

# SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 40

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



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**A Publication Of  
Deeper Christian Life Ministry  
P.O. Box 59, University of Lagos P.O.  
Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria  
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## OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

# 508 Lesson

### LAWS CONCERNING WARFARE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “For the LORD your GOD is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” (Deuteronomy 20:4).

**TEXT:** Deuteronomy 20:1-20

In the preceding chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses had instructed the children of Israel on building cities of refuge for those who killed unawares, not removing their neighbor’s landmarks and establishing the truth of a matter with two or more witnesses. These divine directives were aimed at guiding them to build a strong social relationship when they entered the land of Canaan.

But entering and possessing the promised land would not be easy; it would require fighting various enemies and overcoming them. It was therefore necessary to give them rules of engagement in anticipation of the battles they would need to fight. Thus, Moses instructed them on how to mobilize their troops for war, those to be excluded, distinction between cities to be destroyed or those to be given options for peace, what to do with spoils of war. These and others form the thrust of this study.

***Question 1: Why did God give Israel laws concerning warfare and what lesson can we learn?***

It is clear from these instructions that God is a Warrior who knows and fights battles (He has lost none). Besides, God wanted them to know that they would need to fight before possessing the land. Therefore, the Israelites were to prepare for challenges. The inescapable truth is that whosoever will be on the Lord’s side must experience opposition and, as such, must prepare to fight spiritual battles. The battle becomes fiercer when believers seek to possess all their spiritual possessions and win souls for

Christ. The devil and his cohorts are constantly fighting the believer and seeking his downfall. Even when such a godly person takes a decision for peace, the enemy is always poised for war. **“I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war”** (Psalm 120:7). God wants every believer to be a warrior to be able to fight spiritual battles.

## **PREPARATION AND MOBILIZATION FOR WARFARE**

(Deuteronomy 20:1-9; 23:9; 24:5; Joshua 11:1-12; 10:1-26; Judges 7:2-8; Psalm 46:1,2; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 12:1)

**“When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”** (Deuteronomy 20:1).

At the beginning of their settlement in Canaan, Israel’s army was basically made up of untrained foot soldiers, fewer in number than those of their enemies. Mere sight of a more numerous and better equipped army might intimidate them. Besides, most ancient armies employed psychological warfare and the weapon of fear to intimidate their opponents. Sometimes, they pranced their horses and their hoofs made a terrifying noise; they brandished swords and made them glitter in the sun. But God told the children of Israel not to be afraid because He is their God.

***Question 2: On what grounds were the Israelite soldiers told not to fear their enemies, and how does this apply to believers today?***

The presence of God with Israel was enough to dispel their fear of the enemy. Besides, Israel was to remember their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. If God delivered them from Pharaoh, certainly He would deliver them from all their future enemies. The remembrance of God’s faithfulness in the past should calm their minds and make them courageous in battle. That is why David in the twenty-third Psalm said, **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort**

**me”** (Psalm 23:4). And again, **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea”** (Psalm 46:1,2). Divine presence always guarantees divine protection. Therefore, safety is not necessarily the absence of danger but faith in the Lord’s ability to deliver. Once God is present with His people, there is no army, no matter how formidable, that can conquer them. This was exemplified when Elisha and his servant at Dothan were surrounded by the Syrian army with chariots and horses. Elisha was confident in spite of the danger because of his knowledge of the presence of God’s host (2 Kings 6:13-17). Like Israel of old, children of God should not fear because God is with us. He is Jehovah Shammah and ready to help us in all battles of life.

***Question 3: Mention some instances in the Bible when God helped His people to defeat stronger or more formidable opponents.***

At the beginning of their settlement in Canaan, Joshua was confronted with opposition from many nations. Adonizedec king of Jerusalem led four other kings in battle against Israel; Jabin and his allied forces also confronted them, but they were thoroughly defeated (Joshua 10:1-26; 11:1-12). Later, the Philistines were subdued despite their numerical strength and chariots and horses (1 Samuel 13:5,6; 14:13-23). During the reign of Asa, king of Judah, the Ethiopians came against God’s people but they were defeated (2 Chronicles 14:8-15). Also, Sennacherib led the Assyrians against Judah in the days of king Hezekiah. In spite of their tactics and intimidation, they were defeated (2 Chronicles 32:1-22). Goliath was also slain despite his grandstanding before seemingly ill-equipped David (1 Samuel 17:4-11,39-54).

Though it is true that believers are not fighting against flesh and blood, our foes are not in any way less formidable. Unseen forces of darkness and their human agents deploy innumerable diabolical weapons against us. The devil who is their chief commander seeks to intimidate us with all manner of fear-instilling weapons and tactics. But God

says, **“Fear not: for I am with thee”** (Isaiah 43:5a). And though the enemies may **“trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright”** (Psalm 20:7,8). Our God can cause the most stouthearted to fall before us. All we need to do is to trust Him and refuse to succumb to fear, **“For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you”** (Deuteronomy 20:4).

After the priestly exhortation not to fear the enemy, the officers were to excuse four categories of people from warfare. First, new house owners who had not dedicated or occupied it; second, those who planted vineyards but had not eaten of it; third, those who had betrothed a wife but had not taken her; and fourth, those who were afraid and faint-hearted.

***Question 4: Why were some people excluded from warfare in Israel?***

These exemptions show that the Israelites were not conscripted or compelled to fight against their own will because God is not a taskmaster. He wants those who would serve Him or fight His cause to do so willingly and wholeheartedly. Besides, a look at the reasons for their exclusion from battle shows that a soldier could be distracted if his mind is occupied with these things; the consequences would be tragic. For example, Paul, the apostle writes: **“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”** (2Timothy 2:4). Though we can be engaged in legitimate business, providing shelter, food and other basic necessities for our household, we should not allow ourselves to become engrossed in them as to become unfit for spiritual warfare. Any pursuit or engagement in life that weakens our commitment and consecration to God or that causes our heart to be divided in following the Lord, though legitimate, should be jettisoned.

However, no Christian is excluded from spiritual warfare for any reason. The believer is called upon to lay aside all

entanglements that would distract him (Hebrews 12:1). To believers who misplace priorities, Christ reveals that, **“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”** (Luke 9:26).

**PROCEDURE FOR ISRAEL’S HOLY WAR** (Deuteronomy 20: 10-18; Numbers 33:50-56; 2 Chronicles 20:13-20; 2 Samuel 20:13-22)

**“When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shall besiege it”** (Deuteronomy 20: 10-12).

***Question 5: Distinguish between Israel’s approach in warfare. What is the spiritual correlation in this for believers?***

God commanded the Israelites to distinguish between two kinds of enemies. There were those who should be destroyed completely without any terms of peace: in this category were the seven Canaanite nations and the Amalekites (Deuteronomy 7:1,21; 20:17; 25:17-19; 1 Samuel 15:1-3). Israel was commanded not to negotiate any peace terms or spare any of them or their substance because they were potential spiritual stumbling blocks for them. If they were allowed to live, they would entice Israel to worship idols and practice evil. **“That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD Your God”** (Deuteronomy 20: 18).

The other kinds of enemies were those nations or cities outside the Promised Land who could become enemies of Israel as a result of their aggression or provocation. Against such, God commanded Israel to begin with the peace option. When they approached the city, they should proclaim peace (that means to offer them terms of peace); if they surrendered and accepted their terms, Israel should not fight but turn them into tributaries otherwise, they



should declare war on them and all the males killed and the women, children and livestock taken as spoils of war.

Believers also must give no room to the flesh. In our spiritual warfare, we must never compromise with nor spare the flesh in any way, rather, we are to put to death the deeds of the flesh (Colossians 3:5-9; Galatians 5:19-24). Also, we are to make no peace with heretics and deliberate sinners in the church who refuse to repent. We are commanded not to have fellowship with such people (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 3:10,11; 2 John 10,11). However, in the case of ignorant sinners outside, we are to approach them with patience and compassion (Jude 22,23). Though we hate their sin, we should reach out to such people with the gospel, seeking to win them unto the Lord. Christians must not be found at the vanguard of violence or aggression. The flesh, Satan and the world are the real enemies we must not spare.

### **PROHIBITION OF WASTEFUL DESTRUCTION DURING WARFARE** (Deuteronomy 20:19,20)

The Lord commanded the Israelites that when they engage in war and the need arises to build a bulwark against a city, they should not cut down valuable fruit trees. In other words, the short goal of conquering a city should not override the long term benefits that would be derived from the fruit trees. Only trees that were not meant for food should be cut for use during a siege, but the edible fruit trees should be spared to serve as source of food after the city must have been conquered. The point here is that there is no wisdom in conquering a city using up all available resources only to suffer and die of starvation after the conquest.

***Question 6: Why should we protect our environment and natural resources?***

This rule teaches the importance of avoiding unnecessary waste of resources and needless destruction even in times of war. We should be thoughtful and have foresight as we handle the resources that God has graciously gives into our hands. This prohibition also instructs us that even in

war we must be sensible and discreet. We should not destroy not destroy things just for the sake of it.

But we can also apply this law to support conservation laws which are designed to protect the ecosystem. Natural resources must be conserved and one way of doing this is to discourage deforestation. As believers we must not be guilty of wasting natural resources and we must not allow the satisfaction of short term needs to override long term benefits in our lives. We should always remember that eternity is far more important than our transient sojourn on earth, therefore we should rather sacrifice temporal things to gain eternal blessings.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	1 Corinth	1-2	Numbers	5-6
TUE	“	3-4	“	7
WED	“	5-6	“	8-9
THUR	“	7-8	“	10-11
FRI	“	9-10	“	12-13
SAT	“	11-12	“	14-15
SUN	“	13-14	“	16

# 509 Lesson

## LAWS OF MURDER AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

**MEMORY VERSE:** “So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 21:9).

**TEXT:** Deuteronomy 21:1-23; 22:1-30

In the passage under consideration, the Lord turned Israel’s attention to the procedure of inquest and atonement in cases of anonymous murder and how to handle specific aspects of family relationships. He gave them laws that show His concern for the sanctity of life, preservation of the rights and dignity of women, prevention of exploitation of others and security of property. These laws reveal that God puts great value not only on human life but also on our rights. They also underscore the concern, thoughtfulness, kindness, purity as well as attitudes of mutual help and care that should characterize our relationship with one another.

***Question 1: What can we deduce from the laws of murder and family relationship?***

**ATONEMENT FOR UNSOLVED MURDER CASES**  
(Deuteronomy 21:1-9; 17:8-11; Psalm 9:12)

**“If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him”** (Deuteronomy 21:1). God had prohibited murder and issued directives on the punishment for someone who kills another person (Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17; Deuteronomy 19:11-13). But our text describes a situation where the assailant could not be identified. In such a case, the elders and judges of the people were to determine the city nearest to the site where the victim was found. Atonement rites required that they bring a heifer (young cow, especially one that has never had a calf) to an uncultivated valley and the priests were to kill it, while the city leaders washed their hands over

the slain animal as a symbol of their innocence in the murder case (Psalm 26:6; 73:13; Matthew 27:24). Then, the city leaders would pray for God's mercy. God promised to forgive and absolve them of blood guiltiness after taking these steps.

***Question 2: Point out specific lessons to be learnt from the account of unsolved murder cases and the procedure for atonement.***

From this we note that God places great value on human life and will not take the wasting of it lightly. Second, the wickedness of the human heart is hereby displayed. The fact that a person could take another man's life and escape shows man's wickedness and insensitivity to the sanctity of life. Third, this ceremony portrays that killing another person was not a mean issue and required that steps should be taken to avoid the dire consequences. And, whether the assailant is known or not, God would not allow the matter to be discarded. This is a great challenge to our leaders and those in authority who treat human life so cheaply and handle murder cases with levity. Apart from the unwarranted waste of precious life, it brings untold grief on relatives of the victim. Moreover, the murderer, through his action has attempted to frustrate God's plan and hinder His purpose for the victim. Therefore, shedding of blood provokes God's anger and attracts His judgment upon any land where it is condoned.

