that no matter how difficult and painful the experience we are going through, it is as nothing compared with the joy and peace of eternity – with its complete absence of all pain and suffering.

And so to enjoy our peace of mind we need to deliberately focus on eternity and compare our present sufferings with our future joy.

Peter wrote his two epistles to Christians who were suffering for their faith; and they could well have asked the question – why should this happen?

Peter told them to rejoice and gave them two reasons and grounds for doing so. It's in our Bible verse for today:

- *“You are partakers of Christ’s sufferings”.*

You are following in His footsteps. He was willing to suffer because He had His thoughts and attention focused upon the eternal results of His suffering. *“For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross”* (Hebrews 12 v2b).

- *“When His glory shall be revealed you may be glad with exceeding joy.”*

When time ends and eternity begins you will not only be joyful, but very joyful. Get your eyes on that future eternity which awaits you with all its joy; and the suffering you now endure will seem small in comparison.

Indeed you will be able to rejoice now!

We need to keep our eyes on eternity.

## **Day 7**

*“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8 v18).

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8 v28).

How should we react to difficulties and problems when they come into our lives and ministries? What should our attitude be to suffering?

Paul gives us two verses in Romans chapter 8 which will help us to react in the right way:

- There is something we should understand

Paul says in one of our verses for today that *“all things work together for good to them that love God”* (Romans 8 v28). We can see three important truths in this verse which are related to those who love God.

- ✓ *“All things work”*. Not just the good things but all things that come into our lives – even bad things.

- ✓ “*work together*”. These things accomplish something and they do so in relation to each other. There is a balance between good and bad; and everything fits together like a jig-saw puzzle. When we cook a meal we follow a recipe. The recipe instructs us to use a number of ingredients. But these need to be mixed **together** to provide the final product. And our lives follow the same pattern.
- ✓ “*for good*”. The end result of all that happens is for our good. God loves us and only sends, or allows, those things to come into our lives which will help us.

➤ There is something we should do.

In Romans 8 v18, our other verse for today, Paul tells us to make a comparison. He says look at your sufferings. List them, write them down if you wish and then remember that they are just for now, just for the present. Now think of the glory which you will experience for all eternity and set your eyes on all the blessings of eternity.

Finally compare the two and you will come to the conclusion that there is no comparison, for our sufferings are nothing compared with eternity.

Peter encouraged those who were suffering to think of their “*inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*” (1 Peter 1 v4), and explained that if they did so they would “*greatly rejoice though now, for a season ..... you are in heaviness through manifold temptations*” (1 Peter 1 v6). Their heaviness was only for a season; it was only temporary. Their inheritance was permanent, eternal and indestructible.

That is why we should live in the light of eternity. We should see ourselves, our salvation, our sanctification, our service and our sufferings in the light – not of time – but of eternity.

Jonathan Edwards prayed, “Oh God, stamp eternity on my eyeballs.” May we each one live in the light of eternity.

## **Week 17:**

### **Theme: Investment**

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#### ***Day 1***

*“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Matthew 25 v20 and 21).*

We are servants of Jesus Christ and, as our Master, He expects us to be good and faithful servants. He guides us as to what we should do but, in so doing, expects us to use our common sense to ensure that we are spending our time in that which is worthwhile and profitable. We certainly do need to plan our strategy!

During this week I would like to suggest that your best strategy for service should be one of – INVESTMENT.

#### ***What Is Investment?***

Investment is a word used frequently in business circles – generally with regard to money. A businessman invests money trusting that his business will grow and that he will get good returns. Instead of spending the money and using it to meet present needs he invests it to ensure future returns.

Investment then is the use of present resources to produce future returns.

#### ***What Do We Invest?***

While businessmen invest money, we as Christian workers have other resources to invest, besides money:

- We invest our time. Instead of using all our time to fulfil present needs we invest much of it with the hope of future returns. Paul commands us to “redeem the time because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5 v16). Redeem means to buy back. Another translation of this word is “to make the most of it”. We need to spend and invest time wisely if we are going

to redeem it. Everyone has the same amount of time at their disposal. What matters is what they do with it.

- We invest our work. Instead of only working for immediate results we aim at what will happen in the future because of our present work.
- We invest our money. Instead of spending it today to accomplish a present purpose, we put much of it into something which we can see in the future.
- We invest ourselves, our love, our interest and our involvement. Instead of holding on to all that we have, we put it elsewhere, despite the cost and sacrifice. We know that in the long run this is the best strategy – and one to which the Lord will respond, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (our verse for today).

## ***Day 2***

***“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26 v19).***

This week we are considering the need for, and the value of, INVESTMENT. The Lord Jesus expects us to invest our time, our work, our money and ourselves so as to ensure the greatest possible returns for Himself in the future.

### ***Why Should We Invest?***

We invest, firstly, because we are men and women of VISION. Vision is the ability to look into the future and visualize what is going to take place.

It was this heavenly vision imparted to Paul on the Damascus Road – concerning what God was going to do through him in the lives of many Gentiles – which was to be the mainstay of his ministry. That was why he kept coming back to it in his thoughts, in what he wrote (Romans 11 v13; Galatians 2 v2, 8; Ephesians 3 v1) and in what he said (Acts 13 v47; Acts 20 v21; Acts 26 v19). Vision and investment are closely linked. Both of them deal primarily with the future – not the present. We invest on the basis of what we see and what we hope will happen in the future.

We invest, firstly, because we are concerned about the future, and hope one day to see the reality of our vision and plans.

- A businessman puts part of his capital aside so that he can use it in the future development of his business.



- The sensible parent puts some of his income into savings so that he can finance his children's fees at university.
- The Christian worker lives and works in the present but if he is wise he plans for the future.

We invest, secondly, because we want to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. His earthly ministry lasted just over three years. During those years He met many present needs – healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead. But most of His ministry was directed towards the future when He would no longer be present physically. He had a clear vision concerning the future and all He did was linked with and determined by that vision.

He could have spent much more time meeting the present and visible needs of those with whom He came into contact, for there were many blind, sick and demon-possessed people whom He could have healed. But while He did meet some of those needs, He chose instead to invest much of Himself, and His time in the plan and vision He had for the future (as we will see later in the week). Consequently, while the number of His disciples was comparatively few when He was here on earth, that number grew enormously and dramatically after His departure – because He had invested wisely.

As you consider how you should spend your time, your money, your work programme, you need to think not just about present needs – but future possibilities and your investment in that future.

### ***Day 3***

***“Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2 v10).***

### ***Where Do We Invest?***

In many ways this is the main question. Knowing where to invest is certainly the most important question for a businessman or a financier who has funds which he wants to invest so as to produce future gain. There are many experts and publications which seek to give direction as to where to invest – and the businessman needs to make his decision on the basis of the information he has collected and received.

Similarly, we as Christian workers and as leaders need to consider carefully where we should invest our time, our work, our money and ourselves. We are limited in what we have, therefore we want to invest what we have in the best possible way.

The first step is to ask our Lord and Master for directions.

We saw yesterday that He showed Paul that his investment should be in the Gentiles and that his future ministry should be directed towards them. In our verse for today Paul said that he was willing to “*endure all things for the elect's sake*”. He was willing to suffer if he could only invest himself and his time in those God had called him to reach.

The Lord will also show us what to do and where to invest, even if in a somewhat less spectacular way. He guides us today in several ways:

- Through His Word, the Bible.
- Through the advice of godly people.
- Through prayer and inward peace.
- Through careful and prayerful thought and consideration.

As these come together we can see where we should invest.

The second step is to ask ourselves a number of questions – How can I best invest myself? How can I make most use of the resources God has given me? What brings, eventually, “the greatest returns?” Our answers to those questions will involve not just prayer but also a large measure of careful thought and common sense.

A dear friend of mine has often told me “My goal is to invest in people. They are eternal, and I want my investments to be eternal.” Indeed, it was his comments on investment which first started me to study this subject.

I agree with him. I believe that God wants us to invest ourselves in people and to endeavour to put our time, our work, our money – and especially ourselves – **into others**, because it is then we will get the greatest returns! They will be there when we are no longer there, and our investment will continue to produce results – even if we are not there to see them or receive them.

### *Day 4*

*“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach”* (Mark 3 v13 and 14).

We should invest our time, our work, our money and ourselves primarily in PEOPLE.

This was what the Lord Jesus did during His three years of earthly ministry. He had a very clear and definite plan and strategy concerning His ministry. He decided to invest Himself, His time, His work and His love in a small group of men whom He chose personally right at the beginning of His ministry, as we see in today's verse.

During the three years which followed He saw His investment in them as the main part of His ministry. He did many miracles, and helped and healed many other people, but He devoted Himself primarily to this small group of twelve men because He knew that **they** were the future, and they would be the ones whom God would use to spread the Gospel all over the known world.

His investment in these men had a number of facets or parts:

- Instruction
 

He spent many, many hours teaching them about God, about Himself, about the Holy Spirit and about themselves – what they should be and what they should do.

  - ✓ On many occasions He taught the twelve privately e.g. Matthew chapter 10, Matthew chapter 13, Matthew chapter 24 and 25, John chapter 14, 15 and 16.
  - ✓ On other occasions they shared in, and listened to, His public ministry e.g. Matthew chapter 5, 6, and 7.
- Demonstration
 

He not only told His disciples what to do; He showed them how to do it. His ministry was a model to be imitated in so many ways – how He helped people, talked to people and loved people.
- Delegation
 

He sent His disciples out to preach and minister to the needy (Mark 3 v14; Luke 9 v1; Luke 10 v1), and He then expected them to give a report on their ministry (Mark 6 v30).
- Example
 

Above all He set them an example on how they should live and react to circumstances and opposition. His life was, for them, an example of thoughtfulness (John 13 v14, 15), calmness and quietness under persecution and suffering (1 Peter 2 v21-23), meekness (Matthew 11 v29), gentleness (2 Corinthians 10 v1) self-sacrifice (Philippians 2 v5-8) and a forgiving attitude (Colossians 3 v13).

## **Day 5**

***“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2 v2).***

The Lord Jesus shows us by His example that we should invest ourselves primarily in PEOPLE.

The apostle Paul closely followed His Lord's example and much of his time and work, and much of himself, were invested in those he was training and preparing for future ministry – especially those who were young.

A primary example of this investment was Paul's choice to spend much time and effort with young Timothy. He really invested himself in this young man. He invited Timothy to “join his ministry team” and then did all he could to develop him in the ministry:

- He took Timothy with him on his missionary tours (Acts 16v3) and showed him his methods and his approach.
- He gave him responsibility. He appointed him and sent him out on specific tasks and missions to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3 v2, 6); to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4 v17) and to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1 v3).
- He wrote two long letters of instruction and encouragement to him (1 Timothy and 2 Timothy).
- He encouraged him to invest himself in others, as we read in our Bible verse.

Timothy's effectiveness in Christian service was due, in no small measure, to Paul's investment in him.

Effective Christian service is like a relay race. God has called us and blessed us. We have, as it were, in our hands the “baton” which He has given us. But we do not want to keep it to ourselves. We want to pass it on. We want to invest in someone else. Paul was one of the early runners in this relay race. He invested himself in Timothy and handed the baton to him; and in our verse he encouraged Timothy to pass this “baton” on to faithful men – with the ultimate goal that they would then pass it on to, and invest in, others. And so the race continues.

You and I need to ask God to lead us to people in whom we should invest our time, our money, our work and ourselves. In this way we can, like the Lord Jesus and like Paul, multiply our ministry and build for the future. This is why it is so important for those of us whom God has called to minister to children to invest ourselves also in the training of teachers – so that they will reach the children.

Investment means not spending on present needs but giving to ensure future returns. Instead of spending on ourselves we invest in others.

And I can think of no better investment than that of investing in children and young people. That is why I decided, over 55 years ago, to invest myself in children, and in the evangelism of children.

**They** are the future and as we spend our time with them, and work with them, and give financially to help them, and pour ourselves into them, we are BUILDING THE FUTURE. **That** is investment.

## Day 6

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart”* (Galatians 6 v7 and 9)

### *How Should We Invest?*

There are six words which should describe our “investment programme”.

➤ We should invest **sacrificially**

When a businessman invests money he does not spend it on himself but puts it towards a future project. His eyes are upon the future and not so much on the present.

Investment always involves sacrifice. It means that instead of spending our resources – be they time, work, money or whatever – to meet and supply present needs, we devote them to the use of other needs. And this demands sacrifice.

➤ We should invest **wisely**

A businessman considers carefully where he will invest his money. He wants to be sure of good returns. Therefore he considers all the possibilities and options before making his decision. He takes time to do this so that his investment will be a good one.

You and I need to be wise as to where we invest our time, money and work. We need to consider and decide upon the best place for our investment and, like the businessman, consider the question of “returns” “Where will my investment be most profitable and fruitful and bring most glory and joy to my Saviour?” We also need to be sure to ask God to grant us the wisdom we need to make the right investments (James 1 v5).

As I have already said God led me many years ago to see the great potential of children and young people, and as a result I have invested my life in them.

➤ We should invest **generously**

A businessman knows that the more he invests the more he will receive. The returns depend on the amount invested.

The same principle applies to Christian workers. We reap what we sow. The more we sow the more we will reap, as we read in today's Bible verse. The more we invest the greater will be our returns.

The Christian investor is like a farmer. The farmer sets aside part of this year's harvest so that he can sow it to produce a harvest next year. The more he sows, the more he harvests. If he only sows a little he cannot expect a good harvest.

This principle of generous investment does not only apply to money. It applies also, and perhaps even more so, to the investing and giving of time, love, concern – and especially the giving of ourselves.

## *Day 7*

*"He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126 v6).*

### *How Should We Invest?*

We should invest, as we saw yesterday, sacrificially, wisely, and generously.

➤ We should invest **expectantly** and **joyfully**.

The businessman who invests expects good returns and looks forward to them. Along with the present sacrifice involved he has joy and satisfaction, because he knows he will receive the rewards of his sacrifice in the future. Similarly, investment for the Christian worker is not something to be feared, or avoided. It should not bring dismay or sadness. We invest gladly and joyfully because of what lies ahead and with the assurance that God will bless what we invest: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20 v35b).

We look forward with expectancy to the harvest and to the results, as our Bible verse reminds us. We should be happy and joyful investors.

➤ We should invest **realistically**

At the same time the expectant businessman also needs to be realistic and remember that, while he has made his decision as wisely and carefully as possible, not every investment is successful. There is always a risk of failure.

The Christian worker and leader should be wise as to how he invests himself and all he has. But he also needs to realise that it is possible for his investment to fail. However this should not cause him to become discouraged or defeated.

After all, while the Lord Jesus invested Himself in twelve men, one of them was a failure. Of course the Son of God knew that Judas would be a failure (that “*the Scripture might be fulfilled*”), but it still happened; and this shows us that some of our investments could turn out to be failures.

➤ We should invest **patiently**

The businessman who invests does not expect his returns today or tomorrow. They will come some distance ahead in the future. Very few investments bring quick results.

We are also in the work “for the long term”. Indeed we might only see some of the results of our investment in eternity.

So our “returns” in Christian service don’t usually come immediately; we need to be patient, and not give up when things don’t happen quickly.

### ***When Should We Invest?***

This is our last question and can be answered very briefly.

The time for investment starts NOW. Don’t wait. Look for investment opportunities and GO AHEAD - TODAY.



Ecclesiastes 11v1

*“Cast your bread upon the waters, For  
you will find it after many days.”*

## **Week 18:**

### **Theme - A Bible Verse Which Changes Lives**

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#### *Day 1*

*“Then Solomon determined to build a temple for the name of the LORD, and a royal house for himself” (2 Chronicles 2 v1).*

There are many verses in the Bible which God has used to bless, encourage and challenge His children. Some which spring to mind are Isaiah 53 v5; Matthew 11 v28; John 3 v16; John 10 v21; Romans 12 v1; Ephesians 2 v8; Philippians 4 v13; Hebrews 12 v1.

I will not tell you the verse which I have chosen – a Bible verse which changes lives – until the end of the week. But I will lead up to it from today.

Throughout this week we will focus on a man called Zerubbabel. We read about him in the book of Ezra, but we first must “paint in” the background.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness they worshipped God in the tabernacle – the temporary and moveable tent which God had commanded them to erect (Exodus 25 v8). And, during the 400 years which followed their entrance into the Promised Land, they continued to worship God in this tent. After David became king of Israel he was concerned that, while he and his people lived in permanent houses, the place where God “dwelt” and was worshipped was a tent, albeit a magnificent one. David wanted to build a house or temple worthy of his God. God appreciated his desire but He could not permit him to build it because he was a “man of war”. However, God did give His consent for a temple to be built – but it was to be David’s son, Solomon, who would build it, as we read in today’s verse.

And so Solomon came to the throne and commenced to build the temple with great magnificence and at great cost (2 Chronicles 3 v3).

Because of the political and economic strength of Israel at that time Solomon had tremendous resources at his disposal:

- 70,000 men to bear burdens
- 80,000 men to cut rocks
- 3,600 skilled overseers



- And seemingly unlimited supplies of timber, gold, precious stones and magnificent fabrics.

Solomon and his work force completed the temple (2 Chronicles 5 v1) and on the great day of dedication the glory of the Lord came down and filled the place (2 Chronicles 7 v1).

This magnificent building – known as Solomon’s temple – was to stand for over 400 years and be the centre of the worship of the children of Israel.