Fourth, it shows that God is the advocate of the defenceless. Though the slain man could in no way call out for justice, God does. Those who take the life of others should prepare to confront God either now or in eternity. Fifth, here there is lesson in corporate responsibility. The entire community have the responsibility to ensure the security of life in their vicinity. They are to be vigilant and ensure that criminal activities are not allowed in their community; otherwise God will hold them responsible. Sixth, we also learn the principle of substitutional death and the efficacy of blood atonement. In the rite, an heifer was offered as substitute for the unknown offender who if apprehended, should have been killed. In this, we see a picture of Christ taking the place of guilty sinners on the cross. He died to satisfy

the claims of divine justice and to make atonement for us. By virtue of His sacrifice, repentant sinners are justified and free from punishment.

**LAWS OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP** (Deuteronomy 21:10-21; 22:13-30; Genesis 29:31-35; 30:1,2)

Certain aspects of marriage and family relationship come into focus here. These laws emphasize the need to avoid cruelty, partiality, favouritism, defamation and immorality in the family. In the Old Testament period, God permitted polygamy and divorce on certain grounds. But then, these practices, rather than bring solutions to marital problems, produced serious complications and side effects. And such effects are the reasons for these legislations in our text.

First is the issue of an Israeli soldier who captures a foreign woman during war and desires to marry her (Deuteronomy 21:10-14). The law required that after bringing her home she should shave her head, trim her nails, remove her prisoner's dress and bewail her separation from her parents for a full month. These rites served some useful purpose. One, to symbolize her purification from her pagan background. Two, to accord the woman some measure of dignity and give her time to adjust to her new condition. Three, to instil self-discipline and give the man opportunity to reflect on his decision to marry a foreign prisoner of war. It will also enable the man to put his passion under check, avoid rape and humiliation of the captive woman. And if he finally decides to marry her, then she would no longer be treated as a slave but as a wife; and even if the man was not pleased with her afterwards, he was not permitted to sell her but to release and allow her go absolutely free.

***Question 3: Give reasons why believers must not choose a marriage partner based on impulse.***

Marriage is too important a relationship to be entered into without prayer and proper preparation. The Lord expects that believers would seek His face in choosing a life partner so as to avoid the ugly consequences of carnality. The New Testament shows us that marriage is not just a loose bond between a man and a woman, which can be tied at will

but a serious union that deserves all the seriousness and preparation to fulfill God's purpose for instituting it.

The law of family relationship also focused on a polygamous setting where there is the likelihood of favoritism towards a particular wife and her children. God commanded that the right of the firstborn must be protected, especially if the firstborn son is from the hated wife. According to this law, the firstborn son must be given a double portion of the father's possession and be conferred with the privilege of becoming the family head. However, this law does not in any way constitute a divine endorsement of polygamy. Rather, it gives us insight into the perils and problems of rivalry, partiality, and injustice that are inherent in polygamy.

***Question 4: Why should believers avoid polygamy?***

God's original plan for man is monogamy (one man, one wife); this fact is evident in several parts of the Scripture (Matthew 19:4; 1Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). God created just one woman for the first man, Adam. But more than this, polygamy disqualifies a person from Christian leadership; Paul clearly said: **"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife..."** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:3). And, even in the Old Testament regime where polygamy was permitted, the polygamous marriages of Jacob and of Elkanah, for example, were full of bitter struggles, favouritism, rivalry, carnal scheming and frustrations (Genesis 29:29,30; 24; 1 Samuel 1:1-7; 2:1-5).

After issues bordering on marriage and rights of the firstborn, God gave directives on the Old Testament way of dealing with a stubborn, rebellious son who would not obey the voice of his parents despite repeated rebukes. Such a son was to be brought before the elders of the city where his parents would testify against him. Afterwards, would be stoned to death because he refused to change. This law was intended to instil filial reverence and deter children from being incorrigible.

***Question 5: What can believers learn from the capital punishment of disrespectful and stubborn sons?***

Although the promulgation of capital punishment for stubborn sons is no longer in force, God looks upon rebellious persons as people who deserve maximum sanction. He considers the sins of rebellion and stubbornness as idolatry and witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23) and recommends that those who practise them should not live (Exodus 22:18)

Two, parents should not cover up their children's evil behaviour, but correct, chastize and, if necessary, refer them to spiritual leaders who will help to handle them. The Bible commands: "**Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying**" and, "**withhold not correction from the child: for it thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die**" ( Proverbs 19:18; 23:13). Three, spiritual leaders should be interested in the spiritual development of children under their care. They should help the children in developing high moral standards and live free from the contemporary social vices of their generation. And, finally, we see the contrast between the regime of law and the dispensation of grace. Whereas under the law, the rebellious son was to be executed, Jesus taught, in the parable of the prodigal son, that there is hope for the wayward child (Luke 15:11-24). Therefore, parents should not give up on their rebellious children, but should trust in God's power to change and transform them.

The law also dealt with the issue of defamation of a wife, premarital unchastity, rape and incest (Deuteronomy 22:13-30). This law prescribed punishment for a man who defames his wife by falsely accusing her of premarital infidelity. But if it was true that the woman had defiled herself before marriage, that is, if no evidence of virginity if found, then she would be stoned to death. This was done to judge her sin and also to spite her parents for failing in their responsibility. This duty to their husbands was alluded to by Paul, the apostle when he said, "**for I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ**" (2 Corinthians 11:2). From this, we learn the importance of purity before marriage,

and much more to avoid spiritual defilement which disqualifies us from eternal union with Christ.

Believers must avoid all forms of sexual impurity because God demands absolute purity from His people. In the Old Testament, the sins of rape, adultery, and incest attracted the capital punishment. A woman would only be vindicated if she cried out but could not be heard and helped; otherwise she was considered a willing accomplice. Then a man who raped an unbetrothed woman was compelled to pay a fine and to marry her by all means. This command was intended to punish the offender as well as protect the victim.

True believers are expected to avoid immorality despite the widespread moral decadence in today's world. The standard of God remains unchanging: **“marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Hebrews 13).

**REGULATIONS CONCERNING LAND, ANIMALS, AND SUNDRY MATTERS** (Deuteronomy 21:22,23; 22: 1-12; Joshua 8:29; 10:26,27; Galatians 3:13)

God commanded Israel that the remains of a person executed for a crime, and letter hanged, for the purpose of public humiliation, should not remain on the tree all night. It was considered that a person who was so hanged on the tree was under God's curse. Joshua obeyed this law during his military campaigns in Canaan (Joshua 8:29; 10:26,27); but its greatest application was in Jesus Christ when He was crucified (Galatians 3:13). By dying on the cross, He became accursed so that humanity can be blessed through His sacrifice.

***Question 6: What can we learn about God as we look at the regulations and ordinances in our text?***

God's matchless love and concern about the details of the life of His creatures are not in doubt. Whether they are humans, domestic animals, birds, clothing and houses of His people, He cares about all. He has graciously given laws to govern and protect them. This is why a straying



domestic animal, for example, must be returned or kept in custody to any item lost but found.

The purpose of this command was to encourage good neighborliness and promote mutual concern among the people. For the same reason, God commanded the people to help their neighbor to pull-up his animal which had fallen down. As believers, we are also admonished to “**bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ**” (Galatians 6:2).

Though in modern times, societal laws are so complex and we need to exercise caution lest, while sincerely seeking to help a neighbor, our good intention be misconstrued, this does not absolve us of the responsibility of helping and showing kindness to others.

***Question 7: Briefly state God’s standard on dressing as revealed in our text.***

God is against transvestism, that is, dressing and behaving like the opposite sex; He wants us to be gender distinct. Women were prohibited from wearing men’s clothing, and vice versa. There should be no reversal of roles or any behavior which, as was common among the Canaanites, gave a hint of effeminacy or homosexuality. Believers, whether children, youths or adults should dress in a manner befitting their gender.

Further, God prohibited the taking of a bird with her young ones (Deuteronomy 22:6,7). This was obviously to preserve nature and prevent the extinction of some endangered species. Then, also, God’s law required that safety precautions be taken while building a house in order to avoid unnecessary accidents. This teaches us to be safety conscious and not allow our carelessness to occasion the injury or death of another person.

Finally, God gave laws of segregation to maintain the purity and distinction of natural lines. This law forbade ploughing with two different animals, etc. The significance of these laws is clearly portrayed by Paul the apostle, in describing the unusual relationship between a believer and an unbeliever, used the picture of an unequal yoke

(2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Believers must remain distinct and free from every form of unequal yoke whether in partnership, fellowship, marriage or business but should remain separated from the world and holy unto the Lord.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	1 Cor	15-16	Numbers	17-18
TUE	2 Cor	1-3	“	19-20
WED	“	4-5	“	21-22
THUR	“	6-7	“	23-24
FRI	“	8-9	“	25-26
SAT	“	10-11	“	27-28
SUN	“	12-13	“	29-30

# 510 Lesson

## ADMITTANCE INTO THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL

**TEXT: Deuteronomy 23:1-25**

**MEMORY VERSE: “For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee” (Deuteronomy 23:14)**

**T**oday’s text specifies conditions for admitting into or excluding a non – Hebrew from the congregation of Israel. In addition, it gave instruction on the comportment of the Israelite army at the battlefront. It finally concludes with sundry regulations on interpersonal dealings, loans, pledges and neighborly privileges.

***Question 1: Why was it necessary that conditions be stipulated for admittance into Israel?***

The stipulated conditions for admittance were necessary because of the peculiar status of Israel. As God’s acclaimed firstborn, both the people and their land were to be specially favored. They were to be pre-eminent and their land was to flow with milk and honey. It was therefore certain to become attractive to people of neighboring states. Also, Israel was destined to attain enviable heights in material and military terms. The subsequent comfort from their wealth and the security resulting from their awesome might would definitely make the land a resort or port of call and place of choice. Therefore, to avoid the tendency of corrupt influences from those idolatrous nations, it was necessary to screen those to be admitted so that their pagan practices do not infiltrate the Israeli polity.

## **EXCLUSION AND CONCESSION FOR ADMITTANCE**

(Deuteronomy 23:1-8, 15-16; Nehemiah 13:1,2)

**“He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD”** (Deuteronomy 23:1).

The exclusion covers individuals with physical debilities or those who were products of illegitimate union on the one hand, and nationals of specified countries who were guilty of needless wilful wickedness, on the other. In the first category were the castrated or otherwise mutilated eunuchs and bastards. In the second category were the Ammonites and the Moabites. It is important to note that this regulation was not meant to outrightly forbid people of other nationalities from interacting with God’s people or residing among them either as strangers or captive-turned-wife (Deuteronomy 21:10-3). Rather, it implied a denial of full citizenship privileges of marriage and leadership in the commonwealth of Israel. But if such becomes a proselyte, and keeps God’s commands, the full import of these restrictions might be waved to an appreciable extent (Isaiah 56:3-8; Ruth 1:16; 4:13-22; 2 Samuel 23:8,37; 1 Chronicles 11:10,46; 2 Chronicles 24:26; John 1:12).

***Question 2: How can a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel become a partaker of God’s blessings?***

Exclusion of the castrated or eunuch was an extension of the command that forbade disabled Levites from ministering in the priesthood or secular leadership. As blemished animals were unacceptable in sacrifices and invalid Levites unfit to render spiritual services, so are the mutilated people unqualified to occupy secular positions of authority in Israel. This signified God’s aversion to any spiritual defilement in any of those that occupied leadership positions in the church. In the New Testament, however, Christ’s sacrifice has taken away that restriction such that physical debilities do not constitute an institutional limitation to the height a saint can reach in ministry. As such, one is free to serve the Lord as long as he is spiritually qualified and his physical strength and health can sustain him.

Of the three categories of eunuchs the Lord Jesus Christ identified, the man-made is the only one mentioned here. In many Gentile settings, it was common for priests to be eunuchs and their priestesses dedicated as “spouses” to certain fetishes, thus barring them from normal marriage relationships. In addition, their monarchs kept eunuchs in certain notable positions, and parents did castrate their children with a view to preparing them for pagan priesthood or high-level offices in the courts of their kings and nobles (Matthew 19:12; Acts 8:26-29; 1 Timothy 4:1-3). The Lord here showed His disapproval of such practices.

The exclusion of bastards was to discourage immorality outside lawful wedlock in Israel. Aside preventing the risk of contracting incurable diseases and the consequence of trafficking with the strange gods of the Gentiles, it was also to make them to live pure lives in order to avoid jeopardizing the prospects of their posterity.

Another class of individuals that were not to be permitted in the land were the whoremongers. **“There shall be no whore of the daughters ... nor a sodomite ... of Israel”** (verse 17). Though some pagans keep prostitutes in their temples, it must not be permitted or practiced in Israel. The sin carried the death penalty. The licentious youth, adulterers, fornicators, gays, harlots, lesbians, masturbators, pederasts, as well as their patrons were in the same condemnation. The believer should therefore realize that God’s hatred for sin is not negotiable. Attendance at church services, participation in its activities, fame or popularity in the congregation, ministerial gifts or any other qualities do not recommend one to God. If one does not live in obedience to God in holiness, though he might make the number by human census or church register, he would be missing in heaven’s record (Exodus 32:33; Psalm 66:18; Matthew 7:23; 1 Corinthians 6:15, 16; Ephesians 5:5-7; 2 Timothy 2:19-21; Revelation 22:15).

Closely related to the exclusion of whores is the rejection of any offering from damnable practices. **“Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore ...into the house of the LORD thy God... these are abomination...”** (verse 18). The God of Israel forbids prostitutes from dedicating part

for their earnings to temple services. This indicates that any income earned from evil activities or filthy business engagements must not be applied in the service of the lord. Our substance can only be honorable if it is honesty earned in lawful endeavours, otherwise it is abomination.

**Question 3: What is the outcome of Israel's disobedience to God's commands?**

Unfortunately Israel did not comply with these directives. In the course of time, their kings started to keep eunuchs in their courts like other nations. Also, they married people of pagan origins. Worst of all, the priests who should have corrected them also got themselves enmeshed in the rot (Ruth 1:14; Nehemiah 13:23; 1 kings 16:29-33; 2-14). As a result, the Lord was wroth with them, and the land speud them out to their shame and peril.

The exclusion also affected specific nations: **“An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the lord even to their tenth generation...”** (Verse 3). These two nations were descendants of Lot. Their father had started well by following Abraham from Ur to the Promised Land. Unfortunately, he later separated in pursuit of material benefits. Neither he or nor his descendants ever reunited with Israel. Though the Israelites had heeded the divine restraint not to attack any of them, the Ammonites and Moabites had been unnecessarily antagonistic to Israel. Contrary to the prevalent customary hospitality of that time, they had refused to offer food or drinks to wandering Israel either free for a fee (Deuteronomy 2:27-29). Worse still, they had hired Balaam to curse Israel. When that failed, they succeeded in seducing the people to a life of immorality and idolatry. The result of this singular act was that twenty-four thousand Israelites perished in the matter of Baal-peor (Numbers 22:1-6; 25:1-9; Deuteronomy 2:9, 10; Revelation 2:14).

As a consequence of their unprovoked hatred for God's people, the Lord decreed that **“Thou Shalt not seek their peace or their prosperity all thy days forever”** (verse 6). This instruction was necessary because two and a half tribes of Israel lived beyond Jordan at the borders of these

two fraternal nations, which seemed to have constituted themselves into Israel's enemy. The Lord forbade national affinity with these nations as a matter of policy. This was because neither of them could be dependable or trusted. Failure to keep this charge was one reason that the Israelite tribes which settled on the east of Jordan mingled with their enemies, got hooked with their sins and became the first of the Hebrew stock to be swept off into captivity. The lesson is that those who persecute or wickedly deny God's people of necessary care and provisions are indirectly opposing the Lord. Unless such repent, they are bound to face God's judgment (Ecclesiastes 3:15-17; Acts 9:4). It also teaches that the believer should be wary of the sinning world. He must be circumspect, sober and vigilant because the devil is unrelentingly committed to doing mischief. Therefore, Christians should be always ready to resist sin and Satan (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8, 9).

In addition, it shows that the evils that parents or leaders do rebound on their children and subjects. Unless the latter specifically makes a complete turn to reconcile with God in full surrender and obedience, they might suffer the repercussions of the actions or inactions of their predecessors. Surprisingly, though, the Lord took a strong stance against the posterity of Lot; He was mild with the Edomites and Egyptians, according their grandchildren concession for admittance "**...in their third generation**" (verses 7, 8).

***Question 4: What lessons can we learn from the fact that the Egyptians and Edomites were treated differently from the posterity of Lot?***

Israel was not to hate Edom for their hostility in the wilderness but should admit their offspring into the congregation of God's people in their third generation. The basis of Edom's concession was their fraternity. But for Egypt, it was the hospitality shown Jacob and His household when they came to sojourn in that country. Also, the accommodation and sustenance that they enjoyed for so many years and the fact that the Egyptians provided all that the Israelites required from them at the time of their exodus was the reason God treated them

differently. They were not to remember their bondage in Egypt for the keeping up of any ill-will to the Egyptians, but only for the magnifying of God's power and goodness in their deliverance. Believers should appreciate the fact that God's evaluation of the relative gravity of offences may be different from that of humans. Therefore, we should be more inclined to forgiving offences than retaining them. In addition, we should be grateful for special deeds of kindness.

Another class of individuals to be admitted were servants who fled to Israel from the oppression of their Gentile masters. Such were not to be repatriated until their case have been considered and decided. Of course, if the runaway slave was in the wrong, justice demanded that he should be sent back to his master (Genesis 16:7-9; Philemon 9-13). But if he fled from the fury of a tyrant or as a prospective victim of an idolatrous sacrifice, to embrace Israel's God, **"He shall dwell . . . among you"** (verse 16). Such were to be treated to special opportunity of choosing to live wherever they desire in the land. This teaches that it is honorable to protect the weak as long as he is not wicked ( 1 Samuel 30:15). Similarly, new converts are to be welcomed into God's household with such tenderness and affectionate care that they would not be inclined to going back to a life of servitude to sin and Satan.

#### **EXHORTATION ON COMPORIMENT IN WAR SITUATION** (Deuteronomy 23:9-14; Hebrew 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16)

**"When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, thou keep thee from every wicked thing"** (Deuteronomy 23:9). This charge was for every soldier regardless of his rank. They were to avoid every crime common among the armies of the heathen such as rape, cannibalism, assault, attack on unarmed population, etc. They were to avoid indulgences and feelings that are offensive to God. **" If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp: But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp**



**again”** (verse 10,11). Seeing the trouble and reproach which involuntary pollutions exposed men to, they were to dread all fleshly lusts and be holy unto the Lord. Also, the soldier must maintain cleanliness in matters of natural pollutions. The next two verses emphasize decency and cleanliness which prevent the spread of diseases and promote health.

***Question 5: Why is it important for believers to be holy at all times?***

The reason the soldiers must maintain a consistent life of purity was essentially because the Lord who walked in their camp might depart if they were otherwise disposed. This would make them ordinary and vulnerable. Likewise, contemporary Christians should always be careful to maintain a life of purity so as to retain the promised presence of God, enjoy His blessings and be fit for the rapture.

**EXCLUSIVE CONSIDERATION FOR NEIGHBORS' WELFARE** (Deuteronomy 23:19-25; Exodus 22:25; Psalm 15:3,4)

This section relates to our disposition to financial and material wealth. It challenges believers to liberality in giving financial and material assistance to fellow believers. While the Jew must not lend to his fellow Jew with interest, he was at liberty to do so to strangers. This shows, that charging interest is not sinful in itself but that the Lord wanted His people to relate to one another on the basis of compassion so that they will enjoy His continual favour. For Israel, this was not to be grievous considering the vast provision of God for them in virtually every aspect of their lives (Leviticus 19:34; 25:35-37; Deutronomy 15:3,10; Psalm 15:5).

***Question 6: What lesson can the believer learn from God's command on consideration for our neighbors?***

The New Testament enjoins believers to do good to all men especially they that are of the household of faith. Jesus Christ teaches an extensions of this kindness to strangers

and even enemies (Luke 6:34). For compliance to this command to be meaningful, however, it must be done promptly, cheerfully and graciously (Proverbs 3:27,28; 19:17; 1 John 3:17).

As much as the believer is expected to be liberal to men, so must he manifest discipline in honouring the pledges he makes to God (Deuteronomy 23:21; Numbers 30:2; Ecclesiastes 5:4). The regulations on vows and pledges warn against rashness and frivolity. However, the compulsion that goes with the payment of vows and the liberty to refrain therefrom, do not constitute a licence for reluctance to making promises of commitment to the Lord. It is to inculcate in the believer the need to trust in God not only for the supplies of our daily needs, but also for things with which to contribute to projects that would bring honour to His name (Isaiah 55:10; 2 Corinthians 9:8,10).

The passage concludes with a two-edged regulation on the liberality one might enjoy in the vineyard of a Jew. While it allows the liberty of immediate consumption in a neighbors' farm, it frowns at the over-indulgence of taking same for commercial purposes. Believers should always manifest moderation even when they have free access to certain privileges that is not open to others.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	Galatians	1-2	Numbers	31
TUE	“	3-4	“	32
WED	“	5-6	“	33
THUR	Ephesians	1-2	“	34-35
FRI	“	3-4	“	36
SAT	“	5-6	Deuteron	1
SUN	Philippians	1-2	“	2-3

# 511 LESSON

## LAWS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12: 18).

**TEXT: Deuteronomy 24:1-22; 25:1-19**

In our text, Moses pointed out to the children of Israel the commandments of God as well as His concessions, to ensure that the people live peaceably with one another at the various levels of interpersonal relationship. Concerning marriage, God gave a provisional allowance for divorce and remarriage in order to avoid more terrible sins that could proceed from the hardness of men’s heart. Moses also touched on sundry laws relating to labor matters, lending and borrowing, kindness to the poor and widows, prohibition of oppression, injustice, assault and battery. All those laws reminded the Israelites that even while seeking to exercise their rights, they should be mindful of others. Proper examination of these laws reveals man’s natural tendency to selfishness, greed and wickedness. God expects genuine repentance from everyone who falls short of His laws.

***Question 1: How can a person derive permanent benefit from the study of God’s laws?***

**THE PROVISIONAL LAW OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE** (Deuteronomy 24: 1-4; 21:10-14; 22:13-19; Matthew 5:31,31; 19:1-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-24)

Moses gave the Israelites the provisional law of divorce which God also permitted to operate until the time of Christ’s first coming. This law allowed a man who wished to divorce his wife to write a certificate of divorce and then send her out of his house. Then, after departing from the man’s house, she was free to remarry; but if her second marriage was dissolved, either due to divorce or death of the later husband, the former husband who divorced her first, was not permitted to marry her again. And according

to this law, the reason for divorce was a discovery of some uncleanness in the woman. But the uncleanness here, obviously, must be something other than premarital unchastity or adultery, since the penalty for these was not divorce but stoning to death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:20-22). According to Jewish tradition, the uncleanness could be something shameful, repulsive, improper or immodest in the wife. If any of these was discovered in the wife and the man was no longer pleased with her, then, rather than compel him to live with her in displeasure, thereby opening the door for the possibility of a greater crime, he was allowed to put her away in peace.

***Question 2: Explain the meaning of “because of the hardness of your hearts” in the statement of Jesus concerning divorce in Matthew 19:8.***

In the New Testament, Jesus explained that this permission to divorce one’s wife was given because of the hardness of hearts of the people. What this means is that there is no limit to the evil which the hearts of unregenerate men could devise. A hardened heart could devise criminal methods of getting rid of an unloved wife, or deal so cruelly with her as to cause her permanent injury. Therefore, it was considered a better option to have a broken marriage than broken limbs or dismembered body.

***Question 3: Explain why it is wrong to divorce one’s wife.***

But Jesus pointed out that this law of divorce was an anomaly and only provisional. Right from the original institution of marriage in the book of Genesis, it was not God’s plan to divorce one’s spouse (Matthew 19:1-8). The original plan of God for marriage is that couples should make a lifelong commitment to each other; and once God has joined them together, they should not be put asunder. Even in the Old Testament dispensation where the law permitted divorce, God clearly declared that He hated putting away one’s spouse (Malachi 2:15,16). Thus, divorce should not be seen as a solution to marital problems. Rather, couples should handle their differences through prayer, dialogue, mutual forgiveness, forbearance, and

willingness to make necessary adjustments so that their marriage will succeed.