But then a serious calamity was to hit the children of Israel, their land and their temple.

## ***Day 2***

***“Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions”*** (2 Chronicles 36 v19).

The magnificent temple of Solomon stood for over 400 years. But during those years the children of Israel turned their backs upon God. As a result God allowed foreign armies to invade, first of all, the northern kingdom of Israel, and then the southern kingdom of Judah where the temple was situated. Nebuchadnezzar and his armies invaded Judah (2 Chronicles 36 v6) and took many of the inhabitants into captivity in Babylon (2 Chronicles 36 v20). They also carried away the furniture, the gold and the brass from the temple to put in the temple in Babylon (2 Chronicles 36 v18). Then they burned down Solomon’s temple and broke down the walls of Jerusalem (as today’s verse tells us).

What a sad sight this must have been, and it was to remain like that for the next 70 years. Only the poorest of Judah’s inhabitants were left in the land and before long they adopted the customs of their pagan neighbours alongside their worship of the Lord.

The bulk of the original population of Judah were now in captivity in Babylon. However, fifty years after all of this happened, Babylon was conquered by the Persian king Cyrus, and his views on government and religion were different from his Babylonian predecessors. He was much more tolerant, and instead of forcing everyone to worship Persian gods, he encouraged them in their own religion and worship. Also, he adopted a policy of sending captive peoples back to their own homelands, he returned their religious objects and he even financed the rebuilding of temples.

One of the many peoples who benefited from this policy was the group from Judah, the Jews, the members of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi – the “remnant” of the children of Israel. Indeed God in His Word actually says of Cyrus *“He is My shepherd and shall perform all My pleasure”* (Isaiah 44 v28). And in the following verse we read, *“Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him”* (Isaiah 45 v1) – and the verses which follow are addressed to him.

We can therefore conclude that it was God’s plan for His people to go back to their homeland, and that He had raised up this man Cyrus to be the one who would initiate this process. But that was only the start.

We read in Ezra 1 v1 that *“the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus”* and in Ezra 1 v2 God *“has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem.”* As a result, Cyrus challenged the Jews there in captivity – “Who is ready and willing to go?”

What will their response be? We will see tomorrow.

God often speaks to our hearts and calls us to do something or go somewhere – through a spoken challenge from someone like Cyrus who has been led by God to bring this challenge.

Have you been challenged in this way recently? What is your response?

### ***Day 3***

***“Then the heads of the fathers’ houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem”*** (Ezra 1 v5).

The Jews have now been in captivity in Babylon for 70 years, Cyrus is on the throne and he presents the Jews with a two-fold challenge:

- “Who will go to Jerusalem and build the temple? God will go with you.”
- “Who will help those who go by supplying the silver, gold, animals and supplies which they need?”

And in our verse for today we read that a number responded to both challenges. Why did they respond? This verse tells us that they were those *“whose spirit God had raised”* or *“whose heart God had moved”* (NIV). God had put into each of their hearts a desire and willingness either to go to Jerusalem and build the temple, or to supply those who went with all that they needed. In other words, God had called them or guided them to do something.

This was how God worked. First of all He “*stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*” (Ezra 1 v2) to challenge the Jews to return to their homeland. And then He “*moved the spirits*” of many of these Jews to respond to the challenge. God was working “at both sides”.

God still calls His people to action in the same way today. He leads someone to bring the challenge and He leads others to respond to it.

Among those whose hearts were moved to go to Jerusalem was a man called Zerubbabel. His name is recorded in Ezra 2 v1 as being in a position of leadership. And it is obvious from this verse and from the chapters which follow that he was called to be the leader of the building operation in Jerusalem. He was a direct descendant of David and in our Lord’s genealogy (Matthew 1 v12). Some Bible scholars believe that Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah mentioned in Ezra 1 v8 and 11 was another name for Zerubbabel – his Babylonian name, and this is certainly possible.

### **He was called to do a job**

The first lesson we learn about this man Zerubbabel is that God had moved his heart, had spoken to him and had called him to the job of going to Jerusalem to build the temple. This was something he had never done before. He seems to have been a rather ordinary person like you and me with no building qualifications! But God had called him.

Obedying God would be a big step. It would involve him leaving the place where he had been born and travelling a long distance into the unknown. But it was God who had called him – and he obeyed (Ezra 2 v1 and 2).

Is God calling you into a new ministry or to take a new and difficult step? Perhaps He is calling you as He did Zerubbabel to do something you have never done before. Perhaps He is calling you to leave your home and go to a place of His choosing. If so, you probably feel nervous, fearful and hesitant. But don’t hesitate. Be like Zerubbabel – and obey Him.

## **Day 4**

***“He Who calls you is faithful, Who also will do it”*** (1 Thessalonians 5 v24).

The first thing we learn about Zerubbabel is that he was called to do a job – and in Ezra 2 v1 and 2 he, and those whose hearts God had also moved, set off for Jerusalem to start their God-given task.

We now learn a second truth or lesson about Zerubbabel.

### **He had limited resources**

Zerubbabel never had the resources to build the temple which were available to King Solomon when he built his temple 500 years earlier.

The total number of people in Zerubbabel's expedition was 42,360 (Ezra 2 v64) plus 7,337 servants and 200 singers. Compare those figures with the figures which described Solomon's work force. Consequently, the work force included in this congregation of men, women and children was **much** less powerful than what was available to Solomon. And although Cyrus had sent back with them the vessels of the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had confiscated, their supplies were also limited. Some of the Jewish leaders (Ezra 2 v68, 69) gave generously – but the resources available to Zerubbabel were still very limited in comparison to those of Solomon.

Solomon's father, David, had assembled all the materials Solomon would need to build the temple (1 Chronicles 22 v1-5). There was absolutely no shortage. Vast supplies of stone, metal and wood were brought together in abundance – and, in addition, seemingly unlimited supplies of gold and silver (1 Chronicles 22 v14). Also David had recruited and prepared the many workers who would be needed to do the work (1 Chronicles 22 v15). Solomon certainly had all the resources he needed to build the temple – and they were provided for him.

Sometimes God calls us to do something and we feel that we lack the resources or ability to do it. We look at others (as Zerubbabel may have done with regard to Solomon) and feel inadequate and discouraged and think "If only I had his ability or his financial support I could do this job."

But remember that when God calls us to do something He promises and commits Himself to supply all we need for that job. "*He is faithful*", as our verse for today reminds us. He is faithful to us His people; and He is always faithful to His promises. When He calls He "*will also do it.*"

Paul writes again:

*"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4 v19).

So don't hesitate to make that decision to move forward. Don't hesitate to take that new step. If you are sure that God wants you to do it – go ahead. Don't look at your lack of resources, or your lack of ability. Look at God and His resources and His ability – and put your faith and confidence in Him. He will not let you down.

## **Day 5**

*“And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: “For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel.” Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid” (Ezra 3 v11b).*

We have learned two facts about Zerubbabel.

- He was a man who was called to do a job.
- He was a man who had limited resources for what he was called to do.

And now comes the next step.

### **He started his work**

Then, thirdly, we learn that Zerubbabel started to build (Ezra 3 v2). He and Joshua the priest led the people in their massive building project:

- First of all they built the altar (Ezra 3 v2). That was the best place to start. They were now ready and able to offer up their burnt offerings and they did so each morning and evening.
- The next step was to build the foundations of the temple and, working together, this was what they did (Ezra 3 v10). On its completion all the people praised God, as today’s verse tells us. Indeed the noise of their rejoicing could be heard a long distance away (Ezra 3 v13).

The building project was going very well. Zerubbabel and his men had obeyed God and had started, very effectively and efficiently, the work which God had led them to do.

But then the problems started.

### **He was opposed**

Have you ever noticed that when you start to do something God wants you to do, when you take some new step in the will of God, it is not long before problems come and there is opposition of some kind? This is not abnormal – indeed it is to be expected.

Ezra chapter 4 outlines the opposition Zerubbabel encountered – but it makes sad reading.

There were three problems facing Zerubbabel and his team:

- Unbelievers wanted to join them and work with them (Ezra 4 v2) – but Zerubbabel and his co-workers said “No”.

- The people of the land opposed them directly (Ezra 4 v4) and tried to stop them from building.
- The leaders of the people who lived there wrote lying letters back to the king of Persia, accusing the Jews and saying that they were a rebellious people who would not allow themselves to be under his control (Ezra 4 v12-16), and would not pay their taxes (Ezra 4 v13). This was the most serious problem of all.

And the question is – what will happen? What will the king of Persia do?

## **Day 6**

*“Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia”* (Ezra 4 v24)

We see a picture of ourselves in the life and ministry of Zerubbabel:

- He was called to do a job.
- He had limited resources.
- He started his work.
- He was opposed.

We can probably identify ourselves with each of these steps.

The opposition Zerubbabel faced was intense. He was able to withstand the pleas of the people of the land to take part in his work (which would have resulted in compromise); he was able to withstand the physical opposition and pressure. But what about the letters written to the king?

We read the king's reply in Ezra 4 v17-22.

Unfortunately the king listened to the lies of the leaders who had written the letters and he gave a royal command that the building work should cease.

### **He was discouraged and he quit**

And so Zerubbabel gave up the work of building the temple, as we read in our Bible verse for today.

It would seem at first glance (even though it is difficult to be sure) that he gave up too easily and quickly. He did not contest the king's decision – especially in the light of the fact that the king had not cancelled the original decree of Cyrus to build the temple; and in the light of the loophole in verse 21 that there could be the possibility of another later command which would change this

one. Surely he could have written to the king, or made some kind of representation to him, to assure him that the accusations were false.

We don't know.

But one thing is sure – the work stopped, and we know from Haggai 1 verse 4 that Zerubbabel and his people concentrated, for the next fourteen years, on the building of their own homes and the farming of their own fields – and they seemed to drop completely the idea of building the temple.

However we should not be too critical. Haven't there been many times when we have become discouraged with the work God has called us to do? Haven't there been times when opposition and pressure of some kind have forced us to give up? Haven't there been times when we have moved away from God's will for our ministry and decided, consciously or unconsciously, to concentrate on our own needs?

We need the rebuke Haggai delivered to Zerubbabel and his people in Haggai chapter 1 verses 2-11 as much as they did.

*"Consider your ways"*, the Lord said to them; and it is possible He needs to say this also to those of us who have quit – or who are thinking of quitting.

## **Day 7**

***"So he answered and said to me: 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4 v6).***

What does God do with one of His servants whom He called to do a job, who starts the job even though he has limited resources, who encounters much opposition – and who as a result becomes discouraged and gives up?

### **God spoke to him**

Fourteen years have passed by. The foundations of the temple are still there, but they are overgrown and desolate. God asked two men, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to bring His message to Zerubbabel and his people.

- Haggai came to Zerubbabel with a message of rebuke (Haggai 1 v1)
  - ✓ "You have built your homes – but the house of God lies wasted" (Haggai 1 v4).
  - ✓ *"Consider your ways"* (1 v5 and 1 v7). "You have had bad harvests because you have put your needs before God" (1 v6; 9-11)

- ✓ “Go to the mountains, get wood – and start to build again” (Haggai 1 v8)

But how could this be done?

➤ Zechariah came with a message of encouragement from the Lord and told Zerubbabel how they could accomplish the task God had given them:

- ✓ “*Not by might*” (or by numbers). “It’s not a question of how many of you there are, or how much you have.”
- ✓ “*Not by power*” – (or by individual strength or ability). “It’s not a question of how capable or how gifted you are.”
- ✓ “*But by My Spirit*” – That’s the answer. “This is a spiritual work which can only be accomplished in the power of the Spirit.”

That was just the message Zerubbabel needed and that we, too, need. When we see this great truth – that it is the Holy Spirit Who does the work of God and that we depend on Him for all that is needed for that work, then we can echo the words of Zechariah in chapter 4 v7.

“*Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!*”. God will deal with the problems. Let us trust Him.

### **He started the work again**

As a result of the Word of God through His two prophets, Zerubbabel and his people started to build again (Ezra 5 v2).

### **He finished the work**

And we read in Ezra 6 v15 that three and a half years later the temple was finished. What a day of rejoicing that was (Ezra 6 v16). And what a day of rejoicing it will be when we finish the work God has given us to do.

**Zechariah 4 v6 is the Bible verse which changed Zerubbabel’s life and ministry:**

**And it will change your life and ministry also.**



## Week 19:

### Theme - The Lord's Prayer

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#### Day 1

*"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11 v1).*

This prayer, which we generally call the Lord's Prayer, was given by the Lord Jesus to His disciples on two occasions.

- He gave it, firstly, during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6 verses 5 to 15). The Lord Jesus was instructing His disciples on how to pray. He said, *"After this manner pray you ..."* Therefore the Lord's Prayer is a PATTERN for prayer, and it gives guidelines to follow when praying.
- He gave it again as we can see in today's Bible verse, after the disciples had seen Him at prayer. They came to Him and said, *"Lord teach us to pray."* And in response the Lord Jesus said *"When you pray say...."* (Luke 11 v2). So the Lord's Prayer is also a PRAYER to be prayed.

We can therefore conclude that the Lord Jesus gave us this prayer for two reasons. He wants us to pray it and He wants it to guide us in our prayer life. Today we will look briefly at the pattern this prayer gives us for our prayer life. The Lord's Prayer consists of four parts:

- An introduction – *"Our Father in heaven."*  
Prayer starts by coming into God's Presence in the proper way.
- Three petitions concerning God.
  - ✓ *"Hallowed be Your name"* – concerning God's name.
  - ✓ *"Your kingdom come"* – concerning God's kingdom.
  - ✓ *"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* – concerning God's will.
 We should first of all pray that God will be glorified.
- Three petitions concerning ourselves.
  - ✓ *"Give us this day our daily bread"* – we pray for provision.
  - ✓ *"Forgive our sins or trespasses"* – we pray for pardon.
  - ✓ *"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from all evil"* –we pray for protection.

We should only pray for our own needs after we have prayed concerning God's glory.

- A three-fold conclusion.
  - ✓ “*Yours is the kingdom*” – He is the King of Kings.
  - ✓ “*And the power*” – He is powerful.
  - ✓ “*And the glory – forever*” – He is glorious.

We conclude by focusing again upon God, acknowledging His greatness and praising Him.

## ***Day 2***

***“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name”*** (Matthew 6 v9).

The opening words of the Lord’s Prayer are “*Our Father in heaven*” and from these words we can learn three important lessons about prayer:

- We come into God’s presence and pray with a clear understanding of the fact that God is the Father of all believers and that we have been adopted into His family.

This leads to a number of conclusions from the truth that God is our Father:

- ✓ He loves us and has made a way of access into His presence.
  - ✓ He wants us to speak to Him.
  - ✓ He will listen carefully to what we say.
  - ✓ He will do what is best for us.
  - ✓ He wants us to obey Him.
  - ✓ We can trust Him completely.
- We come into God’s presence along with other believers. The Lord Jesus taught us to say “***Our Father***”. Prayer is not just an individual exercise. There are times when we pray on our own, but we must also remember that we need to fellowship with other believers in prayer and remember together our corporate needs.
  - While the words “*Our Father*” show the **relationship** on which our prayer life is based, the words which follow, “*Our Father in heaven*”, indicate the **reverence** with which we should approach our Father in prayer. Although He is my Father I must not be too familiar in my language. He is in heaven; He is the King of kings; and as I come into His presence I must address Him reverently. If I were coming into the presence of the Queen I would address her with the reverence which is due to her. How much more should I be careful and reverent when I come into the presence of the King of kings, the ruler of the entire universe!

The words “*Our Father in heaven*” also remind me of the power and sovereignty of God Who can do anything and everything He chooses to do. And knowing this should be a constant encouragement to our prayer life.

We can see, over and over again in the Bible, how men of God came into His presence with a tremendous sense of His greatness, knowing that He is “*in heaven*” and in control of everyone and everything.

Nehemiah started his prayer in this way:

“*And I said: ‘I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments’*”(Nehemiah 1 v5).

And the apostles did the same in Acts 4 v24:

“*So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You are God, Who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them’.*”

These two concepts – that God is our Father and that He is the powerful and sovereign God – should be the bases of our prayer life.

### Day 3

“*So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’*” (Luke 11 v2).

Yesterday we saw that the introductory words to the Lord’s prayer give us three principles to guide in our prayer life:

- We pray to God as our Father, knowing that He cares for us.
- We pray to God as Lord in Heaven, knowing that He can do anything.
- We pray in fellowship with others, understanding our family relationship.

The first main section of the prayer which follows this introduction is concerned with God and not with us. This is a most important principle we should always remember when we pray. God and His glory must come first in our prayers. Our first priority, in prayer, must be to worship and adore Him.

We need to be concerned about the three matters which are included in today’s verse – God’s name, God’s kingdom and God’s will – and pray in that order.

- “*Hallowed be Your name*”

First of all we pray concerning the name of God.

- ✓ *Hallowed be **Your** name.* Our main concern should not be for ourselves or for others – but for God and His name.

- ✓ “*Hallowed be Your **name***”. God’s name is synonymous with Himself. His name is the Person He reveals Himself to be (Psalm 102 v15). His name

is His revelation of Himself; and the sum total of all His attributes. When we speak, think or pray about His name we are talking about Him.

- ✓ *“Hallowed (or holy) be Your name”*. His name and His person are already holy. We cannot make His name and His person any more holy.