In fact, it should be noted that Jesus has repealed the law of divorce and remarriage. After explaining the reason why Moses gave the permission to divorce, He went ahead to say, **“whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commiteth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery”** (Matthew 19:9).

***Question 4: Point out from our text God’s provision to strengthen the marriage union.***

Rather than encourage divorce, God actually made provisions to strengthen the marriage relationship. He commanded that newlyweds be given time to remain together and they should not be given any responsibility that will unduly take them away from each other for a long time. This was necessary so that newly married couples would be able to adjust to one another and establish their new home together. In Israel, a man who was about to marry, or who had newly married was exempted from going to war, lest he die in battle and the new bride becomes a widow too soon (Deuteronomy 20:7; 24:5).

**THE PROHIBITION OF OPPRESSION AND HUMANITARIAN LAWS** (Deuteronomy 24:6-22; Exodus 22:26,27; 21:16; 23:6; Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Ruth 2:2-23; Job 22:5,6).

God gave the children of Israel many laws that prohibit oppression of the poor, and which promote peaceful coexistence among the people.

***Question 5: Mention some humanitarian laws in our text and state their application to present-day believers.***

Towards the poor and needy neighbor who had a reason to borrow, the lender must be considerate and not take as collateral or confiscate basic essentials, such as the upper millstone or the outer garment. The upper millstone was used to grind food for the family, and the outer garment

was used to cover against cold at night. Therefore, to take these items as collateral for a loan was to deprive the poor borrower of things that are absolutely necessary for his or her survival, and God condemns such (Deuteronomy 24:6,10-13; Job 24:3,7,8). Though the lender has a right to demand for a pledge or collateral in order to secure his loan, he must still consider the welfare of the borrower. Even the poor deserve some respect. Therefore, they must not be humiliated or treated with disdain just because of their unfortunate condition in life. It was for this same reason God prohibited the lender from entering the house of the borrower to take the collateral or taking the garment of a widow as security for a loan (Deuteronomy 24 : 10,11,17). It is obvious that believers must show mercy and kindness to the poor.

God also prohibited the ungodly acts of kidnapping and human trafficking. These terrible crimes attracted the death penalty because they dehumanized fellow human beings and reduced them to articles of merchandise and forced labor. If this law had been in force at the time the brothers of Joseph sold him to Egypt, they would have been condemned to death. Today, there is a rise both in the rate and dimension of these offences. Some people kidnap for ransom or to settle scores while others steal children or even adults for sale, prostitution or rituals. Yet, there are those who specialize in collecting young people to be sold into forced labour. Believers must steer clear of these crimes. We must not aid and abet these crimes.

Another law in our text concerns labor issues. The poor employee must not be deprived of his wages. The employer must not take advantage of his poor workers, either by delaying or denying them their due payment for services rendered. When the poor man cried unto God on account of default on the part of the employer, He would count it as sin against that employer. As believers, we must remember that showing kindness to the poor will attract God's blessing, but oppressing them will incur His anger. Also, all employers of labor, either in the public or private sector, must pay their workers promptly and stop defrauding them.

There is also a divine provision made for the welfare of strangers, the fatherless, widows and the underprivileged who could not grow their own crops. God commanded the Israelites to leave some fruits for them during harvest (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Leviticus 19:9,10). Those grains that fall to the ground and at the four corners of the field were to be left for the poor and the strangers to glean. Ruth benefitted from this provision as she gleaned in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:2-23). God's command to care for the poor is a moral obligation that every believer must carry out. When reminded by other apostles of this duty, Paul declared that he had a willingness to care for the poor. **"Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do" (Galatians 2:10)**. Believers should not neglect the poor and needy as Christ's earthly ministry was centered on reaching out to the poor. And He warned us of the grave consequences of neglecting the underprivileged (Matthew 25:41-46).

Furthermore, God commanded that the strangers and fatherless must not be denied justice. We must not exploit them, nor do anything that would frustrate them. And also, God put in place the law of individual responsibility which demands that only the offender should be punished for his offence. The parents must not be put to death for the crime of their children, and vice versa (Deuteronomy 24:16). However, there are situations where the entire family may be punished for crime committed by an individual member. This could happen when they fail to expose the crime or dissociate themselves from it (Joshua 7:24,25; I Samuel 2:22-36;4:10-18). However the sons of Korah did not die with their father (Numbers 26:9-11). As believers, we must not be partakers in other men's sin so as not to share in their punishment.

**PUNISHMENT OF OFFENDERS AND DEMAND FOR HONESTY IN BUSINESS** (Deuteronomy 25:1-19; Leviticus 19:20,36; Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:23; 21:6; 2 Corinthians 11:23;24)

As part of God's plan for the Israelites to live in harmony in their respective communities, judges were appointed

to settle disputes. After a proper trial, the innocent was justified while the guilty was given appropriate punishment. If the guilty party deserved to be flogged, then it should be done under the supervision of the judge; and he must not be given more than forty lashes so as not to degenerate to a public humiliation of the offender. What this amounts to then is that, regardless of the offence committed, a fellow human being must not be treated as a beast (Job 18:3).

***Question 6: What lessons can we learn from the limit God placed on corporal punishment?***

This limit of the extent of corporal punishment for an offender teaches us that while administering punishment for a crime, God would not tolerate the humiliation or dehumanization of His creature. And it should be borne in mind that the real focus of punishment should not be the pain inflicted on the culprit, but to prevent the offender from repeating the crime and deter others who might be tempted to commit similar offence. Therefore, whenever those in authority are enforcing discipline or punishing others for their wrongdoing, or when parents have cause to punish their children, it should be done in a way as to avoid the humiliation or dehumanization of the Victim. The Jews were so careful in obeying this command that they eventually reduced the number of lashes to thirty-nine, so that they would not inadequately go beyond the limit (2 Corinthians 11:23:24).

But not only did the law of kindness apply to human beings alone, it was extended to animals as well. In our text, God commanded that the ox that was employed in threshing of corn should not be muzzled. That means its mouth must not be covered, in an attempt to keep it from eating out of the corn. And if animals were expected to be cared for, much more men who are made in the image God.

Paul applied this command in teaching the importance of caring for spiritual leaders who labor in God's vineyard (1 Timothy 5:17,18). Believers must learn to support their leaders and contribute heartily towards their welfare. And of course, spiritual leaders are exhorted not to serve



for the sake of reward from men, but then, let them not be muzzled from enjoying the basic necessities that will enable them to give their best in God's service.

***Question 7: Why is the law of Levirate marriage not applicable to New Testament dispensation?***

Another aspect of Israel's communal life was the practice of Levirate marriage, as described in our text (Deuteronomy 25:5-11). This practice required that a man who is nearest of kin marry the widow of his childless brother so as to raise a heir for him. Tamar and Ruth were taken in this kind of marriage after the death of their husbands (Genesis 38:6-10; Ruth 1:11-13; 3:4-13; 4:1-13). This practice was necessary because in the Old Testament; much emphasis was placed on the continuity of the family line and inheritance of land in Israel. However, in the New Testament dispensation, the emphasis is no longer on the perpetuating of our natural descendants but having eternal life, and offering that life to other as we engage in soul-winning. In addition, the original picture of marriage which Christ revealed in the New Testament leaves no room for polygamy, which would be an inevitable consequence of Levirate, marriage.

The Lord further commanded the Israelites to uphold principles of honesty and transparency in their business dealings. Therefore, they must have a perfect and just weight (for measuring weight), and a perfect and just measure (for measuring volume). They must not practice the unethical methods of using deceptive measuring instruments. All kinds of fraudulent adjustment of measuring instruments, false labels on goods and lowering the quality of goods and services in order to profiteer must be avoided. This rule also applies to the evil practices of over-inflating contract, extortion, bribery and fraud.

God reminded the Israelites of the cruelty of Amalek and the command to destroy them completely (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) to show His hatred for all forms of wickedness, especially against the weak and the poor. Therefore, we should beware lest we incur God's anger by maltreating

those who are weak and defenseless and strangers. Remember that as it happened to Amalek, God will definitely avenge and judge those who oppress others except they repent.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	Philippians	3-4	Deutero	4
TUE	Colosians	1-2	“	5-6
WED	“	3-4	“	7-8
THUR	1 Thess.	1-3	“	9-10
FRI	“	4-5	“	11-12
SAT	2 Thess.	1-3	“	13-14
SUN	1 Timothy	1-2	“	15-16

# 512 Lesson

## FIRST FRUITS AND TITHES

**MEMORY VERSE: “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase” (Proverbs 3:9)**

**TEXT: Deuteronomy 26:1-19**

In this text, Moses instructed the children of Israel on the offering of their first fruits and tithes. He emphasized the need to show gratitude to God for His goodness and mercies, and to give Him the first place in their lives. These instructions to Israel teach believers the importance of honouring God with their substance and **“with the first fruits of all their increase.”** Besides, our text clearly portrays the fact that we should do more than offering just our substances to God to offering ourselves and renewing our covenant with Him.

***Question 1: What can believers learn from the ordinance of first fruits and tithes?***

Before this time, God had commanded Israel to consecrate unto Him their firstborn sons and animals (Exodus 13:1,2). Also, the fruits of tree crops for the first three years were not to be eaten, and in the fourth year all the fruits were to be set apart as holy for giving praise to God. Only in the fifth year were they permitted to harvest the fruit of the tree crops for themselves (Leviticus 19:23-25). Whether it was the first fruits of man, animals or property, an Israelite was expected to devote them to God. All these ordinances point to one major lesson: that the people of God should learn to acknowledge and put God first in their lives. They should not consider anything too great to surrender unto God whenever He makes a demand for them. And believers, being the true Israel of God, should not forget God in the midst of prosperity. When God blesses us, we should remember Him for He is the One that gives us the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18)

## REMEMBERING GOD'S FAVOUR AND GOODNESS

(Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Lamentations 3:19-23)

One of the annual feasts God ordained for the Israelites was the feast of first fruits during which the very first harvests of their crops were presented before the Lord (Exodus 23:19; 34:26). In our text, Moses instructed the children of Israel on conducting the ceremony of first fruits, especially the initial offering after the first harvest in Canaan. The ceremony described in our text was in addition to the earlier instructions on first fruits (Leviticus 2:14; 23:10,15; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:9). For the ceremony, Moses directed that the people should take some of the first fruits in a basket, to the place the Lord should choose (that is the chosen place of worship). There, the offerer would make his declarations before the priest and offer the first fruits at the altar.

***Question 2: Point out the major features of the declarations of offerers at the ceremony of first fruits.***

The people offering their first fruits would make two declarations before the priest. One was a testimony unto the priest (Deuteronomy 26:3-10), the other was a solemn affirmation unto God (Deuteronomy 26:13,14). In summary, the testimony of the offerer before the priest has some instructive features. These include acknowledgment of their entrance and possession of Canaan (verse 3), thanksgiving to God for fulfilling His promise (verse 3), a recount of their humble background, bondage and misery in Egypt (verse 5-7), testimony of exodus from Egypt (verse 8), affirmation of God's faithfulness in bringing them to Canaan, and the confirmation of the truth of His promise that the land is fertile (flowing with milk and honey) The evidence of this is the basket of first fruits being presented before God.

In essence, the ceremony of first fruits was designed to acknowledge God and remember His mercies. It was a practical testimony of Israel, and an apt illustration of the fact that **“it is of the LORD'S Mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not”**

(Lamentations 3:22). Were it not for God's intervention, Jacob, who was described as "**a Syrian ready to perish**" in our text, would have died with no nation arising from him. Beside the fact that Esau wanted to kill him, he was greatly endangered in the house of Laban (Genesis 27:41;31:38-42; 32:6-8). Also, while sojourning in Canaan, famine threatened his existence and his children's that they had to find refuge in Egypt. When, eventually, they multiplied in Egypt, the Egyptians wanted to exterminate them; however, God delivered them and brought them to the Promised Land. Little wonder then that at the feast of first fruits, Israelites were expected to be full of gratitude and praises to God. They were expected to reflect on the mercies of God, worship Him, offer with grateful hearts, and share their substance with the Levites and needy ones.

***Question 3: As believers, what lessons should we learn from the feast of first fruits?***

It is clear that the feast of first fruits could only be done after the Israelites had entered Canaan; for it is only then were they able to honestly say, "**I am come unto the country which the LORD swore unto our fathers for to give us**" (Deuteronomy 26:3b). Similarly, a person must be genuinely saved and be made new in Christ before he can offer the first fruits of new life to God. This application of the first fruits to the new life in Christ is very clear from the New Testament. "**Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creature**" (James 1:18). We must be born again before we can give acceptable offering to God. So, for believers, offering of first fruits is more than bringing physical farm products to church for ceremonies; it is becoming a new creature.

Another lesson is that the feast of first fruits was not observed to obtain deliverance from bondage or to secure entrance into Canaan, but because they had both been delivered and had entered Canaan; it was an indication of gratefulness. Thirdly, during the offering of first fruits the Israelite remembered their humble beginning and the many dangers, toils and snares through which God had brought

them. Like them, our offering should be accompanied with deep humility and self-effacement, knowing that it is not by our own power or wisdom that we acquired whatever we have. We should remember our humble background, divine mercy and how God's amazing grace brought us through many dangers lest we lose our heads in pride.

Yet another point is that the Israelites gave to God with the consciousness that they owed their survival to Him. And we also, in recognition that we owe our survival and blessings to God, must give, not as though we are doing Him a favour but as vassals paying tribute to their landlord. Lastly, the children of Israel could not use the fruit of their crops until they had offered the first fruits to God. The lesson from this is that believers must give God the first place and the first consideration in every area of their lives. We must give Him the very best of our talent, time and treasures like a songwriter aptly expressed. "Give of your best to the Master, Give Him first place in your heart; Give Him first place in you service, consecrate every part".

**RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR TITHING**  
(Deuteronomy 26:12-15; 12:5-14; 14:22-29; Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:24-28; Nehemiah 10:32-39; 13:10 Malachi 3:8-12).

God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of all their produce, as well as of their flocks and herds. This was separate from the special offerings they were required to make on specific occasions, such as during the annual feasts and the regular daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices.

***Question 4: What is the principal message conveyed by the ordinances of tithes and offering?***

This command to give their tithes was basically God's way of teaching them fiscal responsibility. He wanted His people to know that they are financially responsible for other people, and projects, which are far beyond the sphere of their personal needs, or circle of relations. For instance, there were three kinds of tithes Israelites were expected to pay, and they served different purpose. There was the basic regular tithe, which God said belonged to Him. This was given to the Levites who were engaged in

the services of the tabernacle(Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21,24). Then, there was a special tithe which was set apart to be used during the annual festivals. This was used by the giver and his family; and this provision precluded any claim of lack as an excuse for not participating in the annual festivals (Deuteronomy 14:22-26). And finally, there were also periodic tithes, every three years, to be disbursed to the Levites, strangers, orphans and widows (Deuteronomy 14:28,29).

So, it was not just a ten percent or only one tithe that the children of Israel were to give; in some years they were to give three tithes or thirty percent. And all Israelites were expected to give these tithes following the prescribed rules and regulations. One, payment of one kind of tithe did not excuse the payment of the others when they are due. Two, they were expected to pay their tithes to the place God appointed. Three, they had no right to swap or reduce the quantity of any of their tithes. Four, the tithes was not to be misappropriated. Five, failure to give the tithes was equated to robbing God, because it amounted to keeping back what does not belong to them, and this attracted a curse. Six, obedience and faithfulness in giving the tithes would bring a blessing and lead to prosperity. As a matter of fact, the offerer at the ceremony of the first fruits was required to make a solemn declaration before God, that he has been faithful in fulfilling the financial obligations of the tithes meant for the Levites and the poor; and that he had not used the tithes in a sacrilegious way, but have obeyed God's commandment. Then, after this solemn affirmation, he prayed for divine blessing (verse 15).

***Question 5: What practical lessons do believers learn from the principles of tithing in Israel?***

Believers must recognize and fulfill their financial responsibilities in the kingdom of God. It is our duty to contribute to the support of our ministers, to take care of day-to-day running of the church and her projects, to fund evangelistic outreaches, as well as care for the needy.

Another is the fact that there were years when the total tithes of an Israelite amounted to thirty percent of their

annual income. This is a challenge to believers to outgrow the minimum-tithe mentality, and press forward to a dispensation of Spirit-led giving that is ready to give all for the sake of Christ. We must realize that the true measure of our giving is not how much we give, but how much we keep back. That was the measure Christ used to measure the giving of the poor widow who was adjudged to have given most (Luke 21: 1-4).

Also, the fact that Israelites had to set apart a special tithe, every third year, for the care of the poor and underprivileged teaches us that the welfare of the less fortunate brethren should not be overlooked. There should be a specific plan for their regular support and care. As individuals, family, or local church, our budget must include a specific provision for the care of the needy. Besides, believers should not desecrate their tithes by giving it thoughtlessly in just any place they fancy. All tithes must be brought to the storehouse. Offerings meant for charity or special projects are quite different from the basic tithe, and they must not be omitted. Finally, we should give in faith, trusting God to bless us as He has promised and remembering that if we fail to obey God, there will be consequences of poverty or lack of satisfaction, even in times of apparent prosperity.

**RE-AFFIRMATION OF COVENANT-TREATY WITH GOD**  
(Deuteronomy 26:16-19; 4:29; 7:6; 28:1; Psalm 48:14; 1 Peter 2:9).

The ceremony of the first fruits was concluded with a reaffirmation of the covenant - treaty between Israel and God. After the offerers have ended their solemn declarations, then they were exhorted to adhere carefully to the terms of their original covenant agreement with God. In the reaffirmation, Israel openly declared and promised that the Lord would be their God, that they would be obedient and would keep His commandments. Then, on the other hand, God also certified Israel to be His peculiar people, on condition that they walked according to His statutes. He then promised to make them higher than all other nations, in praise, in fame and in honour.



**Question 6: How can a person enter into covenant with God and keep it?**

Believers also have a covenant relationship with God. Through repentance from sin and faith in Christ, we become sons and daughters of God. But then, we need to be separate from the world and remain obedient to God so that we can preserve our covenant with Him and enjoy its benefits. Unto those who come out of the world and remain separated, God promised, **“I will receive you, And will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”** (2 Corinthians 6:17,18).

In conclusion, the ceremony of the first fruits afforded the children of Israel an opportunity to remember God’s mercies, to testify of His faithfulness, to renew their faith in Him and to reaffirm their covenant-treaty with Him. And as believers, we must always remember all that the Lord has done for us and this should lead us to continually worship Him. But we must accompany this with practical holiness, obedience to God and daily renewal of our commitment and consecration to Him.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	1 Timothy	3-4	Deutero.	17-18
TUE	“	5-6	“	19-20
WED	2 Timothy	1-2	“	21-22
THUR	“	3-4	“	23-24
FRI	Titus	1-2	“	25-26
SAT	“	3	“	27
SUN	Hebrews	1-2	“	28

**END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES**

## NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

# 513 Lesson

## PAUL BIDS EPHESIAN ELDERS FAREWELL

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more” (Acts 20:25).

**TEXT:** Acts 20:17-38

The Apostle Paul had spent considerable time in Asia preaching and ministering the gospel. He had been a mighty instrument in God’s hand for the evangelization of Asia Minor with multitude of people turning to the Lord. His exploits were, however not without significant opposition and persecution from the enemies of the gospel as his life was under constant threat and danger. An instance was the chaos and commotion that attended his outreach, orchestrated by Demetrius, the spokesperson for the goddess Diana in the city of Ephesus.

After the uproar however, the apostle purposed to travel through Miletus en route to Jerusalem hoping to join the brethren for the feast of Pentecost. But he needed to meet the elders of the church in Ephesus for a valedictory fellowship because of his concern and love for the church in that city. **“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church”** (Acts 20:17). His foreboding and fear for the future of this church which had been born at great cost to his life (having fought with the beasts of Ephesus), and his admonition to steadfastness and vigilance form the thrust of this lesson.

***Question 1: What lesson can church leaders learn from Paul’s concern for the church in Ephesus?***

**CHARACTERISTICS OF SINCERE MINISTERS** (Acts 20:17-27; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-11; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; Matthew 20:25-28)

Now in Miletus, about 30 miles from Ephesus, where he had lived and worked for three years, Paul summoned the elders to a crucial meeting to deliberate on the future of the Ephesian church. Though in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, he considered the welfare of the brethren more important than this mission. Leaders and workers in God's vineyard need to constantly remember that the spiritual welfare of Christ's flock towers above other commitments. They should not forget that Christ paid the supreme price for His church; hence the need to always work to preserve it from spiritual wolves. Those who abandon Christ's sheep in pursuit of mundane profits should weigh their decision against the price Christ paid to purchase His church (Acts 20:28).

Rather than travel back to Ephesus where the dust is yet to settle from the previous opposition, coupled with his schedule, Paul sent for the elders to come over to Miletus which was a day and a half's journey.

***Question 2: From our text, mention some characteristics expected of true ministers of Christ.***

In Acts, we see Paul mostly as an evangelist but here, we have a unique picture of him as pastor. He was so attached to these brethren **“even as a nurse cherisheth her children....”** He is seen as a man of gracious, heavenly spirit, one who carried on the work by the power of divine grace in spite of sufferings and persecutions. His spirit and conversation were excellent and exemplary; the brethren knew the manner of his commitment, dedication, conversation, simplicity and godly sincerity (2 Corinthians 1:12). Two, he worked among them holily, justly, and unblameably (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 10). His manner of life was not hidden from the church; his light so shone that he could call them to testify. **“Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons”**. Three, the manner of his going in and out among them left no one in doubt of his sincerity and commitment to the work. He was consistent with himself. Four, his business was to serve the Lord, promote His honour and interest. In his ministry, he walked the

talk, that is, he practised what he taught. Five, he did his work with humility of mind. He did not attribute any of his exploits to his ingenuity and power but to the grace of God. He was willing to stoop to any service (Matthew 20:25-28).

Six, he served the Lord with many tears (Philippians 3: 18) and went on in his work in the face of much opposition and trials that befell him **“by the lying in wait of the Jews”**. He did not allow the hostile disposition of the people to dampen his resolve to preach so that he can approve himself to his Master. Seven, he was industrious in his ministry as he preached publicly and from house to house. Eight, he was a faithful minister and watchman who warned others about the coming doom (Ezekiel 33:1-7). **“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”** (Acts 20:26, 27). Nine, he did not add or subtract from the message given to him for the church. He withheld nothing that he considered profitable to the brethren. Indeed, Paul was a pattern worthy of emulation by all true ministers of the gospel (1 Timothy 1:16).

**COUNSEL FOR FAITHFUL MINISTERS** (Acts 20:28:32; 1 Timothy 4: 11-16; Songs 1:5,6; Ephesians 5:6-14, Colossians 2:8; Revelation 2:2; 1 Timothy 1:19,20; 4:1-3; 2:15,17,18; 3:1-9; Jeremiah 3:13-15).

***Question 3: Why should ministers of Christ take heed to their spiritual lives?***

**“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”** (Acts 20:28). Every called and commissioned minister has a two-fold duty: to take heed to himself and, to the flock committed to his charge. Ministers who neglect their own soul will never take faithful care of the souls of others. As servants of Christ, We must first watch over our conduct, conversation and ensure that we are examples to them that are without.

We should take heed that our disposition does not contradict our doctrine; that we do as well as we teach, shunning the sins we condemn in other people. **“Let no man despise thy youth... be thou an example of the believer...”** (1 Timothy 4: 12). We must parade sound spiritual credential at all times and be in constant development of our knowledge and understanding of Scripture; he that is otherwise is altogether unfit to teach men the mysteries of the kingdom.

Secondly, we are to take heed”...**to all the flock”**, to feed, instruct, teach, guide and guard against those ready to prey on the church. Their physical and spiritual welfare must be of great concern to the minister. We are to **“Feed”** and not to fleece the flock for our own personal gain, **“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind”** (1 Peter 5:2; Ezekiel 34:2-12; Luke 12:42). To do this effectively, we must labor to know their state, visit them from house to house; by so doing we shall be acquainted with their weaknesses, pains, problems, temptations and how best to assist, encourage and challenge them.