But our prayer is that we ourselves, and others, might realize that God is holy; that His name and His Person are respected, hallowed and revered by us and them. And it should be the desire of our hearts to see God glorified and exalted, not only in our lives, but in the lives of others. The main purpose of our prayer is His glorification by myself and by others. We are concerned for His glory.

- *“Your kingdom come”*

Secondly, we pray concerning the kingdom of God:

- ✓ *“Your kingdom come”*. Again we need to be concerned first and foremost with God, His kingdom and His glory, and not with ourselves.
- ✓ *“Your kingdom come”*. God is already King of the universe. His kingdom is not future; it is present. He is on the throne and all things are under His control. Therefore we do not pray that He will be King. He is King. His kingdom or government cannot grow!
- ✓ *“Your kingdom come”*. But we pray that men, women and children will acknowledge that He is King and that His kingdom of grace will grow and be extended in our own lives and in the lives of others.

## *Day 4*

*“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6 v10).

God and His glory must come first in our lives and in our prayers and so we emphasize the word **“Your”** as we pray:

- *“Hallowed by Your name.”*
- *“Your kingdom come.”*
- *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

And then, thirdly, we pray concerning the will of God as expressed in today's verse:

- *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

God's will is what He wants done; and our prayer is that **His** will should be done:

- ✓ *"Your will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven."*

We pray that God's will might be done here on the earth:

- In our own lives, that we will obey Him and do what He wants us to do.
- In the lives of others, that they will obey Him and do what He wants them to do.

- ✓ *"Your will be done on earth **as it is in heaven**."*

How should God's will be done? It should be done here on earth as it is done in heaven.

How is it done in heaven? How do the sinless angels in Heaven and the souls of saved men and women in Heaven do God's will? They are our models.

There are three words which describe how God's will is done in heaven:

- It is done cheerfully – with no reservations.
- It is done completely – with no exceptions.
- It is done perfectly – with no disobedience.

We need to obey God's will as they do – cheerfully, completely and perfectly – and we pray that others will do the same.

The second main section of the Lord's Prayer concerns **us** and **our** needs.

We always need to remember the order and the scale of priorities in this prayer; God and His glory must come first; ourselves and our needs should come last!

The Lord Jesus encourages us to pray for three main areas of need in our lives:

- We pray, first of all, for **PROVISION**

*"Give us this day our daily bread."*

This prayer reminds us firstly of an important truth:

- ✓ *"**Give** us ..."* The use of the word "give" acknowledges our dependence upon God for everything. He is sovereign and all we have and all we receive come from Him. He is the One Who gives; we are the ones who receive.

We must never take anything for granted; we need to keep coming to Him, showing how much we depend upon Him and His provision – and then, afterwards, we need to thank Him for what He provides.

## **Day 5**

***“Give us this day our daily bread”*** (Matthew 6 v11).

We are considering in today's verse the first prayer request which the Lord Jesus encouraged us to pray concerning ourselves and our needs.

- It is a prayer for PROVISION. First of all it is a prayer for our body's needs.
  - ✓ ***“Give us this day our daily bread.”***  
We acknowledge our dependence upon our Heavenly Father. He is the One Who gives, and He is concerned with our bodies and our physical needs.
  - ✓ ***“Give **us** this day our daily bread”***  
We acknowledge that we are part of the body of Christ and we pray in fellowship with other believers and for their needs.
  - ✓ ***“Give us **this day** our **daily** bread”***  
We realise that in many ways we live one day at a time. It is important that we live and pray “one day at a time”; that we live in the present and not spend time regretting the past or worrying about the future. The manna which the Israelites received in the wilderness was just enough for one day (apart from the two days' supply received the day before the Sabbath).
  - ✓ ***“Give us this day our daily **bread**”***  
Bread speaks of all our material needs and it is right and biblical for us to ask God to supply those needs. And when He does we should be thankful and content (Philippians 4 v11).  
The Psalmist could say, *“I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread”* (Psalm 37 v25). And I personally can echo his words!
- And then the Lord Jesus encourages us, secondly, to pray for PARDON *“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”*  
As Christians and children of God we still sin even though we are saved. We have been saved from the PENALTY of sin; but we still need to be saved every day from the POWER of sin.  
John in the first chapter of his epistle teaches us two truths:
  - ✓ Believers still sin. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1 v8)

- ✓ Believers need to confess their sins and if they do so they will be forgiven. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1 v9).

And this is what the Lord Jesus is encouraging us to do in this prayer. He taught us that if we ask for forgiveness and pardon He will assuredly grant it – and His Word confirms this.

If we don't ask Him to forgive our sins we will lose our joy and our fellowship with Him – although we will not, and cannot, lose our salvation.

## **Day 6**

*"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"* (Matthew 6 v12).

The first request (*"Give us this day our daily bread"*) concerns our physical and material needs; but today's verse concerns our spiritual need.

As believers, we sin and we need to ask forgiveness of those sins.

But this raises two questions:

- If, as a believer, I am justified and all my sins have been forgiven, why do I need to ask for forgiveness?
- What does the second part of this verse mean? Is my forgiveness conditional on, and determined by, how I forgive others?

It will help us to get the answers to both these questions if we realise that it is possible to consider sin in two ways:

- When a person trusts Christ as his Saviour all his sin, from the point of view of eternity, is forgiven by God the Judge – once and for all. This includes all sin – past, present and future. That subject will never be raised again. There will never be any condemnation for the believer (Romans 8 v1; 8 v31-34). The eternal forgiveness of sin is a once-for-all experience at conversion and never needs to be repeated (Acts 13 v38, 39; Colossians 2 v13).
- The person who has trusted Christ has entered into a new relationship with God. God is not his Judge any more. God is his Father. As a child of God he will sin (1 John 1 v8 and 10). The result of this sin will be to lose his joy, his peace and his fellowship with God – but he will not lose his salvation. So he needs to confess his sin to his Father and receive forgiveness for it. This is day-to-day, temporal forgiveness of sin which has been committed "within the family". This is the forgiveness referred

to in the Lord's Prayer which is addressed to "Our Heavenly Father" and it needs to be distinguished from the once-for-all eternal forgiveness of sin. The former is related to the believer's day-to-day experience; the latter to his eternal position. This family/parental forgiveness depends upon our forgiveness of others. But it has nothing to do with salvation.

I trust this answers the first question.

With regard to the second question, it should be clear from the teaching of the Word of God that eternal salvation and forgiveness do not depend upon our forgiveness of others. We are saved by faith – not by works. Remember that the forgiveness here spoken of is "family forgiveness" and not eternal forgiveness. Dr. Harry Ironside, the well known preacher and writer, puts it like this:

*"If we refuse to forgive our erring brethren God will not grant us that restoration forgiveness for which we plead when conscious of sin and failure. This, of course, has nothing to do with the eternal forgiveness which the believing sinner receives when he comes to Christ. It is the Father's forgiveness of an erring child which must necessarily take into account the attitude of the failed one towards other members of the family."*

## **Day 7**

***"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen"***

(Matthew 6 v13).

The third request which the Lord Jesus tells us to pray for ourselves is a prayer for PROTECTION and should be prayed in two ways:

- Negatively – "*Lead us not into temptation*". This is preventing grace. We don't want to experience difficulties, trials and temptations – especially when they come, as they often do, from Satan. So it is biblical and proper to ask God not to allow them to come. At the same time we need to understand that He is sovereign and completely wise, and that He often allows difficulties or temptations to come so that we will be strengthened through them.
- Positively. "*But deliver us from evil*" (or from the evil one). This is preserving grace.



We are here asking God to protect us and enable us to overcome all the difficulties and temptations which come from Satan. And we can do so in confidence, knowing that God has the power both to protect and to deliver.

And so our Lord's prayer encourages us to pray for our three main needs:

- Provision for our bodies – trusting God the Father to provide.
- Pardon for our souls - trusting God the Son to pardon.
- Protection for our spirits - trusting God the Holy Spirit to protect.

The conclusion of this wonderful prayer is one of praise and worship.

The prayer started by focusing upon God – Who He is (our Heavenly Father) and what He desires (His name to be hallowed, His kingdom to come, and His will to be done). And it now concludes with a three-fold expression of praise and worship:

- *“Yours is the Kingdom”*

We praise and thank Him that He is the King of kings, and we fall at His feet in worship.

- *“And the power”*

We praise and thank Him that He is in control of everyone and everything, and we fall at His feet in worship.

- *“And the glory”*

We praise and thank Him that He is glorious in His splendour and majesty and as we think of, and behold, His glory in His Word, we fall at His feet and worship Him.

And when we praise Him in this way we will have no need to worry about the future. All too often we find ourselves worrying and doubting that God is able to take care of us. How foolish when we know that His kingdom is certain, that His power is sufficient for all situations and that His glory ultimately will prevail.

But don't forget that last word, a key word which is so important. “Amen” means “And may it be so”. It expresses our final desire to leave ourselves and our requests in God's Hands – for Him to do as He wishes and chooses.

## **Week 20:**

### **Theme - Forgiveness**

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#### *Day 1*

***“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”*** (Ephesians 4 v32).

One of the prayer requests which the Lord Jesus teaches us in the Lord's Prayer is *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”* (Matthew 6 v12; Luke 11 v4). It would seem that the Lord Jesus taught this prayer on two occasions – once as a prayer to pray (Luke 11 v2) and once as a model or pattern prayer (Matthew 6 v9). And it is significant that, on this latter occasion, after giving this pattern prayer, He selected this one petition concerning forgiveness and gave more information about it.

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matthew 6 v14 and 15).

We can therefore see the importance the Lord Jesus attributed to forgiveness. This is emphasized by the many times forgiveness is dealt with in the Word of God.

Consequently, and as a follow-on from last week, I would like to deal in much more detail in our studies this week with the subject of forgiveness. There is an excellent book on the subject entitled *“From Forgiven to Forgiving”* by Jay E. Adams, published by Victor Books. From this book I have gleaned some very useful thoughts.

#### **What Is forgiveness?**

It is good to start with a definition of forgiveness so that we will understand what we are studying.

Paul writes in our Bible verse for today, *“Forgive one another just as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.”*

So to find out what forgiveness is we must study God's forgiveness which is the model and pattern for our forgiveness.

When God forgives sin He says so. He declares, *“I will not remember your sins”* (Isaiah 43 v25) *“Your sins are forgiven you”* (Luke 5 v20). When God makes a decision to forgive sin He lets us know (through His Word) that He will no longer hold our sins against us. Consequently, forgiveness is not an emotional

feeling (although that may be involved). God's forgiveness is a decision, declaration or promise whereby He determines, promises and declares that He will not remember the sins of another against him, that He will bury them and never resurrect them against us in the future.

That is how God forgives, and we should model our forgiveness of others on His.

## **Day 2**

*"For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103 v11 and 12).

Yesterday we saw that we are to model our forgiveness of others on God's forgiveness of us. When God forgives He purposely does not remember the sins which have been committed. He promises to bury them – once and for all. And when we forgive those who sin against us we promise not to bring the matter up again.

We need, first of all, to study more thoroughly God's forgiveness – realizing again that this is a model and practical pattern for us to follow.

### **God Is a God Who Longs and Wants to Forgive**

It is vital that we learn from the Word of God what God is like.

We need continually to study and understand the attributes of God, and one of the main attributes of God is His goodness. God is good! The goodness of God includes a number of other attributes:

- His love – He saves
- His grace – He gives
- His mercy – He forgives
- His patience – He waits
- His care – He supplies

Right there in the centre of those statements is the mercy of God and His great desire to forgive sin and not to punish us for it. Mercy means that He withholds His punishment for sin because He has forgiven it. Our verses for today remind us of His great mercy.

One of the most wonderful acts of God is His forgiveness of our sin and this forgiveness is based on His mercy towards us.

*“Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Psalm 103 v3 and 4).*

### **God Can Forgive Us Because of the Death of Jesus Christ**

God is, by nature, merciful and His desire and longing for each of His creatures is that He might forgive all their sins. But because He is a God of holiness and justice He cannot do this unless He has a foundation upon which that forgiveness can be based. That foundation is the cross of Jesus Christ. Because He has taken the punishment for our sins, God can legally and righteously forgive our sins.

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1 v7).*

And we must be clear that it is God's desire, wish and longing to forgive our sin. This is what He wants to do – and He has in Jesus Christ made a way by which this forgiveness is possible. But we will see tomorrow that this forgiveness is conditional on our repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Have you put your trust in Him and had your sins forgiven?

## ***Day 3***

*“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13 v38 and 39).*

We learned two great truths about God yesterday:

- Firstly, that He is a God of mercy and forgiveness and wants and longs to forgive our sin.
- Secondly, that it is possible for God Who is holy and just to forgive our sins because His Son Jesus Christ has taken the punishment for those sins.

### **God's Forgiveness of Us Is conditional**

But, thirdly, we also need to learn when we study God's forgiveness as a pattern for our forgiveness, that God has established a way by which individual sinners can have their sins forgiven. Our sins are not forgiven just by God's

desire to do so, or by Jesus Christ's taking the punishment for our sin. God commands and demands that we as sinners "repent and believe", that we turn from our sin and trust Jesus Christ; and it is at that moment that our sins are forgiven.

In other words, God's forgiveness of our sins is **CONDITIONAL** on our repentance and our putting our trust in Jesus Christ, and if we don't do that our sins will not be forgiven.

You and I need to have our sins forgiven by God, and the moment we turn from those sins and put our trust personally in Jesus Christ, we are justified. God forgives all our sins – past, present and future. He decides and declares that our sin is gone, to be remembered no more (Isaiah 43 v25), buried in the depths of the sea (Micah 7 v19) and removed from us as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103 v12).

That is what justification means. Our sin will not be remembered or brought up again. We will never be condemned, we will never be separated from God and we will never be judged eternally. But there is a condition – we are justified **BY FAITH**; it is our responsibility to exercise that faith in Jesus Christ. And it is only as we do this that our sins are forgiven.

### **Our Forgiveness of Others Is Conditional**

We need to remember that our forgiveness of others needs to be modelled on God's forgiveness of us. Therefore we can come to two simple conclusions:

- There must be in our hearts a longing and desire to forgive the sin of the one who has sinned against us (as there is in the heart of God to forgive us).

This is the first step. We need to have the right **ATTITUDE** towards the one who offends – a forgiving attitude.

- But we can only forgive, in the biblical sense, when the one who has offended us shows and expresses his repentance. Our declaration of forgiveness is conditional on his repentance (as it is with God's forgiveness of us). So when the person who wrongs us repents, we declare our forgiveness towards him/her – and what has been done is buried and forgotten.

### **Day 4**

*"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'"*

*Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Matthew 18 v21, 22).*

Having seen the Bible teaching on God's forgiveness, we turn now to look at ourselves in more detail, so that we can see our need and responsibility to forgive those who sin against us, and how we should deal with this.

### **We Need to Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us**

The Bible makes it clear that we should be like our Father God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, with regard to forgiveness.

*"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5 v48).*

This verse is given in the context of loving and forgiving our enemies.

And Paul makes it clear that this is what God expects from us.

*"And be kind to one another; tenderhearted, forgiving one another; just as God in Christ forgave you" ((Ephesians 4:32).*

This command to forgive others is found many times in the Word of God:

*"Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Colossians 3 v13).*

And there are also illustrations of forgiveness included in the Word of God as examples for us to follow:

- The Lord Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him (Luke 23 v34).
- Stephen asked God to forgive his murderers (Acts 7 v60).
- Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 50 v19-21).

In addition the Lord Jesus in His teaching of the disciples told several parables or stories to show the need for us to forgive those who sin against us.

One of the best known of these parables is in Matthew 18 verses 23-35. It is the story of the servant who owed his king 10,000 talents. He told the king he could not pay and asked him to be patient with him. The king was moved with compassion and completely forgave him his debt. However the servant immediately went to a fellow servant who owed him 100 pence and demanded payment. When this servant asked him for patience he refused and had him cast into prison. When the king heard what had happened he delivered the one whose debt he had forgiven to "the torturers" until the debt should be paid. And the Lord Jesus said:

*"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matthew 19 v35).*

It is in the context of this story that the Lord Jesus told Simon Peter that he should forgive the one who sins against him “seventy times seven” Similarly God wants us to forgive those who sin against us – not once but many times.

## **Day 5**

***“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”*** (Matthew 6 v12).

The Word of God makes it clear, again and again, that God wants His children to be like Himself – and to forgive those who sin against us.

### **We Suffer If We Don’t Forgive**

The Word of God also makes it clear that we will suffer in some way if we don’t forgive. A lack of forgiveness towards those who sin against us can lead to many problems in our lives. Our verse for today teaches that the forgiveness of our sins depends upon our forgiveness of those who sin against us. The next verses do the same.

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matthew 6 v14 and 15). What do verses like these mean?

We need to see, first of all, what they don’t mean! It is not possible that our eternal salvation is the result of our forgiveness of others. We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and not by our works! Well, what do they mean?

There are two possible answers to this question:

- They could mean that our forgiveness of others is an evidence or proof that we ourselves have been forgiven. In other words, if a person who professes to be a Christian has an unforgiving nature this is a sign that he himself has not been forgiven, and that he is not a Christian. This is related to what James teaches in verses 17-26 of the second chapter of his epistle when he teaches that true faith in Jesus Christ is always demonstrated by works. His conclusion is that if the works are not there the faith is not there.
- The second answer (and, I believe, the better one) makes a clear distinction and difference between eternal sin and eternal forgiveness on the one hand and family sin and family forgiveness on the other.
  - ✓ When people hear the Gospel and trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour, God forgives their sins once and for all as their Judge. They are justified; their record is spotless because all their sin (past, present

and future) is forgiven eternally, remembered against them no more – and in its place is recorded the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

- ✓ Those people are now children of God. As their Father, God has much to do in training them to become obedient and holy children. Part of this training involves their sin. When they sin they are not thrown out of God's family, but their Father expects them to repent, confess their sins and receive His parental forgiveness. They have already been forgiven judicially and eternally; that is over and done with. Now they need on an ongoing basis to be forgiven as members of God's family. This is the forgiveness asked for in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6 v12) and which is referred to in Matthew 6 v14 and 15. The believer who does not forgive others will suffer. He will not have his "family sins" forgiven, he will lose his joy and peace and is open to receive chastisement from his heavenly Father.

## ***Day 6***

***"Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do"*** (Colossians 3 v13).

God wants us to forgive those who sin against us.

And so the questions we now face are:

- How do we forgive those who sin against us?
- Do we forgive them even if there is no evidence of repentance?
- Is our forgiveness unconditional or conditional?

The key to the answers to these questions lies in Ephesians 4 v32 and our verse for today (Colossians 3 v13). We should forgive "*one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*" And "*as Christ forgave you so also do you.*"

Our forgiveness of others should be patterned on God's forgiveness of us. Is God's forgiveness unconditional or conditional? Does He forgive sinners if there is no evidence of repentance? How does God forgive those who sin against Him?

It is clear from Scripture that forgiveness can be looked at in two ways:

- First of all there is the ATTITUDE of forgiveness. This is a willingness and desire in our hearts to forgive those who sin against us. Instead of having bitterness and resentment in our hearts against them we should have a forgiving spirit. We have not yet forgiven those who sinned against



us – but we are ready and willing to do so. Isn't this what the Bible teaches us about God. He is ready and willing to forgive all sinners – no matter how bad they are. He has not forgiven **all** sinners – otherwise this would mean universal salvation. But His attitude is one of forgiveness. *“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You”* (Psalm 86 v5).

We should be the same – ready and willing to forgive.

- Then secondly there is the ACT of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just an attitude or a feeling. It becomes a promise. When you say, “I forgive you” to another person you make a promise not to remember his sin by bringing it up again. The matter is closed – once and for all. The sin is buried and you do your best to keep that promise.

And when God actually forgives sinners He makes that same promise (Luke 5 v20). Our sin is buried, to be remembered no more (Isaiah 43 v25). He forgives immediately, fully and permanently; and so should we.

But when does God promise and give this act of forgiveness? Only when the sinner repents (Acts 2 v38). God's attitude of forgiveness is unconditional; but His act of forgiveness is conditional on the sinner's repentance.

Consequently, while we should always have an attitude of forgiveness to those who sin against us we can only forgive, as an act, when the one involved repents (Luke 17 v3, 4).

Has someone harmed you or hurt you in some way? Do you have an attitude of forgiveness in your heart? Are you ready and willing to forgive him when the opportunity comes?

## **Day 7**

***“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”*** (Mathew 18 v15).

The Lord Jesus demonstrated His attitude of forgiveness when He prayed on the cross *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23 v34); but I believe that they were not actually forgiven until many of them repented of their sin (Acts 2 v38-41) on the Day of Pentecost under the preaching of Peter.

Stephen prayed with an attitude of forgiveness that the Lord would not “*lay this sin to their charge*” (Acts 7 v60), and at least one of the guilty ones was forgiven later on when he repented. His name was Saul.

### **Steps to take**

If someone has sinned against you the Bible makes it clear that there are several steps you need to take:

- First of all ask God to give you an attitude of forgiveness towards the person involved – so that in your heart you are ready and willing to forgive him.
- You should speak alone with the one who has sinned against you and explain to him what he has done as our verse for today indicates. At the same time you should show by your attitude and words that you are ready and willing to forgive.
- If he repents – that is if he sees that he was wrong and asks for forgiveness – you should forgive him (Luke 17 v4). This means, as we have seen, that you promise never to raise the matter again with him.
- If he sins again and repents again you should forgive him again and again (Matthew 18 v22; Luke 17 v4). This is difficult but this is what the Bible teaches. This was what the Lord Jesus told Peter as we saw earlier this week.
- If he does not repent, you should involve others (Matthew 18 v16, 17) but if he still does not repent you cannot actually forgive him (although you still have an attitude of forgiveness in your heart and a desire to forgive him).

### **The Blessings of Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is not easy but the believer who forgives those who sin against him when they repent will be blessed by God (Matthew 5 v7).

And the person who is forgiven is also blessed because he has been released from the burden and guilt of what he has done.

But the believer who does not have a forgiving spirit and refuses to forgive the person who has repented will not be blessed, but he will leave himself open to the chastisement of his Heavenly Father and could well become hard and bitter.

Is there someone you need to forgive? Do you have a forgiving attitude? Are you ready to go to him with that attitude? If he repents are you ready to forgive him completely? Go today. As you forgive, you will be blessed by God. If you don't forgive you will lose that blessing.

## Week 21:

# Theme - Lessons From Lepers

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### Day 1

*“Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper” (2 Kings 5 v1).*

In our studies this week we will look at several passages of the Bible which speak about lepers, or people with leprosy, and see what lessons we can learn from them.

Leprosy was a disease which was quite common in Bible times. It affected the skin and was very infectious. As a result lepers were considered unclean, unable to take their part in the worshipping community, and they were isolated from other people. In Israel it was the priest who decided if a person had leprosy and should be isolated, and it was to the priest the leper who was healed should go for clearance.

Sometimes in our ministry we use leprosy as a picture of sin because:

- Leprosy is often regarded as incurable by human means. So is sin.
- Leprosy makes a person “unclean”. So does sin.
- Leprosy isolates and separates. So does sin.

The best known leper in the Bible is Naaman. He first appears in the Bible in our verse for today and we can learn a number of facts about him.

➤ **The man he was**

The Bible tells us in 2 Kings 5 v1 the kind of man Naaman was:

- ✓ He was a great man with his master, the king of Syria. This means that he was an important person in the royal court, where he had a lot of influence.
- ✓ He was an honourable man. He was highly thought of and very popular with his master, and with all the people because of his mighty actions.
- ✓ He was a brave and successful general, a mighty man of valour who had delivered the country of Syria from its enemies.
- ✓ But he was a leper – and there was no cure for his leprosy.

It is interesting to see that greatness, honour, success and strength could not bring healing from this disease. If Naaman had been asked if he would like to be a famous man with leprosy, or a simple unknown person without leprosy, he would certainly have chosen the latter.

The Bible encourages you and me to see ourselves as we really are. We have a problem and a disease much worse than leprosy, one to which there is no human solution. We are all sinners (Isaiah 53 v6; Romans 3 v23) and there is no way we, ourselves, can get rid of our sin – no matter how important, honourable, successful and wealthy we are. Only God can solve this problem.

## ***Day 2***

*“And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman’s wife. Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”* (2 Kings 5 v2 and 3).

We have looked at Naaman in 2 Kings 5 v1 and have seen **the man he was**. Now we will see his great need and God’s answer to that need:

### ➤ **The need he recognized**

Naaman’s leprosy was his greatest problem and it is obvious from the reading of 2 Kings chapter 5 that he wanted to be healed from it, and that he was willing to do anything to receive that healing.

Similarly, no one can be saved from their sin unless they see their need to be saved. Unfortunately, too many people are like the Pharisee in Luke 18 v11 who boasted of his goodness and did not see his sinfulness; and too few are like the publican in Luke 18 v13 who cried, *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”*

### ➤ **The news he received**

And then one day Naaman received the good news that he could be healed. Our verse for today tells us about a Jewish girl who had been captured by the Syrian army and was working as a maid to Naaman’s wife. She told her mistress that there was a prophet of God back in her homeland who could cure him. What a thrill this must have been for Naaman! Here was a possible solution to his problem.

And the best and most exciting news that a sinner can receive is that *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”* (1 Timothy 1 v15). That is

the message of the Gospel; that is the good news for you and me and for our children.

➤ **The action he took**

Naaman was excited. And he started to move towards the solution to the problem which had been presented to him:

- ✓ He went to his king and got a royal letter to give to the king of Israel.
- ✓ He assembled a large amount of gold, silver and garments to “pay for his healing.”
- ✓ He travelled to Israel, went to the king and presented his letter. However the king couldn’t help. He had come to the wrong place and the wrong person.
- ✓ He then received word through the king that he should go to Elisha, the prophet and the man of God.
- ✓ He went to Elisha’s home.

It is wonderful to see Naaman’s concern and his great desire to be healed. It is obvious that he was ready and willing to go anywhere and do anything – well, as we shall see, almost anything.

Similarly, it is wonderful to see the concern of those who want to be saved, and who start to make their first steps in the right direction – even though they have not yet arrived.

### **Day 3**

*“And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean. So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (2 Kings 5 v10 and 14).*

We have seen the kind of man Naaman was, the need he recognized, the news he received and the action he took. And now .....

➤ **The command he received**

When Naaman arrived at Elisha’s home he was rather taken aback when Elisha’s servant came out to speak to him – and not Elisha himself. And he was especially disappointed and angry when the servant conveyed to him Elisha’s command as found in our verse for today:

*"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean"* (2 Kings 5 v10).

This method of healing was humiliating and he rejected it:

✓ It was not spectacular enough! (verse 11). He had expected the prophet to appear and do a miracle.

✓ He felt his own rivers at home were better than the Jordan (verse 12). So often today people reject God's way of salvation, just as Naaman rejected Elisha's solution, because it seems so simple, or because they want to be saved their way. But a sinner can only be saved God's way, which is obedience to His Word. Likewise, Naaman could only be healed when he obeyed God's Word through His prophet.

Naaman's servants reasoned with him and encouraged him to obey.

➤ **The obedience he demonstrated**

And, as a result, he did obey. He went into the river Jordan, dipped himself in the water seven times and was completely healed. It was all so simple and straight forward. Only obedience was required. And the lesson we learn from this leper is that healing, in his case, and salvation, in our case, is only possible if we obey God and do what He tells us to do.

Today, God's command is *"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16 v31). There is no other way. It is a simple command – and the response of the sinner should be one of **obedience**.

But the story has a wonderful ending.

➤ **The change he experienced**

Something else happened to Naaman besides his healing. Something else happened which was even more important, and more beneficial, than the fact that he had been healed.

It is obvious from verse 15, and verses 17-19 that Naaman had also come into a new relationship with the God of Israel. Not only was he healed physically but he was healed spiritually and he went back home a changed man and a worshipper of the one and only true God.

## ***Day 4***

*"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan"*

(Luke 17 verses 15 and 16).

Yesterday we learned the lesson from the story of Naaman the leper that healing and salvation are only possible when we obey God and His Word. Today we go one step further and learn another lesson from the ten lepers about whom we read in Luke 17 v11-19.

➤ **The ten men in need**

All these ten men had a serious problem. They were lepers standing afar off (verse 12), isolated and separated from their families and from society, and there was no cure for this dreaded disease.

➤ **The ten men who prayed**

The Lord Jesus entered their village. Somehow they had heard about Him, and His power, and they cried out to Him, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*”. (verse 13)

➤ **The ten men who were healed**

And the Lord Jesus, in response to their prayer, healed all ten of them, just as He healed the leper in Matthew 8 v2,3 and many more besides (Matthew 11 v5). He did not touch them with His healing Hand; He did not say to them “Be healed.” He told them to go and show the priests that they were healed; and as they went, in obedience to His command, they all were healed.

➤ **The one man who was thankful**

As the ten turned away to go to the priests rejoicing in their healing, one turned back and came to the Lord Jesus. He did three things as our verses for today show:

- ✓ He glorified God with a loud voice (verse 15).
- ✓ He fell down on his face at the feet of the Lord Jesus (verse 16).
- ✓ He thanked Him for his healing (verse 16).

The Lord Jesus was pleased with this man’s thankfulness – especially because he was a Samaritan and not a Jew.

➤ **The nine men who were not thankful**

But the Lord Jesus expressed surprise that the other nine had not come to express their gratitude for what He had done – especially because, unlike the one who had come, they were all Jews and should have known better.

➤ **The one man who was saved**

There was a special, and greater, blessing for the Samaritan who did return to say “thank you”. The Lord Jesus told him “*Your faith has made you whole*” (verse 19). We can conclude from this statement that the Samaritan had not only experienced physical healing from the Lord Jesus;

but he had also received spiritual healing or salvation – and that was more important.

We need to be sure that we follow the example of the one leper and not the nine – and express our thanks to the Lord Jesus for what He has done for us.

## ***Day 5***

*“Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, ‘Why are we sitting here until we die?’ If we say, ‘We will enter the city,’ the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die” (2 Kings 7 v3 and 4).*

This week we are **learning lessons from lepers**.

Our first lesson from the story of Naaman is that we can only be saved if we obey God’s command to trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our second lesson from the story of the ten lepers is that when Jesus Christ saves us, we should express our thankfulness to Him.

We will learn our third lesson today and tomorrow from a very interesting story about four lepers in 2 Kings chapter 7.

The city of Samaria was besieged by the Syrian army and as a result there was a great famine in the city. All the domestic animals were eaten and there were even instances of cannibalism. Then in 2 Kings 7 v3 we are introduced to four lepers who were sitting at the entrance to the city. As we look at these four lepers, and all that happened to them, we can see four pictures:

### ➤ **A picture of distress**

These four men were certainly in a position of great distress, and we see in today’s verses that they were wondering what they should do:

- ✓ If they entered the city they would die – because of the famine.
- ✓ If they remained where they were they would die – because they had no food, and because of their leprosy.
- ✓ If they moved forward into the Syrian camp they would almost certainly be killed.

Whatever they did, the only possible result was death. There was no solution to their problem.



This could be a picture of a person who is unsaved and without Christ. He is lost and there is no human solution to his problem. No matter which way he turns the answer is ultimately death – not just physical death, but eternal death and separation from God forever.

“Well”, said the lepers, “We will go into the Syrian camp and if they kill us we shall but die.”

And so they left where they were sitting and as night approached they moved forward, rather nervously, towards the Syrian camp (2 Kings 7 v5). At least death might prove more mercifully swift this way – and who knows what might happen! It was their only chance.

What will happen to them? We will find out tomorrow!

But is it possible that someone who is reading these words is in a similar type of distress – and you literally don’t know which way to turn?

If so, make sure you turn to Jesus Christ.

## ***Day 6***

*“Then they said to one another, “We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king’s household” (2 Kings 7 v9).*

As we look at the four lepers in 2 Kings chapter 7 we can see firstly a **picture of distress**. But as they moved towards the Syrian camp we see a second picture.

### ➤ **A picture of discovery**

When they got to the camp they discovered that **God has already been there** (2 Kings 7 v5). The camp was empty and deserted. God had caused the Syrians to hear the noise of a great army coming against them. As a result they were afraid and, just before the lepers arrived, they had all fled from the camp, leaving it completely intact.

You can imagine the excitement of the lepers as they came into the deserted camp and realised (as surely they must have done) that God had been there and had solved their problem.

Similarly, it is wonderful for us to make the discovery that God has been **HERE** on this earth in the Person of His Son, and that through His death on the cross, has solved the problem of our sin. He died to save us from

sin and judgment. We just need to trust Him and receive the blessing of salvation. Have you done this? If not, you could do so today and be saved (Acts 16 v31).

➤ **A picture of distraction**

What did the four lepers do? What should they have done?

They should have rushed back into the city to share the good news with those who were dying, and tell them that food and safety were available. Instead, they thought only of themselves and started to enjoy themselves. They were distracted by all the good things around them – all the food and drink, all the silver and gold, all the beautiful clothes. They not only filled their stomachs, but began to hide the silver, gold and raiment for future use.

How sad! And many Christians today are also distracted by the things of this life, and instead of sharing the good news of salvation with the children, they enjoy the things of this world.

➤ **A picture of distribution**

But the story does not end there. We see in today's verse that in the midst of their festivities they came to see how selfish they were and realised that they needed to share the good news with those in the city:

- ✓ They were convicted – “*We are not doing right*”
- ✓ They could not wait – “*If we wait until morning light.*”
- ✓ They made a decision – “*Come, let us go and tell.*”

So they came with the good news and the city was saved.

And God wants you and me to go and tell the good news of the Gospel to those who are perishing. We must not allow anything to distract us from this responsibility.

## ***Day 7***

*“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives “ (Hebrews 12 v5 and 6).*

During this week we have been **looking** at **lessons** we can **learn** from lepers in the Bible. So far we have learned three lessons in a logical order:

- Naaman the leper – we must be saved.
- The ten lepers – we must be thankful for our salvation.
- The four lepers – we must share the message of salvation with others.

But there is one more lesson to learn, and it is a hard and difficult one.