As Christ’s fold is flocked with persons of different pedigree-weak, strong, rich, poor, old or young- it is the duty of the minister to seek to promote the welfare of each individual. There should be no partiality in fellowship and relationship within the fold. True and faithful shepherds regard the interest of every sheep in the fold and seek the interest of all.

**CAUTION AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS** (Acts 20: 29-32; Jude 4, 14-20; 1 John 4;1-3; Matthew 7:15;24:24; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:1-5; Ezekiel 34:2,3; Zechariah 11: 17;2 Timothy 4:5; Colossians 1:28)

**“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock”** (Acts 20:29). By inspiration, the apostle could discern the future of the Ephesian church; he foresaw grievous wolves preying on the flock that Christ paid so great a price to purchase and which the apostle labored day and

night to preserve. Of particular note is that the wolves would even surface from within the church, not sparing the flock. There shall arise heretics peddling falsehood in order to mislead unsuspecting members. Persecutors, seducers and false teachers are wolves which seek to destroy the flock. Paul's presence had been the restraining force against the activities of these foes and a means of guarding the church and preserving it (Galatians. 2:4-6; 1 Timothy 1:20). Now that he was going, the possibility of these enemies scattering the flock became the apprehension of the apostle. They would attempt to bring in crooked and damnable heresies. **"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction"** (2 Peter 2:1). The most dangerous enemies which the church has had, have been nurtured in its own bosom. Some of these people embraced the pure gospel until they were captured by inordinate ambition, like Diotrephes (3 John 1:9), Phygellus or Hermogenes (1 Timothy 1: 15), or the likes of Hymeneus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20). Men who love power and yield to its lust cause divisions and retard the church's march to progress. It is therefore the duty of every believer to be on constant guard against these agents of the devil to avoid losing our heritage to the enemy. The church of Christ would least worry about external enemies if there are no foes in its own nest.

***Question 4: How can the church of Christ put the activities of false teachers in check?***

**COMMENDATION AND APOSTOLIC FAREWELL** (Acts 20:33-38; 14:23; John 17:17; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:12; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 1:4)

**"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"** (Acts 20:32). About to leave them, the Apostle committed them to the faithful care of God knowing full-well that in spite of dangers lurking in the church, God is able to preserve His own ( 2 Timothy 1:12). He commended

them to **“the word of his grace...”** which is both sure and steadfast and able to anchor their souls till the end.

The Word possesses the capacity to build and preserve those that have submitted their lives to be governed by it. It is a great preservative against spiritual decay and destruction, error and heresies. With a firm belief in the power of the word, Paul committed them into its protection. Believers who hope to overcome the world and its din cannot but make the Word their bulwark. The word of God is able to establish believers amidst the dangers to which they would be exposed.

As the Apostle rounded off his valedictory sermon, he laid bare his testimonial of sincerity, hard work, self-support and sacrificial service. **“I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel”**, he said. He was not of the company of shepherds who defraud the sheep in order to satisfy their lust for gain. His purpose of coming into the ministry was not to enrich himself at the expense of the church. In Corinth, Paul lived and labored with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:3); he referred elsewhere to the fact that he had deliberately supported himself, at least in part through his own labor (1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). He challenged the people to witness against him if he had eaten their bread for nought (though by law he is entitled to live by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14)). He was like Samuel who, at the twilight of his ministry called on the nation of Israel to witness against his stewardship (1 Samuel 12:3). How the servants of Christ today need to emulate this apostle to the Gentiles and live by example. Ministers must learn, where possible to support the work and be concerned about what they can give to their flock than what they can get from the flock. Paul shows that every Christian, when he dies, should leave behind a worthy testimonial.

Paul enjoined them to be committed to giving and supporting those that are less privileged because it attracts more blessings from the Lord. Those who practise giving enjoys far greater joy and fulfillment than those that are dependent on others. While the receiver had spent and long forgotten the gift, the giver continues to savour the

privilege of being a channel of blessing to someone. Our Lord Jesus Himself approves of this lifestyle when He said: **“It is more blessed to give than to receive”** (Verse 35).

***Question 5: How can believers develop the grace of giving?***

Opportunities abound near and around us to lend a helping hand to someone. We would not need to go too far before we see those who need our support, whether physical, spiritual, material or financial. The Scripture enjoins us not to be weary in well-doing, for we shall reap if we faint not (Galatians 6:9, 10) .

As this great Apostle took his leave of the Ephesian elders, he prayed with them and for them. It was a difficult parting not only because he said they would see his face no more but he had endeared himself to them and was precious in their sight. He had been an instrument of encouragement, succor and exemplary Christian living. He loved them with genuine love. Parting with those we really love is always painful. Believers and Christian leaders should so live and relate that when by reason of transfer or relocation, others might not have occasion to rejoice for it. It is a tragedy when the brethren push for transfer or relocation of their spiritual leaders. Paul and the brethren eventually parted with prayer and tears believing that, if not here, they would meet again at the feet of Christ.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	Hebrews	3-4	Deutero.	29-30
TUE	“	5-6	“	31
WED	“	7-8	“	32
THUR	“	9-10	“	33-34
FRI	“	11	Joshua	1-2
SAT	“	12-13	“	3-4
SUN	James	1-2	“	5-6



# 514 Lesson

## PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Then Paul answered, what mean ye to weep and to break mine hear? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

**TEXT:** Acts 21:1-17

**O**ur study focuses on Paul’s journey to Jerusalem where he declared “**the name of the Lord Jesus**” which he once cursed. He was ready not only to declare the name but be bound and even die for it.

The declaration of the gospel in these last days requires men of such consecration and commitment, men of courage and true conviction, We need men of firm resolution to spread the gospel anytime and everywhere, as the Holy spirit directs. We must not allow the feelings of friends and hostilities from foes to deter us from carrying out this God-given mandate. Paul lived his life to fulfil the call of God for Him. It was the desire to fulfil this divine mandate that he determined to go to Jerusalem in spite of dissuasions and warnings against it.

**Question 1: What should our attitude be to the declaration of the gospel, amidst danger ?**

Every believer must emulate Paul the Apostle to be ready to declare the whole gospel to the whole world. Our resolution must not depend on when it is safe land convenient but at times when we are confronted with adversities of life. Christ had shown us that we must move from city to city, and from towns to villages. We are compelled by the demand of duty and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the dying world without considering the dangers and risks involved.

## **PAUL'S JOURNEY FROM EPHESUS TO TYRE (Acts 21:1-4; Acts 21:14; 4:24).**

Paul and his company separated from the Ephesian brethren to continue their journey to Jerusalem. This was with much pain and difficulty as we see the free expression of love and concern for the beloved Apostle, who had served them with much love and sacrifice ministering to them with tears and in trials. They were heartbroken at the thought of not seeing the face of the Apostle again. Christian ministers, like Paul, are enjoined to build strong relationship with other believers by sharing, caring, rejoicing and praying with them. Ministers must not only share the gospel; they must be ready to share their affection and life with the brethren.

Paul with his company continued his journey passing through Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Phoenicia and set forth at Cyprus before landing at Tyre, where they tarried for seven days with the disciples. **“And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem”.** (Acts 21:4).

***Question 2: How did Paul respond to the warning of the Spirit through the disciples at Tyre?***

It is important to note that Paul did not disobey the warning by going to Jerusalem but he considered it in relation to his ultimate mission. He viewed the mission to Jerusalem in the light of God's revealed will for his life. The Spirit did not prohibit him from going to Jerusalem but warned him of the persecution that awaited him there.

Though the Spirit's warnings, Paul was fully prepared to face the risk of his life as he was determined to fulfil the mission he was called for. But the brethren at Tyre were very concerned over the safety of the trip. They dissuaded him from going so as to save his life from the impending danger. But Paul could not give in to such persuasions; he stood by his words because he knew that the Lord would take care of him. What a challenge to believers! The gospel must be preached amidst tribulations, distresses, persecutions, famines, nakedness, peril and sword.

**Question 3: What can we learn from Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem?**

First, ministers and believer must always consider the perfect will of God in every situation they find themselves. Second, they should not love their safety and well-being at the expense of reaching out to sinners for the salvation of their souls. Third, their decisions in every circumstance should be based on eternity. Fourth, they should be knowledgeable of the Spirit's direction and the revealed will of God. Fifth, the care and concern for fellow believers should not hinder them from doing the will of God.

As the brethren could not dissuade Paul from his trip, they gathered the brethren to pray with him. This act exhibited by the brethren is quite commendable and instructive at this point in Paul's ministry. We recall that he prayed with the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:36) before leaving them. Now we see him pray with the disciples at Tyre. This underscores the priority and power of corporate prayers especially when we are on evangelistic outreaches and special assignments.

The power of prayer in believers' ministry cannot be overemphasized. Hence, the church must rise like the early Apostles who "...**continued with one accord in prayer and supplication**" (Act 1:14). In unity, believers must see prayer as the only potent force to confront the devil and rescue souls from satanic holds. Spiritual warfare is therefore indispensable for every soul winner especially now that we have the mandate to Disciple A Whole Nation (DAWN).

**Question 4: Highlight the essential conditions for effective corporate prayers.**

Effective corporate prayers among believers would require that believers be united in their prayers (Acts 1:14). There must be unity of heart and purpose. Second, their lives must be free from all secret and open sins. There must be purity among the brethren (1 Peter 1:14-16). Third, they must pray in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:16). Fourth, prayers must be in agreement with the scriptures and

the will of God (1 John 5:14). Fifth, they must exercise faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Hebrew 11:6, Acts 20:21). Sixth, there must be perseverance and persistence in prayers (Luke 18:5). Seventh, all forms of doubts and unbelief should be completely eliminated (James 1:6).

**PAUL AT CAESAREA WITH PHILIP THE EVANGELIST**  
(Acts 21:6-9; 8:4-40; Acts 6:5).

**“And the next day we that were of Paul’s company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him”** (Acts 21:8) On arrival at Caesarea, Paul and his company abode with Philip the evangelist who was one of those sent forth as itinerant preachers, and one of the seven selected as deacons (Acts 6:5). It is ironical that Philip, in whose house Paul now lodged, was initially driven out of his house by Paul’s persecution (Acts 8:15). Believers should emulate the exemplary lifestyle of Philip. Former injustice and injuries should be forgiven and forgotten upon true repentance and we should receive such into our warm embrace whom Christ has taken into His bosom.

***Question 5: What lessons can believers learn from the life of Philip and his household?***

Philip demonstrated great humility and meekness, which is very essential for any pilgrim desiring to be used by God. He faithfully served as deacon, became an evangelist to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Second, he demonstrated prompt forgiveness of all offences committed against him by Paul in his days of persecution. We should also learn to forgive those who hurt us at one time or the other, whether in ministry or personal lives. Third, Philip maintained a healthy balance between his spiritual and marital life as he was able to raise virtuous daughters who became prophets in the church (Acts 21:9). Fourth, we found the power of positive influence in Philip as he was able to influence his four daughters into their prophetic ministry. Fifth, Philip exhibited Christian hospitality as his house was a ready lodging place for saints and strangers (1 Peter 4:9; Acts 21:8)

**PROPHECY OF AGABUS AT CAESAREA** (Acts 21:10-14; 11:27, 28).

Agabus was a prophet who came to Caesarea from Judea with an express message from the Holy Spirit for Paul. Agabus used the sign after the manner of the old prophets who often prophesied with symbols and expressions to drive home their message. Thus, Isaiah went barefooted to show what the people of Israel should meet under the king of Assyria (Isaiah 20:2). Ezekiel was to pack up his stuff and remove, to signify the people's removal into captivity (Ezekiel 12:1-7).

It pleased God to teach His people by visible signs as well as by the word so that they might make deeper expressions upon their minds. In like manner, Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet signifying what would happen to him at Jerusalem. From this we observe the great goodness and condescension of God in warning the Apostle ahead of time. The Holy Spirit first made it known **"that bonds and afflictions abide me"** (Acts 20:23). The disciples at Tyre also prophesied same (Acts 21:4). All these were to enable the Apostle to be thoroughly prepared for the suffering ahead of him.