God is a God of holiness and justice. He does not like to see His children disobey Him and often He will chasten them when they do so, as our verse for today tells us. They do not lose their salvation. They lose their fellowship with God, their joy and peace and their fruitfulness:

- Miriam, the sister of Moses was a child of God but she spoke and rebelled against Moses' leadership and, by implication, God's appointment of Moses (Numbers 12 v1, 2). The result was that God chastened her and she became a leper (Numbers 12 v10). It was only through the prayer of Moses that she was healed seven days later. I am sure she never forgot this experience and learned not to be disobedient to God.
- Gehazi was the servant of Elisha and it seems likely that he was a believer. When Elisha refused to accept payment from Naaman after he was healed, Gehazi ran after him and told Naaman a lie so that he could receive money and clothes from him (2 Kings 5 v20-23). Then he lied to Elisha concerning what he had done (2 Kings 5 v25), and as a result he became a leper.
- Uzziah, or Azariah, was a king of Judah who reigned for 52 years. We can read about him in 2 Chronicles chapter 26. It would seem that he also was a believer and a good king for most of his reign. "*He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*" (2 Chronicles 26 v4) and "*He sought God*" (verse 5). God blessed and prospered him and the nation. But he became proud and went into the temple to take on priestly responsibilities (verse 16).

As a result God smote him with leprosy (verse 20, 21).

These three examples of leprosy remind us that God chastens and corrects His children when they need it, but He always chastens in love and has a purpose in doing so (Hebrews 12 v5, 6). God will not usually chasten you and me by sending leprosy, but He may send, or allow, other things to come into our lives to chasten and correct us.

If you and I have been disobedient, like Miriam, or deceitful like Gehazi, or proud like Uzziah, we need to repent and make things right with God. He will then restore us and heal us.

## Week 22:

### Theme - Kings And Kids

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#### *Day 1*

*"Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren. And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him"*

(2 Kings 2 v19, 20).

I first visited USA in the summer of 1964 to attend the Child Evangelism Fellowship Leadership Training Institute held in Michigan, and while there I was asked to speak to the full-time CEF workers in that state. I spoke on the subject "Kings and Kids" and am using my notes of that talk as the basis of our meditations and studies this week.

Last week we spent a lot of time in 1 Kings and 2 Kings thinking about Naaman, the four lepers in Samaria, and Gehazi. So I felt it would be appropriate to continue in the two books of Kings and see if there are any lessons we can learn about children or "kids".

We see, first of all (2 Kings 2 v19-22), a city and its needs – a city with a great problem. It was the city of Jericho.

➤ **The problem**

The men of Jericho spoke to Elisha about the situation of the city, and as he looked upon it he could see that it was very pleasant. But then they explained that there was a serious problem because the river flowing into the city had poisonous water and, as a result, the land would not produce crops.

Do we see here a picture of the city or country where you live and work? It is, in many ways, pleasant and beautiful – but there is an "evil river" flowing through the city – the "river" of sin. Sin abounds and as a result there is barrenness and a lack of spirituality and conformity to God's Will. The men of Jericho had come to Elisha to ask if he could solve their great problem.

➤ **The solution**

To solve the problem Elisha outlined four steps that had to be followed:

✓ **He asked for a new bowl.**

He would use this bowl to solve the problem.

God still uses “new bowls” to solve the problems of individuals, cities and countries. Are you a “new bowl”? Have you been born again? Have you trusted Jesus Christ?

✓ **He asked them to put salt in the bowl**

It is true that God uses “new bowls”, but they should be bowls which are filled with the salt of clean living and the salt of a good testimony (Matthew 5 v13).

Are we living lives like that?

## Day 2

*“Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.’ So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke” (2 Kings 2 v21, 22).*

The city of Jericho had a serious problem – the water was bad and the ground was barren. The inhabitants asked Elisha, the man of God, to solve their problem.

He did so in four ways:

- ✓ He asked for a new bowl.
- ✓ He asked for salt to be put in it.
- ✓ **He went back to the source.**

He then went, with the bowl and the salt to the spring of the water, to the source of the river. He realised that it was there the problem began, and that it could only be solved by going back to the source. If he had dealt with the river downstream and purified the water there, the water coming from above would soon have poisoned the river again. He had to go back to the source.

Can you see an application here for you and me? If we want to solve the problem of the “evil water” of sin in our cities and countries we need to go back to where it started. We need to find the source and concentrate our attention there. If the source can be purified then the river will be purified.

Where is the source? Where does the river of sin in our cities begin? It starts with the boys and girls. They are the source. That is where the water and the river start to flow. So if we want to see the water in our city purified we need to reach the children and see them saved and purified – so that the water in our city will become clean and the land productive.

✓ **He threw the salt in**

And when Elisha got to the source he threw **all** the salt into it. He held back none of it.

Is there not another application here for ourselves? We should not only be born again and be living clean lives; we should not only go to the source of “the river” – to the boys and girls, but we should give those children all we have. We should “throw ourselves” and all we have into a ministry to reach them. We should hold nothing back. They need us, and the spiritual help we can give them.

And what was the result? God purified the waters flowing through Jericho and the land was no longer barren (verse 21b).

And it could well be that when you and I give ourselves to reach, and minister to, the children that God will work in their hearts, save and cleanse them and that He will then through them, bring spiritual cleanness to our cities and countries.

The future of the children and, to some extent, the future of the country is in your hands!

### ***Day 3***

*“When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD” (2 Kings 4 v32 and 33).*

Our theme for this week is “Kings and Kids”. We saw in 2 Kings 2 v19-22, why we should reach children with the Gospel and devote ourselves and our time to their spiritual needs. We learned that we need to go back to the source.

In 2 Kings 4 v18-39 we can learn **how** we should reach the children.

This is the story of a dead child. The child miraculously born to the Shunammite woman had died in his mother’s arms; and her immediate response was to go to Elisha, the man of God, to ask him to help her and to meet her child’s need. The final result was that the child was restored to life again through his ministry.

You and I have the responsibility to meet the needs of today's children. They are spiritually dead and need spiritual life. So we look at Elisha and his ministry to this dead child and ask ourselves the question – "What can I learn from him which will help me in my ministry?"

➤ **Consider the man he was**

God is more interested in the worker than the work and the main reason why God used Elisha to bring this child to life was because he had a life which was pleasing to Him:

- ✓ He was a man of holiness

The testimony of the Shunammite woman concerning Elisha was "*I perceive that this is a holy man of God*" (verse 9).

- ✓ He was a man of faith

We can see this clearly in chapter 6 v16 when he encouraged his servant not to be afraid because he could see the Lord's protecting angels.

- ✓ He was a man of power

When Elijah was taken to Heaven (chapter 2 v11) Elisha received a double portion of the Spirit which had rested on him.

As we minister to children we need to pray that God will enable us to be men and women of holiness, faith and power. Then He will bless us and use us.

➤ **Consider the methods he used**

When Elisha came into the room where the dead child lay he followed three steps:

- ✓ First of all **he prayed** (verse 33)

That surely was the main secret of his success. Our Bible verse for today tells us that he prayed and asked God to restore the child to life. That must always be our first step.

How much time have we spent this week praying for the salvation of our children? Which is more important – to talk to the children about God, or to talk to God about the children?

## **Day 4**

*"And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm"* (2 Kings 4 v34).

Yesterday we were looking at Elisha and his ministry to a physically dead child in 2 Kings 4; and we were seeking to learn lessons which could help us in our ministry to spiritually dead children.

We saw that he was a man of holiness, faith and power, and we realised our need to be men and women like that if God was going to use us in our ministry to children.

We started to look, then, at what he did to help the child and to restore him to life:

➤ **He prayed**

The situation was beyond him, his ability and his power. He could not bring dead children to life, and so he asked God to do so. He must have learned this lesson from his former master Elijah who was faced with the same situation in 1 Kings chapter 17 v17-24.

When he came to that dead child the first thing he did was to pray and the Bible records his prayer in verse 21, *“O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him.”* And we read that *“the Lord heard the voice of Elijah ... and he revived”* (verse 22).

This must always be our first step in our ministry to dead boys and girls. We need to spend much time in prayer for them.

➤ **He stretched himself** on the child (verse 34)

This means two things:

- ✓ Firstly, he came into actual contact with the child. Having prayed for him he went to him.

It is vital to pray for the children; but that is not enough. It is God Who gives life but He uses people like you and me to bring the message of life to the children. We need to go to them, to come into contact with them, and to share the powerful, life-giving message of the Gospel with them. They will be saved through the Word of God which they will hear from us.

- ✓ Secondly, he identified himself with the child as we can see in today’s verse – he put his mouth on the child’s mouth, his eyes on the child’s eyes and his hands on the child’s hands. This was not easy or natural for a grown man to do. But he did it!

And so should we identify ourselves with the children – and endeavour to see things as they see them, to speak in a way they will understand and be willing to act as they act.

However the child did not yet come to life. His skin became warm but that was all. What would Elisha do next? We will see tomorrow.



## Day 5

*“He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes”*

(2 Kings 4 v35).

We have learned from 2 Kings chapter 4 that we should be, like Elisha, men and women of holiness, faith and power. Those were the key factors in Elisha’s life – and in his ministry. We have also learned that there are certain steps we need to take if God is going to use us in our ministry to the children.

- **He prayed for the child.** We need to pray for our dead children.
- **He stretched himself upon the child.** We need to make contact with them and identify ourselves with them. But what should we do if nothing happens? What did Elisha do?
- **He persevered**

We read in verse 35 that he returned, that he walked back and forth in the room – then that he went back to the child, contacted him **again**, and stretched himself on him **again**.

He did not give up because he had not seen any results. He believed that God was going to do something eventually; and so he knew that he must not quit. He kept going; he persevered.

Even when the child started to sneeze he continued in contact with the child, and it was only after the seventh sneeze that the child opened his eyes. I wonder did Elisha remember that, on his instructions, it was only after Naaman dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan that he was healed from his leprosy, or that it was only after the children of Israel had walked around the walls of Jericho seven times on that final day that the walls fell down? Or that it was only after Elijah’s servant had looked seven times that he saw a little rain cloud?

How important it was for Elisha, Naaman and the children of Israel to persevere, because it was only after their perseverance that they saw the intervention and blessing of God.

How important, also, it is for you and me not to quit.

Are you feeling discouraged just now with your ministry? Are you thinking of giving up? Don’t! Perhaps you are just at the fifth or sixth sneeze! How tragic it would be to quit and miss God’s blessing on your ministry.

➤ **The child came to life**

What joy there was in that little home as the mother saw her child raised from the dead!

And what joy there will be when God uses you to bring dead boys and girls to life through the new birth – joy in the hearts of the children, joy in your heart and joy among the angels of Heaven (Luke 15 v7, 10).

There is no greater privilege in this world than that of leading a child to Jesus Christ. God chooses and uses people like Elisha to be channels of blessing and salvation to the boys and girls. You could be one of those channels today.

## **Day 6**

*“Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, “The child has not awakened” (2 Kings 4 v31).*

God used Elisha to bring a dead child to life. We have seen that Elisha was a man of purity, a man of prayer, a man of preparation and perspiration, and a man of perseverance.

But did you notice in 2 Kings chapter 4 that there was another man involved in the story? He was called Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. And did you notice in today's verse that he tried to raise the dead boy to life without success (verse 31)? How did he fail when Elisha succeeded? Could we learn some lessons from his failed attempt which will enable us to avoid similar failures? Compare him and his methods with Elisha.

➤ **There were faults in the man**

There were, first of all, faults and shortcomings in Gehazi as a person.

✓ He was not a man of holiness (as can be seen in 2 Kings chapter 5). He deceived Naaman, he stole, he lied and he also tried to deceive Elisha. He seemed to be more interested in material things than spiritual things.

✓ He certainly gave no evidence of being a man of faith or a man of power.

➤ **There were faults in his methods**

✓ He did not pray

When he came to the child in verse 31 he went directly to the child and placed the staff on his face. There is no evidence at all that he prayed

beforehand – as Elisha did.

- ✓ He himself did not come into contact with the child.

He laid Elisha's staff on the child's face, but he himself did not touch the child or identify himself with the child in the way Elisha did. He took the easy way out. He was, of course, only doing what Elisha told him to do. It could well be that Elisha gave these instructions to help others to see how important close personal contact is when helping those in need.

- ✓ He did not persevere.

When nothing happened he returned immediately to Elisha and told him, "*The child is not awakened.*" We might get the impression that this was what he expected to happen!

We need to model our ministry to dead children on the picture given by Elisha and avoid the mistakes illustrated by the person and actions of Gehazi.

*"Lead me to some child today. Teach me, Lord, just what to say.  
Boys and girls are lost in sin, and cannot find their way.  
Few there are who seem to care; few there are who pray.  
Melt my heart and fill my life. Give me one child today."*

## **Day 7**

***"And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Then she said to her mistress, 'If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy'"*** (2 Kings 5 v2 and 3).

We have been looking this week at the two books of Kings to see what we can learn about our ministry to kids.

- In 2 Kings 2 v19-22 we learned how important it is to go back to the source and reach children with the gospel when they are still young.
- In 2 Kings 4 v8-37 we learned some lessons in how to evangelize children.
- The next logical step is to read 2 Kings chapter 5 verses 1-4, and see the potential of a child who has had some experience and contact with God.

When the Syrian army invaded Israel they captured “a little maid”. We do not know her name; but when she was brought to Syria she became a servant or slave to the wife of Naaman, the general, whom we studied earlier.

We can learn several lessons about children from this captured girl:

- Someone back in Israel had instructed her in the things of God. What an investment that would prove to be! She was herself, probably a believer. At least she believed in the power of God to do miracles. And even when she was far from home and spiritual influences she was still perfectly clear in her beliefs.
- She was a very effective witness to her mistress although she had every reason to be quiet and say nothing:
  - ✓ She could have been afraid to speak. Everything and everyone was against her.
  - ✓ She could have been resentful and angry with her position as slave – and said nothing.

But she was not bitter, nor did she want to get her own back by keeping quiet. She loved and cared for her master and told her mistress how God could heal him.

Children can be most effective witnesses and can often put adults to shame.

- The results of that witness were tremendous. Because of what she said, Naaman, her master was healed and even, more importantly, he began to worship the God of Israel. What a witness he would become to his own people – especially because he was such an important person. You never know the eventual result of a child's faith and witness, and the lives which can be touched and changed through their lives, their words and their witness – to other children, in their own homes and elsewhere. That is one of the reasons why we should evangelize children and reach them with the Gospel. A saved child can be a very effective missionary. Those children in your Sunday school class or Good News Club could be missionaries like Naaman's maid. Pray for them. Evangelize them. Teach them. Challenge them.

## Week 23:

### Theme - Mark And Minors

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#### *Day 1*

*“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach”* (Mark 3 v13, 14).

At the beginning of last week I mentioned that the meditations for the week (“Kings and kids”) were based upon notes I used the first time I spoke to CEF workers in USA in 1964. This week I would like to base our studies and meditations on notes I used the second time I spoke to the same group of CEF workers. My theme was “Mark and Minors”. In these studies I looked at and considered some passages in Mark’s Gospel which help us to understand how we can best reach children with the Gospel.

➤ **A principle to remember**

In Mark chapter 3 verses 13 and 14, our verses for today, we are reminded of a basic principle upon which our ministry to children should be founded and which we have already looked at a number of weeks ago. But it is worth looking at again.

In verse 13 the Lord Jesus called a group of men and they came unto Him. The first step in our ministry to children is not that we GO to the children but that we COME to the Saviour. His call is primarily to COME to Him. Why should we come to Him? The next verse gives us the answer. He ordained twelve *“that they should be with Him”* (verse 14b).

He chose them, first of all, to have fellowship with Him, to listen to Him, and to speak to Him. That is also His first priority for us. He wants us to come IN before we go OUT.

Then in verse 14 **after** the disciples had come to Him and after they had been with Him, the Lord Jesus *“sent them forth to preach”*. Now they were to go OUT and reach the lost with the good news.

Similarly the Lord Jesus calls us to come to Him and to be with Him; and then He sends us out to reach the children.

✓ The order is COME – and then GO

✓ The order is IN – and then OUT.

Our breathing is balanced. We breath IN and then we breath OUT. If we breath IN all the time or if we breath OUT all the time the result will be disaster. We need to do both.

Similarly in our ministry we need to be balanced. We need to COME IN – then GO OUT. Not one, not the other – but both.

## **Day 2**

*“Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”* (Mark 9 v37).

*“Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them”* (Mark 10 v13).

One of the best known passages in the Bible about children is Mark 10 verses 13-16. Yesterday we saw an important **principle** which we should, as children's workers, **remember**. Jesus Christ wants us first of all to COME to Him and then GO to the children. Today we see a promise and a precept.

### ➤ **A promise to claim**

In our passage today we see a PRECEPT concerning children which we need to OBEY. But before we look at that precept we need to go back into the previous chapter to see a PROMISE which we need to CLAIM, because that verse helps us better to understand the verses in Mark 10.

One of our verses for today (Mark 9 v37) refers to the incident which is recorded in more detail in Matthew 18 v1-14, and the words of our verse are repeated, more or less, in verse 5 of that chapter. In both these verses the Lord Jesus identifies Himself with children. He loves them so much that He says if we receive or welcome even one child in His name it is just as if we are receiving or welcoming Him. And when we receive or welcome Him, it is just as if we are receiving or welcoming God the Father.

This is an astonishing promise of our Lord Jesus. If we open our affections, our hearts, our homes, our wallets to a child, and bid him welcome in the name of Jesus Christ it is just as if we are welcoming and giving hospitality to the Lord Jesus Christ, and our Heavenly Father. We must do it of course “in the Name of Jesus Christ” and we do so because we love and serve Him.

➤ **A precept to obey**

We now return to Mark 10 v13-16 where the Lord Jesus tells His disciples and us to allow the children to come to Him. That is a precept or command. Some people brought young children to the Lord Jesus so that He could touch and bless them. But we see in today's second verse that the disciples rebuked them and turned the children away. We read in verse 14 that the Lord Jesus was "*much displeased*". I understand that the word used here is "a strong word of deep emotion" and could be translated "moved with indignation". Or even "angry". It has even been suggested that this is perhaps the strongest word used in the Gospels to describe the emotions of the Lord Jesus.

Why was the Lord Jesus so indignant? The disciples often made mistakes, but why should He be so displeased with this mistake?

Because this was not a mistake but an act of disobedience to the command the Lord Jesus had previously given to welcome children. They were turning the children away instead of welcoming them!

May God help us always to receive children – in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **Day 3**

*"But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them" Mark 10 v14-16).*

We return today to Mark 10 verse 13-16, and we will look briefly at the four people or groups of people involved in this precious story about children which concluded with the command the Lord Jesus gave concerning them.

➤ **The people and their desire to bring children to the Lord Jesus**

We do not know who these people were. Perhaps they were the parents of the children. Perhaps they were simply neighbours and friends. But we do know that they wanted to bring these children to the Lord Jesus.

May this also be our desire!

➤ **The children and their willingness to come**

The children did not draw back nor did they want to go away. They were like the little boy in Matthew 18 v2 who just came to the Lord Jesus. And many children today would come to the Lord Jesus if only they had the opportunity to do so.

➤ **The disciples and their rejection of the children**

We don't know why they rebuked those who brought them and why they tried to turn the children away. Perhaps they felt the Lord Jesus was too busy; or perhaps they felt the children were not important enough to warrant His attention and blessing. But we do know that they rejected the children. Unfortunately this still happens today. Many do not see the need for children to come and trust the Lord Jesus, and some would even turn them away.

➤ **The Lord Jesus and His reaction**

We can see in today's verses that the Lord Jesus reacted in four ways:

- ✓ Firstly, He rebuked the disciples for their rejection of the children. We saw yesterday this was an act of disobedience and merited the Lord's rebuke (verse 14).
- ✓ Secondly, He gave a command. He said, "*Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them*" (verse 14). This is the command or precept we need to remember and obey today. We must never turn children away from the Lord Jesus but let them come to Him.
- ✓ Thirdly, He used the children to explain the way of salvation (verse 15).
- ✓ Fourthly, He put His hands upon the children and blessed them (verse 16).

There is a PRECEPT for us still to OBEY. "Let them come to Me. Do not turn them away." (Mark 10v14)

This is a PROMISE for us still to CLAIM. "Welcome the children and you will welcome the Lord Jesus and our Heavenly Father" (Matthew 18 v5).

## **Day 4**

*"For He said to him, 'Come out of the man, unclean spirit!' ..... Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction..... Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement" (Mark 5 verses 8, 29, 42)*



One of the most interesting chapters in Mark's Gospel is chapter 5. This chapter can be divided into three parts:

- Verses 1-20. A MAN and his problem of DEMONS.
- Verses 25-34. A WOMAN and her problem of DISEASE.
- Verses 21-24 and 35-43. A CHILD and her problem of DEATH.

The Lord Jesus entered victoriously into all three situations He met the needs of all three people and solved all three problems, as we see in our verses for today.

We can therefore make two conclusions:

- The Lord Jesus is able to meet the needs of men, women and children.
- The Lord Jesus is victorious over demons, disease and death.

We have a Lord and a Saviour Who can do anything!

But we want to concentrate our attention during the remaining part of this week on the child about whom we read in this chapter and think about what the Lord Jesus did for her. At the same time we want to try to learn any lesson which will help us in our ministry to children.

We will start with a short summary of all that happened.

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue and his daughter, aged twelve, was very sick. He had heard about the miracles done by the Lord Jesus in Capernaum, and had possibly witnessed some of them. So he came to Him and asked Him if He would heal his daughter. The Lord Jesus went with him towards his home. On the way He healed a sick woman, and then word came that the girl was dead. But the Lord Jesus and Jairus proceeded to his home despite that message, and despite the scorn of those who mocked them (verse 40). He, the parents, and three of His disciples (Luke 8 v51) went into the room where the dead girl lay. He took her by the hand and asked her to get up – and she did so! It was a wonderful miracle.

In this story of Jairus' daughter we have three PICTURES which will help us in our ministry to children.

### ***The picture of a child who was dead***

How sad to see a dead child! How devastating it must have been for Jairus and his wife to see their daughter become so sick and then die.

But we need to realise that all around us are many dead children. Physically they are alive but according to the Bible (Ephesians 2 v1, 8) they are spiritually dead and they need the spiritual life, the eternal life, which only the Lord Jesus can give them.

But you and I are needed to bring the message of salvation to them so that they can trust the Lord Jesus and receive that spiritual life.

## ***Day 5***

***“Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet”*** (Mark 5 v21, 22).

As we read the story of Jairus’ daughter we can see three pictures. We saw yesterday the picture of a child who was dead.

### ***The picture of an adult who was burdened for the child***

How wonderful it was that someone cared for that child, and was willing to do all he could to meet her need.

#### ➤ **Who was he?**

- ✓ He was a man. It is especially interesting to know that it was the father who showed his concern and came to the Lord Jesus. So often we find today that most of those who minister to the spiritual needs of children are women. But we long to see more men involved.
- ✓ He was an important man. As a ruler of the synagogue he would have been highly regarded in his community.  
But his importance did not prevent him from hurrying through the streets of the city and throwing himself at the feet of the Lord Jesus – as we can see in today’s Bible verse.
- ✓ He was a busy man. He had many responsibilities in the synagogue and much work to do. But his first priority was his daughter – and he put his work and busyness aside so that he could help her.

How wonderful it would be to see more men, no matter how important or how busy they are, who would see the spiritual need of dead children and be willing to do all they could to meet their need.

#### ➤ **What did he do?**

We can see five steps in the ministry of Jairus to his daughter, and these are steps which we need to follow in our ministry to boys and girls:

- ✓ He COMPREHENDED (understood) his child’s need. He could see that his child was very sick and needed healing or she would die.

He had the right PERSPECTIVE of the child – and so should we concerning our children. Our first step in ministering to children is to understand their need – that they are spiritually dead, outside God’s kingdom and need to be saved.

- ✓ He CARED for his daughter. He cared enough to leave what he was doing, to run through the streets of the city and to seek the only One Who could meet his child’s need.

He had the right kind of PASSION for the child.

And so must we. Our hearts need to be touched by their needs. And when our hearts are touched and we really care we will want to DO something to reach them and help them.

## **Day 6**

*“And begged Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.’ So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him”* (Mark 5 v23 and 24).

We have been looking at Jairus in Mark 5 and how he helped and ministered to his very sick child:

- He COMPREHENDED her need.
- He CARED for her.
- HE CAME to the Lord Jesus. Only One Person could meet his child’s need, and he knew that. So He came to the Lord Jesus.

He came to the right PERSON.

As you and I see the great spiritual need of our children and realise they are spiritually dead, we know that there is only One Person Who can save and help them and that is the Lord Jesus. So we must come to Him. He is the only Saviour.

- He CAST himself at the feet of the Lord Jesus as an act of submission to Him. He acknowledged His Lordship and His power.

He got into the right PLACE.

Similarly as we come to Him we need to abandon all our efforts and in humble submission we need to trust Him to work in the children’s hearts.

- He CRIED to the Lord Jesus in prayer and asked Him to come and heal his child.

He prayed the right PRAYER

How necessary it is for us to spend much time in prayer for our children, and to cry unto God for them and their salvation.

And so Jairus had the right perspective and the right passion. He came to the right Person, he got into the right place and he made the right prayer. He was certainly the right kind of parent.

The Lord Jesus now took over and went with Jairus to the child!

We have seen the picture of a child who was dead, and the picture of an adult who was burdened. We will see tomorrow the picture of a Saviour Who was able to meet that child's need.

This is a wonderfully encouraging truth. When you come to Him with a burden for children and a desire to help them, the Lord Jesus is ready and willing to go with you. "Let's go together and help the child", He may have said to Jairus. He does not want you to meet the need of the children on your own.

If you come to Him and you really want to see those children receive new life, eternal life, He will go with you and He will meet their need. He is the Only One Who can do it!

But are you willing to learn from this example of Jairus to COME to the Lord Jesus, to CAST yourself at His feet, to CRY onto Him for the souls of your children and then, as we will see tomorrow, to COMMIT yourself to go to the children, with the Lord Jesus, and reach them with the Gospel?

## ***Day 7***

*"Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, 'Talitha, cumi,' which is translated, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement" (Mark 5 v41, 42).*

The Lord Jesus went with Jairus so that they could together help a child in need.

### ***The picture of the "perfect children's worker"***

We can learn so much from the Lord Jesus as He ministers to Jairus' daughter and her need:

- He COMMITTED Himself to this child. He was already very busy but He left what He was doing to go to where the child was.  
Our children need that same kind of commitment.

- He did not allow anyone or anything to stop Him from going to the child. He CONTINUED on His journey to the child despite all the obstacles.
  - ✓ The throng or crowd tried to stop Him (verse 24). “We need you here”, they probably cried. But they did not stop Him. There are people who will try to stop us from going to the children. They say, “They are not important”, “You should use your gifts here.” Don’t let them stop you.
  - ✓ Doubters tried to stop Him (verse 35). They brought the information that the girl was dead and said, “There is no point in coming.” But this did not stop Him. There are those who, equally today, do not believe that the Lord Jesus can save children, and who try to dissuade us from going to them. Don’t let them stop you.
  - ✓ Scorners tried to stop Him (verse 40). When He spoke about the child sleeping and implied that He was going to “waken her” they “laughed Him to scorn”. But they did not stop Him. The result was that He put the scorners out; and they did not see the mighty miracle which took place. A last resort for people who try to stop us from going to the children is to laugh or mock us for being involved in a ministry which they feel to be inferior. Don’t let them stop you.
- He now shows that He COULD meet the child’s need. He brought the child’s parents, with Peter, James and John, into the room, took the child by the hand and spoke to her. And we read in today’s verse that she not only came back to life, but she got up and walked. This is the kind of miracle we want to see occur in our children’s hearts, and our prayer is that the Lord Jesus will give them spiritual life; and that they will start walking.
- He COMMANDED the parents to give her something to eat. Now that the child was alive she needed food and it was the parents’ responsibility to give her food. Similarly, when the Lord Jesus saves our children, gives them new, eternal, and spiritual life and enables them to start walking, it is our responsibility to feed them and help them grow.

Have we modelled ourselves and our ministry on the Lord Jesus, the “perfect children’s worker”?

## Week 24:

# Theme - Our Relationship With The Unsaved

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### *Day 1*

*"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world"* (John 17 v15 and 16).

One of the most important subjects for us as Christians to study and understand is our relationships with others – and what the Bible teaches about these.

My relationships involve firstly my **attitudes** and how **I feel** with regard to those with whom I come into contact. And then my **actions** involve what **I do** in my contacts with them.

In our daily devotions this week I would like to study the subject of the relationships of Christians with unbelievers.

There are so many people around us who are not saved – in our place of work, or school or even in our church, in our neighbourhood, and sometimes in our home. We need to know how to relate to these dear people. What should be our attitude toward them? How should we act towards them?

The Bible gives us three key principles and commands:

### *Be Friendly with Them*

The Bible teaches us four key truths with regard to our relationship with the world and unsaved people:

- We are saved **OUT OF THE WORLD** (John 15 v19)  
We were part of the unsaved mass of humanity but are no longer part of it.
- We are sent **INTO THE WORLD** (Mark 16 v15)  
God wants the rest of the world to hear the message through which we were saved; and we are the bearers of that message.
- We live **IN THE WORLD** (1 John 4 v17)  
We do not or should not live in a Christian ghetto or on an island. We are right there in the world – living and working with those who are unsaved.
- We are **NOT OF THE WORLD** (John 15 v19; 17 v16) – as today's verse tells us.  
We should not think and act like the unsaved around us.

But we are the Bible which the world reads; and we need to be close enough to them that they might read it.

## Day 2

***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5 v16)

God wants us to be friendly with those who are unsaved and we will do this if we follow and abide by two principles:

➤ **Listen to and obey the words of the Lord Jesus**

- ✓ He said, *“You are the salt of the earth”* (Matthew 5 v13).

Salt purifies, transforms and flavours that with which it comes into contact. We as believers are responsible to do the same in this world in which we live. But we can only do so if we come into meaningful friendly contact with the world. And our contact will only be effective if we *“have not lost our savour (or flavour)”*.

- ✓ He said, *“You are the light of the world”* (Matthew 5 v14).

Light shows up darkness and banishes darkness. But for light to be effective it must be seen, and it must be close. Jesus Christ said of Himself, *“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”* (John 9 v5). This is also true of us. To be a light of the world we must be in the world.

- ✓ Then the Lord Jesus explains how our salt and our light can be effective. Our Bible verse for today tells us that the unsaved need to *“see our good works”* and then because of what they have seen they will *“glorify our Father in Heaven”* (Matthew 5 v16).

But there are two conditions which make it possible for this to happen:

- Our works must be good works.
- Our works must be visible. They cannot be visible if we are a long distance away, or if we are shut up and closed off in a religious ghetto of some kind. They will only see our good works if we are close to them and friendly with them.

➤ **Follow the example of the Lord Jesus**

The Bible shows us that the Lord Jesus did not isolate Himself from unsaved people. Instead we learn, over and over again, that He sought them out, and came to where they were:

- ✓ The Pharisees said of Him, *"This man receives sinners and eats with them"* (Luke 15 v2). And He was glad to accept Matthew's invitation to eat at his house along with the tax collectors and sinners.
- ✓ He was the friend of Zacchaeus when no one else would speak to him (Luke 19 v1-10) and He took time to listen to and talk to the Samaritan woman (John 4 v5-26). He even called Judas Iscariot, His betrayer, "friend" (Matthew 26 v50).
- ✓ He was invited to a wedding – and went to it (John 2 v1-11). He had come to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19 v10) and He could not do that if He did not go to them and be friendly with them. We need to follow His example.

### ***Day 3***

***"Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation"***  
(1 Peter 2 v12)

The Lord Jesus was friendly with the unsaved. We must do the same. The only people whom the Lord Jesus criticized were the hypocritical religious leaders.

There are two dangers we need to avoid in our relationships with the unsaved:

- Some believers withdraw from the world and from the unsaved and develop a ghetto mentality. They get involved in a kind of modern monastic system and relate only to fellow Christians.
- Some become too involved in the thinking and activities of the unsaved. Instead of being friendly with them they get really involved with them and become absorbed into the world and the things of the world.

The Lord Jesus was never guilty of either of these two errors or extremes. God wants us to be friendly with the unsaved so that we can influence them and even win them for Him. Many of them are very nice people and make good friends. In this way we can get involved in a programme of friendship evangelism. As we do this we must be careful, first of all, not to compromise our position and beliefs, and, secondly, we must avoid an attitude of superiority or a tendency to criticise them and some of their actions. It is better to be positive than negative.



Some of the unsaved may reject us completely and criticise us unjustly. But we must be sure that they reject us only because of our beliefs and our Christian stand – and not because of problems which we have caused by our attitudes.

### ***Be Different from Them***

Our first responsibility towards the unsaved is to be friendly with them. Our second responsibility is to be different from them. We **are** different. If we are not different we are not saved because “*if anyone is in Christ he is a new creature*” (2 Corinthians 5 v17). We are not perfect; far from it. But the Bible teaches us, and experience shows us, that the believer is a new person with a new life and a new nature which must show itself:

- We saw yesterday that the Lord Jesus compared us to salt in an evil world (Matthew 5 v13) and light in a dark world (Matthew 5 v14).
- Paul writes that we “*should not walk as other Gentiles walk*” (Ephesians 4 v17) and he compared the present walk of the believers with how they had lived when they were unsaved (Ephesians 2 v2 and 1 Corinthians 6 v9-11).
- John encouraged believers to “*love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*” (1 John 2 v15).

It is absolutely necessary that our lives are different from the unsaved and also that our difference is visible.

Today’s verse tells us that our honest way of life and our good works will lead the unsaved to glorify God – when they see them.

### ***Day 4***

***“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men”*** (Titus 3 v8).

The Bible teaches us that there are two kinds of people in the world:

- Those who have trusted Christ. These people are different and their lives are, in some way, pleasing to God.
- Those who have not trusted Christ. These people are not different and their lives are displeasing to God.

And the Bible also teaches that God uses the changed lives of the first group to speak to those in the second group and to lead them to the place where their own lives will also be changed and different.

We therefore, in the first group, need to be a good witness to the unsaved in the second group, by what we say and especially by how we live. Our different lifestyles should be obvious to them. However, the difference does not just consist in the things we don't do, and the places we don't go to. It is more important that the difference in our lives is shown by what we are and what we do:

- Honesty and truthfulness in all we say and do.
- Hard work in school or in our place of business.
- Love, gentleness and kindness in our relationships with others.
- Helpfulness to those who need help.
- Dependability in times of need.

Paul reminds us in our verse that good works **are** important, and that they are good and profitable to both those who show them and those who see them. They are especially helpful to the unsaved because God can use them to lead them to Christ.

Above all, God wants us to be **nice** people, people whom unsaved people like to be with – even though they don't agree with what we believe and what we say.