God always prepares His children in advance for any condition they are to pass through in life. Paul was not therefore surprised at the prophecies but prepared adequately to meet with the challenges. His being forewarned made him to be forearmed as he proceeded to Jerusalem.

**"Then Paul answered, what mean ye to weep and break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"** (Acts 21:13). Paul's mind was fixed on going to Jerusalem; he felt he was prepared enough for whatever awaited him. Expressions of tenderness among friends and brethren are proper. Tears may be inevitable when parting with those we love; but such expressions ought not to be allowed to interfere with the convictions of duty in our minds. We do not need to discourage and distract others from their duty posts. Wisdom demands that we

commit them to the Lord through prayers. In addition, we should lend them all necessary support within our power and commend them to the protection of the Lord. **“And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done”** (Acts 21:14).

***Question 6: How can believers and ministers be assisted in doing God’s will?***

Ministers and Christian workers should understand that life on earth is to please God. Paul knew that his life could only be fruitful and fulfilled when he pleases God with it. Of course, no one enjoys pain, but a faithful disciple will want to please God in every situation. Our desire to please God should overshadow our desire to avoid hardship and suffering. When we really want to do God’s will, we must accept all that comes with it – even the pain. It is only then that we can rightly say, **“the will of the Lord be done”**.

**PAUL FINALLY ARRIVES AT JERUSALEM** (Acts 21:15-17; 2 Corinthians 6:3-5; Job 32:7; 2 Timothy 4:5-7)

It is interesting to note that Paul who did not allow anything or anyone to deter him from doing God’s will finally arrived at Jerusalem with some disciples from Caesarea who brought him to the house of an old disciple named Mnason of Cyprus. The Apostle was gladly received by the brethren at Jerusalem. It is very instructive to observe that he chose to abide with an old disciple of Christ. Such a prudent and experienced man will no doubt contribute positively towards the success of his ministry at Jerusalem. Paul enjoyed warm reception because he lived to please God that called him out of darkness to make His name known to the Gentiles. He chose a path unpopular and uncommon to men, motivated only by his faith in the promises of the everlasting Father.

No matter how demanding, every born again child of God is expected to take the message of hope to the sinning world. But this can only be achieved by daring and militant saints like Paul the Apostle.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	James	3-4	Joshua	7
TUE	“	5	“	8-9
WED	1 Peter	1-2	“	10
THUR	“	3	“	11-12
FRI	“	4-5	“	13-14
SAT	2 Peter	1-2	“	15
SUN	“	3	“	16-17

# 515 Lesson

## PAUL TAKES A JEWISH VOW

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law” (1 Corinthians 9:20).

**TEXT: Acts 21:18-26**

**P**aul’s last trip to Jerusalem in the preceding verses of this chapter was dotted with clear foreboding. Prophet Agabus from Judea and the disciples at Tyre in Syria warned him of the dangers that he himself had known would befall him there (Acts 21: 10-14; Acts 20:22,23). In the light of this revelation, his own team members besought him not to go to Jerusalem. But he had resolved to do what he believed was God’s will for him no matter the severity of the troubles and persecutions that he would suffer. Christ, our Master knew that His bitter suffering and cruel death was the Father’s will; so, He set his face like a flint and went to the cross. Like the apostle, we should manifest Christ-like disposition by subordinating our will to God’s. Paul’s testimony of success in ministry before Apostle James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem, their counsel to him and his response form the basis of this study.

**MUTUAL AFFECTION AMONG THE APOSTLES** (Acts 21:17,18; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Galatians 2:7; Psalm 66:6)

Apostle Paul and his team were cordially received by the brethren upon their arrival in Jerusalem. The next day, a meeting was arranged with James (the half-brother of our Lord Jesus) and all the elders in the church. **“And the day the following Paul went with us unto James and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them he declared particularly what God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry”** (verse 18, 19). Paul’s humble disposition showed forth in the respect he



paid to James and the elders in Jerusalem. Though he was an apostle, he respected the office of the local church. He also spoke in humility of not what he had achieved among the Gentiles, but **“what God wrought among the Gentiles”**. Paul saw himself as a mere instrument in the hand of God, who in reality did the gracious work of salvation among the Gentiles. The habit of ascribing all the glory to God is a pattern of the life of the apostle worthy of emulation. Writing to the church in Corinth and in an effort to cure their divisive attitude, he said, **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planted anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase”** (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7). In the same spirit, he attributed the effectiveness of the ministry of Apostle Peter and his to God, when he wrote to exhort the church in Galatia., **“for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles”**( Galatians 2:8)

***Question 1: What Christian virtue can believers learn from Paul’s account of his ministry to the Gentiles?***

Paul gave his account in such a way as to make the grace of God, rather than his own ministry-ability the reason for his success among the Gentiles. This is a rebuke to believers who thoughtlessly appropriate the glory that is God’s. The apostle so ascribed all the glory to God that his audience **“when they heard it, glorified the Lord”** and not him. He did not structure his testimony in such a way as to draw his audience into admiration or praise for him. He played down the sufferings, persecutions and physical dangers he endured in the mission field in order not to draw unnecessary sympathy to himself. First, Paul’s heart was filled with gratitude for the grace of God in his ministry and then he designed it that his audience may help him exalt God.

**“Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews are which believe and they are zealous of the law”** (verse 20). While the Lord was mighty in Paul toward the Gentiles, He equally wrought effectually in Jerusalem to

the apostleship of the circumcision. Paul must no doubt have been as happy with the growth of Jerusalem church as James and the elders were at the growth of the gospel among the Gentiles. The apostles had mutual joy at one another's success in the vineyard of their common Saviour. The lesson here is that the cause of the foreign mission and that of the home mission should always enjoy our fullest mutual sympathy and support. It is also noteworthy that though it would seem that God had prospered Paul's ministry more than theirs, the Jerusalem elder's attitude to and relationship with the apostle did not portray any form of envy or competition. Contrariwise, they glorified God, which was all the apostle needed to be encouraged.

**MISREPRESENTATION OF APOSTOLIC MESSAGE** (Acts 21:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; Philippians 3:5; Romans 2:28, 29; Acts 18:18; Romans 3:30).

Basking in the joy of fellowship occasioned by Paul's visit and testimony of breakthrough in ministry among the Gentiles, James and the other elders were concerned about his reputation and safety among the Jews in Jerusalem. They wished that apostle Paul would move freely both among the Jews and in the temple, and perhaps have opportunity to exhort and edify the Jerusalem church. Nothing could be more desirable than this to the apostle whose **"heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved"** (Roman 10:1). The leaders in Jerusalem church were also concerned that Paul's presence should not engender division or disruption in the church. There was however a hindrance: **"... they (the Jews in Jerusalem church) are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcized their children, neither to walk after the customs"**(verse 21).

***Question 2: Evaluate the truth of the allegations by the Jews against Paul's doctrines.***

Although Paul taught that it was inconsequential to one's salvation whether or not one was circumcised, he did not teach people to forsake the custom of the Jews. To the Corinthian church, he wrote, **"Circumcision is nothing,**

**and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God”** ( 1 Corinthians 7:19). To the Galatians, **“...for in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love”** (Galatians 5:6). Both epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians had been written before Paul’s visit to Jerusalem. The reference to circumcision or uncircumcision was clearly to state that salvation has nothing to do with whether one was circumcised or not. Writing to the Philippian church, the apostle owned up to his own circumcision but repudiated its relevance to the salvation of his soul: **“circumcized the eighth day , of the stock of Israel...an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee”**. He counted these “gainful” antecedents as dung while emphasizing that what was important was **“not circumcision which is outward in the flesh”** but that true **“circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God”**(Romans 2:28,29). The apostle himself had Timothy circumcized before taking him along in his second missionary journey because it was expedient to the cause of the gospel among the Jews in Derbe and Lystra. He also had taken a Jewish vow himself while in Corinth (Acts 18:18). Paul did not in any place tell the Jews that it was wrong for them to circumcize their children or to practice their customs, provided they did not make those customs the basis of their hope of salvation.

***Question 3: What traditions and observances do some people today ignorantly think are necessary for salvation?***

While affirming that **“circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing”**, the apostle repeatedly emphasized that only faith in Christ is necessary for salvation both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, **“seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, (in Jesus Christ) and the uncircumcision through faith”** (Romans 3:30).

The charge of **“teaching all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses”** was similar to that laid against Stephen. Stephen’s accusers claimed, **“we**

**have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God”** (Acts 6:11). The controversy the Jews had with the early Apostles of Christ stemmed from a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between the Mosaic laws and ordinances on one hand, and the gospel on the other.

***Question 4: What is the relationship between Mosaic ordinances and the gospel?***

The law and ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation served to reveal the holiness and justice of God, and the life-taking gravity of sin. The law in itself “**is holy, and the commandment holy, and good**” (Romans 7:12). But man’s experience under the law only showed how the best of men, with the best of intentions, is incapable of living up to the standard of God’s law. The law therefore exposed man’s innate sinfulness and thereby his need for a Saviour who in a representative capacity would fulfill God’s law and also submit to a vicarious death for man’s sin, as demanded by the law (Acts 13:39). Faith in Christ therefore enables us to appropriate the benefits of His righteousness and substitutionary death.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared, “**Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill**” (Matthew 5:17). In the New Testament, keeping the ordinances of Mosaic laws and ordinances is superseded by the gospel because they were types and shadows of which Christ is the substance and fulfillment (Colossians 2:17; Hebrew 10:10). The gospel of Christ introduced a new dispensation for Jews and Gentiles alike “**For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us**” (Ephesians 2:14).

**MANIFESTATION OF APOSTOLIC ZEAL FOR EVANGELIZATION** (Acts 21:23-26; Romans 9:3,1 Corinthians 1:32,33; 9:20).

The leaders in Jerusalem asked Paul to demonstrate his reverence for Jewish laws by identifying himself with four men who were under a Nazarite vow, paying their sacrifice expenses and being with them in the temple during their

purification rites. **“We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, where of they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law”** (verse 23,24). This suggestion, no doubt, was made out of a desire to protect Paul from false accusations and to afford him acceptance and free access in the temple.

**Question 5: Why did Apostle Paul agree to identify with Mosaic laws while in Jerusalem? What lesson does his conduct teach us?**

Paul’s zeal for the salvation of the Jews was most fervent. Writing to the Roman church, he declared: **“for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh”** (Romans 9:3). His earlier insistence to go to Jerusalem in spite of the foreseen difficulties was born out of the rare opportunity the feast in Jerusalem presented to preach the gospel to the large number of Jews who would gather there. Beside bringing **“certain contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem”** (Romans 15:26), he was also to unify the Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul himself knew that the cause of the gospel among the Jews would suffer if there was any imputation or accusation against himself or any preacher. He was therefore willing to subordinate the observance of a harmless Jewish ceremony to the paramount business of soul-winning. Here, Paul’s action was consistent with his own principle in ministry not to offend the Jews, the Gentiles or the church but to do everything to save all categories of sinners (1 Corinthians 9:20). Paul’s evangelistic zeal challenges us today, particularly in view of the better facilities and opportunities available to today’s believers. Like the apostle, we must be prayerfully creative in turning available privileges into profitable gospel opportunities, and thereby fulfill the great commission.

## **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	1 John	1-2	Joshua	18
TUE	“	3-4	“	19
WED	“	5	“	20-21
THUR	2 John & 3 John		“	22
FRI	Jude	1	“	23-24
SAT	Revelation	1-2	Judges	1
SUN	“	3-4	“	2-3

# 516 LESSON

## THE JEWS APPREHEND PAUL

**MEMMORY VERSE:** “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

**TEXT:** Acts 21:27-40

**T**he text is an account of how Asian Jews who had returned to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem raised an unjustifiable attack on Apostle Paul. This is one of the many scripture records of instances when Satan’s agents in the guise of religious zeal trump charges up in order to wreck havoc on the saints. But this incident is neither unexpected nor unusual. The Lord had predicted that such situations would arise against His ministers. So, as it did not surprise the apostle, it should not jolt any genuine believer.