### ***Be Separate from Them***

We need to be friendly to the unsaved and different from them. But we also need to be separate from them. This might seem, at first glance, to contradict what I have said so far.

How can we be friendly to them and yet separated from them?

- It is not usually possible to be separated physically from unsaved people. We are all in the world and circumstances often bring us together.
- It is not always possible to be separated practically from unsaved people – especially in our home, or at school, or at work, or even in church. We need to be together with them.

But the Bible teaches us that we should not enter into any kind of alliance, partnership, fellowship (as opposed to friendship) or close relationship with the unsaved unless these are situations over which we have no control.

## Day 5

*“Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you”* (2 Corinthians 6 v17).

Our relationships with unsaved people should be governed by three biblical principles:

- We should be friendly with them.
- We should be different from them.
- We should be separate from them.

This separation is not one of position or isolation. It is not practical, possible, or good, to be separated physically and completely from unsaved people. We need to be with them if we are going to be the salt and light which they need. But we should not choose to enter into an alliance or **close** relationship with the unsaved. There are times when we have no control of the situation and we cannot avoid such an alliance. For example, a Christian may have unsaved parents, or a worker may have an unsaved boss or a wife may be saved after her marriage to an unsaved husband. But if the choice is ours and we are able to control what we do, then the Bible teaches us not to become involved in this way – but to be separate.

There are several such situations which we should avoid at all times:

- Dating and marriage - We should not decide to date or marry an unsaved person.
- Business - We should not set up business in partnership with an unsaved person.
- Church – We should not worship in a church where there is serious doctrinal error.
- Christian service – We should not do Christian work in alliance with unsaved people.

Why? Because the Bible tells us to be separate from the unsaved.

What is the Bible teaching on the subject of separation?

### ➤ **The Bible commands separation**

The best known passage on this subject is 2 Corinthians 6 v14-18.

There is a clear command in our verse for today to “*come out from among them*” and this command is also given in a different way in verse 14.

*“Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”*

A yoke was a wooden frame joining two animals (usually oxen) so that they could work together. But a farmer would never yoke together two

animals which were different in size or strength. It would not work. So we should not be joined together in an alliance with unbelievers – because this would be an unequal yoke between two different kinds of people and would not work. This therefore rules out an alliance, partnership, or fellowship between a saved and unsaved person. These can be disastrous.

### **Day 6**

***“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?***

***And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Corinthians 6 v14-16a and 16b).***

Paul explains his command in our verses for today not to be yoked or joined together with unbelievers in five ways:

- ✓ Righteousness cannot have fellowship with unrighteousness. The word used here (fellowship) is a commercial term, with the thought of partnership.
- ✓ Light has no communion with darkness. The word used here (Koinonia or communion) is a family term indicating things held in common.
- ✓ Christ has no concord with Belial. The word used (concord) is a musical term. There can be no harmony between the two because there is a different conductor, a different score and different music.
- ✓ A believer can have no part with an unbeliever. The word used (part) is a real estate term related to land ownership.
- ✓ The temple of God has no agreement with idols. The word used (agreement) is a political term with the thought of working together.

So Paul deals with this matter very comprehensively and gives five clear reasons for not being “unequally yoked”. He repeats this command in verse 17: *“Come out from among them and be separate.”*

At the same time Paul gives a three-fold promise in 2 Corinthians 6v17,18 to those who “*come out*” and are separate, and who say “no” to a relationship or alliance with unsaved people:

- ✓ “*I will receive you.*”
- ✓ “*I will be a Father unto you.*”
- ✓ “*You shall be My sons and daughters.*”

So, while we may lose in some ways from not entering that unequal relationship, we will gain in other ways which are more important and more lasting. We can be sure that He will more than make up for any loss.

➤ **The apostles and early church set us an example of separation**

The apostles were friendly with the unsaved and they were different from them. But they also separated themselves from them.

- ✓ They separated themselves eventually from the synagogues and from synagogue worship, although they continued to preach there when the opportunity arose.
- ✓ They formed separate local Bible churches and fellowships.
- ✓ They were available to the unsaved, and desired to help them and win them – but they did not enter into any alliances with them.

In the same way we need to be friendly, accessible, and pleasant in our relationships with the unsaved – but still separate from them.

## **Day 7**

*“Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’ “ (2 Corinthians 6 v17b and 18).*

In the Old Testament the Jews were taught to live apart from unbelievers and to be completely separate from them in every way, because the Jewish nation was socially and geographically separate from its pagan neighbours (Leviticus 20 v24). We are also commanded in the New Testament to be separate from unbelievers but not in the same social and geographic sense because of our different circumstances. Unlike the Jews in the Old Testament we as believers are scattered in every society and culture. We are in the world but not of it. However, we can still learn much from the Old Testament principle and practice of separation.

- We as believers should not marry unbelievers (Deuteronomy 7 v3, 4; Nehemiah 9 v2).
- We as believers should not engage in Christian service along with unbelievers (Ezra 4 v1-3; Nehemiah 6 v1-4).

These two principles should lead us to four conclusions:

- A believer should not marry – or even date – an unsaved person. There are those who have made this mistake believing or persuading themselves that by doing so they might win their unsaved partner to Christ. However this does not usually happen, and the result of such disobedience can cause unhappiness, stress and regrets.

At the same time, if a person becomes a believer and his or her mate is unsaved this is a situation which cannot be avoided. The saved member should remain with the unsaved partner and pray for and witness to the one who is not saved.

- A believer should not enter into a business partnership with an unsaved person. Their beliefs and standards will not be the same and will eventually lead to division and problems.

However if he is already in such a situation when he trusts Christ, then if the situation allows him to maintain a good and clear Christian witness he should not feel obliged to withdraw.

- A believer should think carefully and pray fervently concerning what he should do if, when he trusts Christ, he is in a church where the pastor, leaders and many of the people are unsaved. Some feel they should stay in such a church and witness there. Others, like myself, feel it is better to leave and find a church where the Bible is believed and the Gospel faithfully preached.

- A believer should not serve Jesus Christ in alliance with unsaved people. Separation like this is not easy – but it is biblical and God will bless the one who separates in accordance with His will. At the same time we must apply this principle with great care.

## Week 25: Varied Themes

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### Day 1

*“Saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me”* (Matthew 21 v2).

We will not cover one single theme throughout this week or next week. Instead we will have a number of unrelated subjects for our meditations.

The theme for today and tomorrow is DONKEYS!

God uses ordinary people like you and me in His service. But perhaps you still have doubts. “Can He really use me?” If you have these doubts our meditations for today and tomorrow are just for you.

There are several donkeys mentioned in the Bible and each of them can teach us a lesson:

- There is a **straying** donkey in 1 Samuel 9 v3. We are all “astray” by nature.
- There is a **sentenced** donkey in Exodus 13 v13. Like that donkey we are all sentenced to death unless a substitute can be found.
- There is a **speaking** donkey in Numbers 22 v28-30. If a donkey can speak for God, surely we can also.

But we want to concentrate our thoughts on the best known donkey in the Bible:

- There is a **serving** donkey in Mark 11 v1-11. There is a number of facts about this donkey and his service which can help us to see a picture of ourselves and our service. If a donkey can serve Him, so can we. If He can use a donkey, He can use us.

#### **He was young** (Mark 11 v2)

The Lord Jesus sent two of His disciples with the instructions contained in our Bible verse to fetch a colt or donkey on which He would ride into Jerusalem. They went and found two donkeys – an old one and a young one. The Lord Jesus planned to ride on the young donkey. How wonderful it is when the Lord Jesus uses those who are young in His service. We think of Naaman’s maid, David, Samuel, Timothy, the boy with the loaves and fishes – and many more.

Ecclesiastes 12 v1 reminds us to “remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.”

**He was needed** (Mark 11 v3)

“The Lord has need of him.” He needed the young donkey; and He needs you and me. No matter how awkward we are, He needs our particular kind of awkwardness. No one else can do the job that God has for us to do.

**He was loosed** (Mark 11 v2, 4)

The donkey was no use when he was tied. He had to be loosed. Before we can be used by Jesus Christ we need to be untied, loosed and redeemed from sin. This is only possible through the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and through personal faith in Him.

## *Day 2*

*“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*  
(Matthew 21 v5).

We have already learned three facts about the donkey on which the Lord Jesus would enter Jerusalem.

He was **young**, he was **needed** and he was **loosed**

And as we have compared ourselves and our service with that donkey we have seen how the Lord Jesus uses **young** people, how He **needs** us for His service, and how He **looses** us, first of all, in preparation for that service by saving us. We should also see that even when we are saved there are bonds which can restrict us in our service for Him – bonds of selfishness, fear and lack of faith. We need to be loosed or released from these.

**He was tamed** (Mark 11 v2)

No one, we read, had ever sat upon this donkey before. So he had to be tamed and disciplined.

We as the servants of Jesus Christ also need to be tamed and disciplined by Him. We have so many “rough edges”. He uses different means to tame us – circumstances, difficulties, and people. Think of how He tamed Peter and Paul. He can only really use us when He has tamed us.

And so we pray, “Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.”

**He was used** (Mark 11 v7)

The Lord Jesus was pleased to **use** him. He carried the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem, as our verse tells us. The Lord Jesus was uplifted by him. No one



saw the donkey; no one paid any attention to him or praised him. He did his job quietly and efficiently – and the people praised the Lord Jesus. But he was honoured because the Lord Jesus used him and was exalted by him.

He wants to **use** us. If someone says, “How could He possibly use me? I have little ability and no training”, he should think of this donkey. There were many things he could not do. But he could lift the Lord Jesus up, and he could carry Him into Jerusalem.

The Lord wants us to uplift Him so that others will see Him and not us. And we are honoured to do so. What a privilege it is for us to exalt Him!

**He was at a crossroads** (Mark 11 v4)

But did you notice that before all of this happened the donkey was at “*a place where two ways meet*”. He was at a crossroads. What a blessing it was that he took, or was led onto, the road which led to the Lord Jesus.

Are you at a crossroads? Take the road on which the Lord Jesus stands – no matter what it costs. Give your all to Him with no reservations – your personality (all that you are), your possessions (all that you have), and your plans (all that you ever hope to be). He will then use you to exalt Him - and He will, at the same time, honour you.

### ***Day 3***

***“But has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”*** (2 Timothy 1 v10).

Today and tomorrow we will meditate on the theme “Jesus Christ and death”. Death is the great enemy of mankind, the enemy which causes fear and dread in the human heart, and the enemy which no man can defeat, delay or destroy. Jesus Christ came into this world, not just to save lost sinners but also to defeat and abolish death, as our verse reminds us.

**He was sovereign over death**

First of all the Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is SOVEREIGN over death. We learn this great truth in two ways:

- When He was here on earth He showed His sovereignty over death by raising three people from the dead – a man (John 11 v44), a youth (Luke 7 v15) and a child (Mark 5 v42). It is interesting to note the differences and variations in these three “resurrections”:

	<b>ADULT</b>	<b>YOUTH</b>	<b>CHILD</b>
Time dead	Several days	One day	Just dead
Place laid	Tomb (cave)	Coffin	Couch
Action and words	He wept, groaned and cried with a loud voice.	He spoke seven words.	He spoke two words.
Result	Came out, bound	Sat up and spoke	Walked
Command	Loose him	Take him	Feed her

It is interesting to compare these three resurrections and conclude that the child had been dead for the shortest time, that she was more accessible, that the Lord's action was shorter and simpler, and that the result was the best of the three.

Could we compare these conclusions to our evangelism of spiritually dead children?

Could we also conclude that just as the parents were commanded to feed the child who was now alive, so it is our responsibility to feed the children who are now spiritually alive?

- Three days after the Lord Jesus died on the cross He was raised from the dead and in that context Paul wrote "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*" (1 Corinthians 15 v54 and 55).

The Lord Jesus is truly sovereign over death.

### ***Day 4***

***"Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory". "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious"***  
(1 Peter 1 v8a and 2 v7a)

The Lord Jesus had twelve apostles, or disciples, but He selected three of them, Peter, James and John to be a kind of "inner circle". The Bible tells us that there were three occasions when the Lord Jesus took them with Him for a special purpose. All three occasions were connected with death, and the Lord

Jesus wanted to use these special occasions to teach them and ourselves something about death, and His relationship to death.

**He was sovereign over death** (Mark 5 v35-42).

We learned this yesterday. In Mark 5 v37 the Lord Jesus asked Peter, James and John to come with Him to the home of Jairus. There they saw Him raise Jairus' daughter from the dead.

This was a wonderful demonstration of the miracle working power of the Son of God. And from this they learned this first great truth of the SOVEREIGNTY of the Lord Jesus over death. They now understood something about His POWER.

**He was superior to death** (Mark 9 v2-8)

Some time after the events of Mark chapter 5, the Lord Jesus again selected these three disciples and took them up to a high mountain. Here they had a vision of God's Son in His glory. His majesty, honour and glory were unveiled to them; and they heard the voice of God from the glory saying, "*This is My beloved Son, hear Him.*"

They learned the lesson on this occasion that death had no claim on Jesus Christ. He had never sinned. His glory and majesty had been hidden by His flesh but were now unveiled and shone through. They now understood something about His PERSON and they had seen that He was SUPERIOR to death.

He could have returned to Heaven at that moment. But He didn't. Why?

**He became subject to death** (Mark 14 v32-38)

The Lord Jesus took the three disciples again apart – this time into the garden of Gethsemene. In this garden they learned that the One Who was SOVEREIGN over death and SUPERIOR to death was willing to become SUBJECT and SUBMISSIVE to death – even the death of the cross – because He loved us so much. This was why He had not returned to Heaven. He remained here to die for our sins. They were beginning to understand something about His PASSION.

Peter wrote in one of his epistles some years later concerning the Lord Jesus "*Whom having not seen you love*" (1 Peter 1 v8) and "*onto you therefore which believe He is precious*" (1 Peter 2 v7). Our verses for today show how much we love Him.

Why do we love Him? Why is He precious? Because He is sovereign over death and superior to death, but especially because He became subject to death – for our sakes and our salvation.

## **Day 5**

***“And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’”*** (1 Corinthians 11 v24, 25).

Having dwelt in our last two studies on the subject of Jesus Christ and death, I feel it would be appropriate today to think about this command which Jesus Christ gave us with regard to His own death.

The communion service, or Lord's supper, occupies an important part in all our churches. In obedience to His command the local church meets to remember the death of Jesus Christ by breaking bread and drinking the fruit of the vine. The communion service has six purposes:

- It is a time of **COMMEMORATION** - when we **LOOK BACK** (1 Corinthians 11 v24, 25). Our Lord wants us to remember what He did to save us. Partaking of the two symbols of His Death reminds us of the price He paid for our salvation.
- It is a time of **ADORATION** – when we **LOOK UP** (1 Corinthians 10 v16). Paul uses the word “communion” with reference to the Lord's supper. *“Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 10 v16b). As we remember what He did we fellowship and are in communion with Him. We worship Him, adore Him and thank Him for our salvation.
- It is a time of **UNIFICATION** – when we **LOOK AROUND** (1 Corinthians 10 v16). At the Lord's table we do not just commune and fellowship with our Saviour. We also fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul's phrase *“the communion of the body of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 10 v16) also speaks of our fellowship together at the Lord's table and it displays this communion and unity.
- It is a time of **PROCLAMATION** – when we **LOOK OUTWARD** (1 Corinthians 11 v26). The Lord Jesus told us that by obeying Him in this way and by eating the bread and drinking the cup we would show or proclaim His death. The Lord's supper is celebrated as an act of witness and testimony to other Christians and to the unsaved.
- It is a time of **ANTICIPATION** – when we **LOOK FORWARD** (1 Corinthians 11 v26). We are only proclaiming His death until He comes. And as we remember and proclaim what He did for us on the cross, we are looking

forward to the time when it will be no longer necessary to do so for He will come again and we will see Him and be in His immediate Presence.

- It is a time of EXAMINATION – when we LOOK INWARD (1 Corinthians 11 v28). As we come to the Lord's table we are exhorted to examine ourselves to make sure that there is no known and deliberate sin or act of rebellion in our lives which needs to be confessed.

How important it is to understand and obey our Lord's command!

## **Day 6**

*“So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you’ “ (Matthew 17 v20)*

Our meditation today is on the subject of MOUNTAINS and we should look at three Bible passages:

- God's PROMISE concerning mountains (Matthew 17 v20 and 21)  
This promise in today's Bible verse has three parts:
  - ✓ The **challenge** is given. Do you have a mountain in your life which is a hindrance to what God wants you to be and to do?
  - ✓ The **conditions** are outlined. Do you have the faith to believe that God can do something? Even if your faith is “*as a grain of mustard seed*” it will be enough. Are you prepared to take time to **pray** and engage in rigorous **self-discipline** (verse 21)?
  - ✓ The **consequence** is promised. God will remove the mountain (if it is His Will to do so).
- Our PRAYER concerning mountains (Joshua 14 v12)  
The old man Caleb cries out to Joshua, “*Give me this mountain.*”
  - ✓ Think of his **courage** (14 v11). “I am not afraid to fight”, he cried.
  - ✓ Think of his **confidence** (14 v11). “I am strong and able to conquer it”, he cried.
  - ✓ Think of the **conquest** (15 v14). He drove out the giants and captured the mountain.

And so we cry out to our greater Joshua, “*Give me this mountain*”, and as we pray, He grants us the **courage** and **confidence** we need and ultimately, if it is His Will, the **conquest** of that mountain.

- God's PROVISION concerning mountains (Zechariah 4 v6, 7)

Zerababbel had encountered many difficulties and problems in his task of building the temple and he had stopped building. But the messenger of the Lord comes to him and speaks to him:

- ✓ A word of **comfort** (verse 9). He was to continue with the work which God had given him – and finish it.
- ✓ A word of **correction** (verse 6). He would not accomplish it by might (his own strength) or by power (numbers) but only by the Holy Spirit. He would give all the strength and numbers needed.
- ✓ A word of **command** (verse 7). The angel speaks to the mountain and levels it to the ground. Now he can get on with his work.

Do you have a mountain before you? Are you facing a difficult situation? Is there a step which God has called you to take – and it seems impossible for you to do so?

Believe the PROMISE of God, be sure that you PRAY to God; and expect the PROVISION from God.

## *Day 7*

*“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me; to do Your will, O God’ ”* (Hebrews 10 v7).

Did you know that the Bible records conversations which took place between God the Father and God the Son – firstly in eternity and then in time?

Let us approach this sacred subject with reverence and awe.

- THE WILL OF GOD THE FATHER had been expressed to God the Son and He responded to His Father in Hebrews 10 v9:

*“I come to do **Your Will**, O God.”*

And that Will, according to Hebrews 10 v10 involved *“the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”*, with our salvation and sanctification the result of that offering.

- THE WILLINGNESS OF GOD THE SON is clearly revealed in what He had said to His Father:

- ✓ His **dedication** and obedience to His Father’s Will as shown in today’s Bible verse:

*“Lo, **I come** to do Your Will, O God”* (Hebrews 10 v7 and 9a).

- ✓ His **delight** in doing what His Father wanted Him to do:

*“**I delight** to do Your Will O God”* (Psalm 40 v8).

- ✓ His **description** of what His Father wants:

- The burnt offerings and sin offerings of animals were not enough (Hebrews 10 v4, 5; Psalm 40 v6).
- He, God the Son, was in His human body to be the full and final sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10 v5b; Psalm 40 vs6 and 7).
- THE WORK OF GOD THE FATHER is spoken about by God the Son to His Father when He said, *"I have finished the work which You gave Me to do"* (John 17 v4). This was the work which had been *"foreordained before the foundation of the world"* (1 Peter 1 v20) in the eternal council of the Godhead.
- THE WORDS OF GOD THE FATHER are referred to by God the Son to His Father when He said, *"I have given them the words which You have given Me"* (John 17 v8). God the Son was passing on to His disciples, and to us, the words which God the Father had planned for Him to pass on.
- THE WEALTH OF GOD THE SON is referred to six times in John 17 – in verses 2, 6, 9, 11, 12 and 24. God the Son describes us – you and me – as having been given to Him by God the Father. We are His promised wealth and possessions. He saw us and was satisfied (Isaiah 53 v11). He saw us as His joy and endured the cross (Hebrews 12 v2) to receive that joy and wealth.

We are saved and we are secure because of this eternal covenant between God the Father and God the Son.

Let us worship and thank them from the bottom of our hearts as we meditate on all that they have said and done.



Revelation 5v12

*"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To  
receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and  
blessing!"*

## Week 26: Varied Themes

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### *Day 1*

*“But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking” (Luke 5 v5, 6).*

Throughout this week of meditations we will look at and think about a number of different and varied themes – taking one day for each. Our first meditation centres on Simon Peter and the incident which took place in Luke 5 v1-11; and outlines six steps which could also apply to us.

➤ **Simon was sought** (John 1 v41)

In John chapter 1 we read that Simon was sought by his brother Andrew and brought to the Lord Jesus. That was the beginning of a new life of usefulness and service.

➤ **People were taught** (Luke 5v3)

In Luke 5 v3 the Lord Jesus entered Simon Peter's boat and from it He taught many people; and I am sure that Peter was one of the most eager listeners. It was just an ordinary boat which the Lord Jesus used. Peter was just an ordinary person whom the Lord Jesus used. The Lord Jesus still uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things; and He wants to teach others through us.

➤ **A miracle was wrought** (verse 6) **and fish were caught**

The Lord Jesus in verse 4 gave Peter a command to let down his nets. Peter at first objected; but eventually he obeyed. Today's verse tells us that a miracle was wrought by the Lord Jesus and many fish were caught (verse 6).

➤ **Peter was naught** (verse 8)

It is interesting to see Peter's reaction to this great miracle. In verse 8 we read that he “*fell down at Jesus' knees saying, ‘Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’*” He was convicted because he had been guilty of the sin of unbelief and doubt, he saw that he was nothing (naught) and he was overcome by the sight of the power and majesty of the Lord Jesus.



➤ **Glory was brought** (verse 9)

Verse 9 tells us that all who witnessed this miracle were astonished and they were lost in amazement. They had seen the Lord Jesus perform a wonderful miracle which had brought glory to Him and they were beginning to understand Who He was and from Whom He had come.

➤ **Many more fish would be caught** (verse 10)

Many fish had been caught in verse 6 but many human fish would be caught in the years which lay ahead when Peter obeyed the Lord's command to "*Fear not*" (verse 10) "*Forsake all*" (verse 11) "*Follow Me*" and "*Fish men*" (Matthew 4 v19).

## *Day 2*

***"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"*** (Luke 19 v10).

Our meditation today centres on the Lord Jesus and one word – the word DOWN.

This word will remind us of all that He did for us and for our salvation:

➤ **He looked down.** God has continually "*looked down on the children of men*" (Psalm 53 v2) and in doing so saw that "*there is none that does good, no not one*" (Psalm 53 v3). He saw our need – and, at the same time, determined to meet that need. So .....

➤ **He came down.** "*Though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor that you through His poverty might become rich*" (2 Corinthians 8 v9). He "*took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men*" (Philippians 2 v7). "*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1 v14). And He came down, as our verse for today reminds us, to seek and to save us.

➤ **He laid down.** Having come down from the glory, and having lived a life of purity and obedience to God's commands He "*humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2 v8). He laid down His life for us and for our salvation. Paul could write from his heart "*The Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me*" (Galatians 2 v20).

➤ **He went down.** Paul also wanted to emphasize that the Lord Jesus was truly dead. So he emphasized in 1 Corinthians 15 v4, "*that He was buried.*" His body went down, as it were, into the depths of the earth – completely without life.

- **He did not stay down.** But Paul immediately adds *“that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures and that He was seen ....”* (1 Corinthians 15 v4, 5). His body did not stay down or stay dead but it was raised again from the dead, a glorious and immortal body – never to die again.
- **He sat down.** Forty days later the Lord Jesus ascended into Heaven, the God-man exalted by His Father as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And the Bible records that He then sat down at His Father’s right hand in the Heavenly places (Ephesians 1 v20) to represent us, to intercede for us and to help us.
- **He will come down.** But the story is not finished. One day He will come down again physically and gloriously onto this earth (Acts 1 v11). He will come back again the second time and receive all who trust Him onto Himself (1 Thessalonians 4 v16, 17).

Why did He do all of this?

So that He could take all who trust Him UP to be with Him forever.

He came DOWN so that we might go UP.

*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8 v9).

### **Day 3**

*“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12 v2).

Yesterday we thought about Jesus Christ and the word DOWN. Today we think about ourselves and the word UP. In the light of yesterday’s seven steps which Jesus Christ took, there are seven steps He wants us to take:

- **Wake up.** Unsaved people are completely and soundly asleep. Indeed they are more than asleep – they are dead. And we who are believers can easily fall asleep and not be aware of the world’s needs. So Paul addresses the unsaved, *“Awake you who are asleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light”* (Ephesians 5 v14). And he addresses those who are saved, *“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep .... Let us walk honestly”* (Romans 13 v11,13).

- **Own up.** The next step for the unsaved person is to see his sin, to be willing to own up to his sin and to repent or turn from it. *“Repent you therefore and be converted that your sins will be blotted out”* (Acts 3 v19); and the believer is exhorted, when he awakens to sin in his life to confess it and own up so that he will be forgiven by His Father (1 John 1 v9).
- **Pay (Paid) up.** But the wakened and confessing sinner needs to know that he cannot pay up; he cannot save himself. The debt has been paid by Jesus Christ *“In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”* (Ephesians 1 v7).
- **Hurry up.** It is so easy for sinners to put off their responsibility to trust Christ. They need to remember that *“now is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6 v2). Believers need to obey the Lord today and not tomorrow. And so the Word of God emphasizes the urgency of obedience today. *“My Son, go work **today** in my vineyard”* (Matthew 21 v28).
- **Cheer up.** The Christian life is not a sad life, it is a glad life. The Bible teaches that believers should be joyful. *“Rejoice in the Lord always”*, writes Paul in Philippians 4 v4, and the Lord Jesus wants our joy to be full (John 15 v11).
- **Grow up.** Trusting Christ is not the end. It’s just the beginning – the beginning of a new life. God wants us to *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3 v18) and we will do so as we *“desire the sincere milk of the Word”* (1 Peter 2 v2).
- **Look up.** But all of these “UPS” are only possible as we keep our eyes upon the Lord Jesus – *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12 v2) and as we *“consider Him”* (Hebrews 12 v3).

### *Day 4*

*“Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”* (Luke 24 v31 and 32).

Today I would like to share some thoughts with you from the OPENING chapter of Luke’s Gospel.

But I would hasten to remind you that the OPENING chapter of Luke’s Gospel is chapter 24 because this is the chapter in which many things are OPENED fully for the first time.

➤ **Opened Tomb**

*"They found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre"* (verse 2). Praise God for the OPENED tomb; and for the triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ.

➤ **Opened Eyes**

*"Their eyes were OPENED and they knew Him"* (verse 31). They had walked with Him along the road but had not known that it was the Lord. How wonderful it is that He wants to OPEN our eyes so that we might see Him clearly in every circumstance of life!

➤ **Opened Scriptures**

*"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He OPENED the Scriptures to us?"* (verse 32). Today's verse speaks of both opened eyes and opened Scriptures. Eyes that are OPENED to know Him are OPEN to see the Scriptures that speak about Him.

➤ **Opened Understanding**

*"Then OPENED He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures"* (verse 45). He wanted them to see Himself in **all** of the Scriptures. So He OPENED their minds that they might comprehend **all** that had been written concerning Him.

➤ **Opened World**

*"Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations"* (verse 47). He OPENED the world for them, and commanded them to go to all nations with the message of repentance and remission.

➤ **Opened Heaven**

*"He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven"* (verse 51). Heaven was OPENED before their eyes as their Lord and Saviour was taken from them; at the same time Heaven was OPENED for themselves, and also for those whom they would have the privilege of leading to Jesus Christ.

How important it is for us to see an OPEN tomb, to see the Saviour at all times with OPENED eyes, to have the Word of God OPENED to us in a new way, to have an OPENED understanding concerning Christ in the Scriptures, to do what God wants us to do in reaching an OPENED world with the Gospel and to look forward to that day when the Heavens will be OPENED for our home-coming.

## **Day 5**

***“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by Whose stripes you were healed”*** (1 Peter 2 v24).

Gardens play a big part in the Bible – the garden of Eden (Genesis 2 v8), the garden of Gethsemane (John 19 v41) and the heavenly “garden” (Revelation 22 v2).

Trees also have an important place in the Bible and our meditation today is on the subject of trees:

➤ **A man behind a tree**

In Genesis chapter 3 verse 8 Adam tried to hide himself among the trees from the presence of God because he had sinned. Sin separates from God, and also creates in the sinner a desire to hide from God, from others and even from ourselves. Here is a man HIDING behind a tree and this reminds us of SIN.

➤ **A man on a tree**

God’s answer to Adam’s sin and our sin was to send His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sin as a substitute and sacrifice. Today’s verse tells us about His death for us *“on the tree”*. Paul also writes, *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written ‘Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree’”* (Galatians 3 v13).

Here is a Man HANGING on a tree and offering Himself as a SACRIFICE.

➤ **A man under a tree**

Nathaniel was a well known thinker! Philip found him under a fig tree (John 1 v48) and told him about the Lord Jesus (John 1 v45). Nathaniel doubted Philip’s claim that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah but responded to Philip’s invitation to *“come and see”* (John 1 v46). When the Lord Jesus saw Nathaniel He spoke to him and showed him that He already knew him and that He was omniscient. Nathaniel, when he heard this, saw and understood that Jesus Christ is *“the son of God .... The King of Israel.”* (John 1 v49).

Here is a man HEARING under a tree and receiving the blessing of spiritual SIGHT.

➤ **A man up a tree**

Zacchaeus was a well known rascal. He climbed the sycamore tree so he could see the Lord Jesus (Luke 19 v4). The Lord Jesus stopped, looked at

him and told him to hasten and come down. Zacchaeus did so and received the Lord Jesus joyfully (Luke 19 v6).

Here is a man HASTENING down from a tree to obey, and receiving the Lord Jesus and the blessing of SALVATION.

SIN – SACRIFICE – SIGHT – SALVATION. That is the message of the trees. Is there a message here for you – reminding you of your sin; showing you God's answer for your sin, and your need to come to Jesus Christ and receive Him?

And if you are saved are you willing to share this message with others – and especially with the children?

## **Day 6**

*“And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you”* (Matthew 28 v7).

Matthew's Gospel is a wonderful book and in the early chapters the Lord Jesus chose and called twelve men who were to be His disciples, or learners, (Matthew 4 v18-22).

In the chapters which follow He taught His disciples three great truths concerning Himself:

### ➤ **Who He was**

He wanted them, first of all, to know and understand that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. And He taught them this truth in two ways:

- ✓ Through His miracles (Matthew 8 v23-27).
- ✓ Through His words (Matthew 9 v2; 16 v17).

The climax to His teaching concerning Who He was came in Matthew 16 v16 where Peter said, *‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’*. And immediately from verse 21 onwards the Lord Jesus started to teach them what He had come to do.

### ➤ **What He had come to do**

On a number of occasions the Lord Jesus told and taught His disciples that two things were going to happen:

- ✓ He was going to suffer and be killed.
- ✓ He was going to rise again.

He linked both of these truths together in Matthew 16 v21; 17 v22,23; Matthew 20 v18 and 19. He also made it clear that He had come *“to give His life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20 v28).

As the time of His death drew near He again told the disciples that He would soon die and rise again (Matthew 26 v31, 32) and He added that after He had risen from the dead He would go before them into Galilee and see them there. After He had risen again, the disciples were reminded by the angel (in today's verse) and by Himself (Matthew 28 v10) of His appointed rendezvous with them in Galilee.

➤ **What He wanted them to do**

The time for that rendezvous had come and the disciples (now eleven in number) met with the Lord Jesus in Galilee; and there He gave them His great command and commission to make disciples of all nations – by going, by baptizing and by teaching (Matthew 28 v19, 20) – and He promised them His power (verse 18) and His presence (verse 20).

What happened in the **garden** and at **Golgotha** showed them what He had done for them. What happened at **Galilee** showed them what they should do for Him. Why Galilee? This was the place where He had first called them into His service, and this was now the place where He showed them all that was involved in that service – TO REACH THE WORLD FOR HIM.

## *Day 7*

***“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”*** (1 Thessalonians 5 v16-18).

In this meditation we will look again at the three key verses quoted above which clearly express God's Will for each of us. He wants us to be “anxious for nothing, thankful for anything and prayerful about everything.”

There are three problems which you and I have to face and overcome:

- Depression of spirit.
- Dependence on self.
- Dissatisfaction with the situation we face.

Which of us could say that we have not experienced some, or all, of these? 1 Thessalonians 5 v16-18 outlines God's will for us in reaction to each of these problems:

➤ **Be joyful** – always

God is not glorified by our depression. He wants us to have joy – real joy. Joy is not “ha-ha”, joking and laughter; it is not just happiness, and it is certainly not dependent on circumstances. Joy is a deep, quiet

contentment, rest and peace which enables us to face any problem. Philippians 4 shows us how we can have peace (v6 and 7) and joy (v4). LEAVE your problem with Him – and be JOYFUL.

➤ **Be prayerful** – always

No matter what the problem is there are two key facts to remember:

- ✓ God can solve that problem. There is nothing too big for Him.
- ✓ We need to commit the problem to Him. We need to depend on Him and not on ourselves.

Paul emphasized our need for prayer over and over again, yet we so often neglect the most important weapon we possess (Ephesians 6 v18).

LEAN on Him, trust Him for the answer and be PRAYERFUL.

➤ **Be thankful** – always

It is so easy to complain. That is our human reaction to difficult situations. But we should, instead, seek always to find something in the situation for which we can praise God and be thankful.

Matthew Henry, the famous English theologian, was robbed on his way to a meeting at which he was to speak. When he arrived at the meeting and told the people what happened he did so with joy and thankfulness. They said to him, “Why are you so thankful for such an experience?” He replied:

- ✓ “I am thankful, firstly, that it happened to me and not to someone else.
- ✓ I am thankful, secondly, because they took my money and not my life.
- ✓ And I am thankful, thirdly, because I had so little money with me.”

LOOK for something in every situation for which you can thank God. Be THANKFUL.

Be JOYFUL, PRAYERFUL and THANKFUL.



Revelation 5v13

*“Blessing and honor and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to  
the Lamb, forever and ever!”*