**Question 1:** *What challenges can the contemporary believer receive from Paul’s experience in our text?*

The manner with which the Jews apprehended Paul and all he was made to go through is a pointer to the ease and speed at which graceless bigots conspire against reason to persecute the redeemed. This should challenge Christians to respond swiftly to calls to prayer and service. The Incident also shows that persecution, sometimes, could be unavoidable. Saints need not violate any moral or social law to incur the wrath of the unregenerate. All it requires is to dare to be different, declare one’s stand for Christ and uncompromisingly defend His word (John 15:18-21)

As the passage closes, Paul proves to be gospel general indeed. Being unperturbed by the battery, he defied all odds to speak to the people. Thus, he left a challenging legacy to believers in subsequent generations on how to face the continuing persecution against the church.

**CONTINUING PERSECUTION AGAINST GOD'S MINISTERS** (Acts 21:27-31; 2 Kings 22:24-27; Jeremiah 37:11-16; Acts 9:19-25; 16:16-24; 17:1-5, 10-13, 18:12; 2Corinthians 11:24-33; 2 Timothy 3:12).

The experience in our text was not new to Paul. Right from the earliest days after his conversion, persecutions had constantly trailed the course of his Christian life and ministry at Damascus, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, etc. In most cases, the persecution arose without provocation. **“And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him”** (verse 27) and, immediately, raised accusations against him. The charges against Paul remind one of Stephen's in which Paul himself was a notable figure. Then, he was an unconscious tool in the hand of Satan. Now he was a conscious and willing target of the mob's wrath.

***Question 2: Compare the attack on Paul with that of Stephen.***

The charges against Paul were similar to that of Stephen in both content and intent. Both were accused of blasphemy against the temple and the law. In addition, Paul was charged with teaching against the Jewish people and nation. In both instances, people were emotionally stirred up with the intention of killing the gospel ministers. The prosecution modes were also similar. The accusers did not respect due process. They wanted judgment without justice. Without waiting for any judicial pronouncement on Stephen, they stoned him to death. Likewise here, the Jews did not recourse to any Jewish or Roman legal institution. Even when Lysias; the chief captain waded into the matter they still demanded for execution without prosecution as they cried **“away with him”** (verse 36).

***Question 3: What lessons can we learn from this turn of events in Paul's life?***

The event was not an indication of divine vendetta against Paul. When a sinner genuinely repents, God no longer



remembers his past evil deeds. But having become a beloved child of God, he becomes Satan's avowed enemy. Satan therefore mobilizes his hordes of evil spiritual and human agents to unleash terrible temptations, persecutions and afflictions against the believer with the aim of making him to renounce his faith in Christ. Sometimes, Satan uses circumstances, situations and people to bring tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword against the believer. The believer must bear in mind therefore that the purpose of Satan and his agents in all that they do is to separate the believer **"from the love of God"**. However, through it all, the Lord promises to be present to defend, protect and preserve His elect. The believer should therefore consider it all as a light affliction which will attract far more exceeding weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17; Jeremiah 1:8,18,19; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6).

***Question 4: Critically assess the allegations made against Paul.***

The first three charges related to his doctrine while the fourth was a supposed misconduct. The first was that he taught against the people (the Jews). Paul had, through his gospel messages, been at the vanguard of promoting liberal social relations between Jews and Gentiles. He had maintained that the cross of Christ has removed any class distinction between the two. The Jews felt that was eroding their contrived superiority over others. To the persecutors, propagating such views was grievous and unpardonable. But Paul's teaching in this regard agrees with that of John the Baptist and Christ's who had taught that He would bring **"other sheep"** which are not of the Jewish stock together with the Gentiles so that there would be **"one fold and one shepherd"** (Matthew 3:7-9; John 10:14-16; Romans 10:10-13).

The second allegation was that he taught against the law of Moses. It was true that Paul had maintained that Christ was higher and more honourable than Moses. He had also asserted that the believer in Christ was a spiritual Jew and in God's reckoning superior to the natural Jew. The clear implication of this was that the

natural Jew who did not believe in Christ was relegated and rejected (Galatians 2:15, 16). Also, the Jews were obviously offended by Paul's stand against the imposition of Jewish ceremonial customs especially circumcision as a condition for the salvation of Gentiles. It is noteworthy that despite his conviction, he never forced any Jew to forsake their law. It is even more so that early in his second missionary journey, he had circumcised Timothy, a promising young Christian son of a Jewess. Also, at the time he was apprehended, Paul himself was undergoing purification in the temple according to Jewish custom. Therefore, the allegation that he denigrated the law was untenable. Besides, their contention with Paul is a proof of their own guilt in disobeying Moses whom they purport to defend (Deuteronomy 18:15-19).

The third charge related to disregard of the temple. This was incorrect. If he despised the temple, he would not have been found there conforming to its order. The fourth accusation was that he had brought in Gentiles to defile the holy place. This, again, is untenable. The temple had a court of the Gentiles where any non-Hebrew could worship the God of Israel. This accusation was based on the supposition that Paul had brought Trophimum into the sacred section. Though the Ephesian had been seen in Paul's company in the streets, he was nowhere around the temple at the time of the arrest. Thus, the attempt to kill Paul shows how grossly unruly the unregenerate can be. It is a clear example of how uncivil enemies of the cross can be in their perverted determination to crush those whose doctrine threatens their errors.

***Question 5: Why are believers persecuted on false charges?***

Satan's kingdom on earth thrives on deceit. But the truth of the gospel dispossesses him of his captives. The desperation to prevent this is one reason the devil subtly mobilizes situations and people under his influence to attack or detract believers from preaching sound doctrines. Another reason people detest the light of Christ is the pervasive human depravity. **“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light ... Lest his deeds should**

**be reproved”** (John 8:12, 44-47). Seeing the spread of the Christian faith is a threat to the office and honour of leaders of false religions, and persecution of believers a veritable tool in hindering the spread of the gospel, false religionists do not spare efforts at persecuting believers to stop the declaration of the gospel.

Another reason believers are attacked by unbelievers is the latter’s concern for pecuniary advantage (Act 19:24-27). Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths fall into this bracket. However tough or rough the antagonism, the Lord God will keep His Pledge to build His church regardless of the opposition of the gates of hell. In the same vein, He will as always, fulfil His word to be present to protect his ministers (Psalm 23:4; Matthew 10:29-33).

**CONSTANT PROTECTION THROUGH GOD’S MEANS**  
(Acts 21:31-35; Jeremiah 26:16-24; 38:7-13; Daniel 3:13-25; 5:17-40; 9:19-25)

***Question 6: What lesson can persecuted believers learn from the timely intervention of Lysias?***

It is consoling that God always provides protection and timely intervention in times of travails of His people and ministers. The Lord frustrated the intention of the enemies of the gospel to kill Paul. Rather, the incident became a means to enable the apostle fulfil his divine mandate to bear the name of Christ **“before the Gentiles and kings”** (Acts 9:15;26:19; Philippians 1:12-13). Believers and gospel ministers should therefore confidently continue their work for God with full persuasion that no counsel of the ungodly will succeed against their lives until their work on earth is complete. The Christian should learn to trust that God can use a seemingly bad situation to enhance the growth of His work, expand the resourcefulness of His ministers and transport them to higher spiritual levels.

God’s nature, His concern for his ministers and His promises regarding their preservation in times of crises in the course of discharging their duties are here evident. God’s ministers are as precious as the apple of His eyes. He has promised His presence in whatever location or situation to fortify, defend and preserve them (Isaiah 43:2;

Jeremiah 15:20-24; Matthew 28:20). He has power to intervene either directly or indirectly in matters affecting them. He can use elements and features of nature, angles, humans or anything to truncate the enemies' evil machinations. In this instance, He intervened indirectly by stirring Lysias and his soldiers to serve as a lifeguard to bear Paul up from the rage of the mob.

The command to bind Paul was to assure the Jews that he did not intend to acquit him but to secure him for prosecution. The binding of Paul was to lead to his being borne by the soldiers from the reach of violent Jews. Though they demanded his execution, Lysias was committed to hearing the other side of the story before condemning him. So he demanded of them who he was and what he had done. But, the mob could not give a specific charge against Paul just as it was in the Ephesian riot.

### **CONFIDENT DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE** (Acts 21:36-40; 4:1,2; 4:17-22; 14:19-22; 2 Timothy 4:1,2)

Following the pattern of his Lord's compassion for humanity even at the hour of his greatest trouble on earth, Paul still wanted to minister to his persecutors. The first step was to secure the permission of the chief captain who was surprised that Paul could speak Greek, having mistaken him for an Egyptian who has caused uproar a few years before the incident in the text. However, Paul soon declared that his identity was a sharp contrast to Lysias' supposition. Identifying himself, Paul said, **"I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city"** (verse 39).

***Question 7: What is the significance of Paul's defence?***

Paul identified with his persecutors by nationality and described the dignity of his nativity; thus, making their attack on him questionable. That they attempted to kill a kinsman of theirs without a cause was altogether worrisome. Being a freeborn from Tarsus, a rich and fruitful metropolis in Cilicia, they ought not to have scourged him. Worse, they had attempted to kill him without trial or an

order by a Roman court. This indicated the gravity of his persecutors' offence. Thus, the Jews were in danger of being called to question on the matter. However, Paul's intention in so declaring his identity was to prove that he was a responsible, respectable citizen, so that he might be allowed to speak.

Having been allowed to speak, Paul beckoned with his hand until there was silence and he spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue (verse 40). Paul's tact is as commendable as it is instructive. He spoke Greek to Lysias and Hebrew to the Jews. As many believers as have bilingual or multilingual competencies should use their privilege wisely in the course of ministry. Believers should learn to use all their assets, whether physical, educational or spiritual to further the cause of the gospel. Also, educated ministers could take a cue from Paul to use their native tongue to minister to their native people for maximum impact. As the chapter closed, Paul's mastery over his pains, passions and situation is worthy of note as he challenges the Christian to a life of courage and commitment to Christ's cause in season and out of season.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	Revelation	5-6	Judges	4-5
TUE	“	7-8	“	6
WED	“	9-10	“	7-8
THUR	“	11-12	“	9
FRI	“	13-14	“	10-11
SAT	“	15-16	“	12-13
SUN	“	17-18	“	14-15

# 517 LESSON

## PAUL'S DEFENCE BEFORE THE PEOPLE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you” (Acts 22:1).

**TEXT:** Acts 22:1-30

**O**ur study centers on the defence of Paul who was accused of being the one “**that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place**” (Acts 21:28).

In his defence, Paul spoke the Hebrew language to the people not only to communicate but to show his respect for the Jewish laws and custom. He equally accorded them all dignity and honour, saying, “**Men, brethren and fathers.**” He did not render evil for evil; he had learnt from Christ how to suffer reproaches for the gospel. Disciples of Christ must learn how to accord people honour and dignity. They must also communicate effectively with the language of the people. This is important if our evangelistic outreaches are going to be fruitful. With this approach, Paul was able to gain the full attention of his audience. “**And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence**”.

**Question 1: What lessons can believers learn from Paul's defence?**

All defenders of the gospel must rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who will put the right words in their mouth. Second, we must apply tact and wisdom in establishing a common point of contact with the people. Third, we must hold our accusers with the right dignity and honour, even when they are difficult and hostile.

Fourth, we must use the language that is very familiar with our audience. Fifth, we must maintain a strong and

solid testimony of Christ. Paul was very respectful in his defence, showing due honour to members of the Sanhedrin by addressing them as **“Men, brethren and fathers.”**

**THE BIRTH AND BACKGROUND OF PAUL THE APOSTLE** (Acts 22:1-5; 5:34; 21:20-39; 26:5; Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:5)

**“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia”**. Paul was born in Tarsus a city which was the capital of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor. It was distinguished for the culture of Greek, philosophy and literature; at a time, its schools became a rival of Athens and Alexandria. Paul proudly declared his place of birth to refute their charge that he taught against Moses, referring to his education under their venerated doctor of the law, Gamaliel the most distinguished Jewish Rabbi of his time. Paul mentioned his background to show that he was entitled to the privileges of the Jews and that he had opportunity to become fully acquainted with the nature of the law.

By saying he was at one time Zealous for the God as any of his listeners, Paul was acknowledging their sincere motives behind the desire to kill him. He recognized the fact that he would have done the same to Christian leaders a few years earlier. With this, he established a common point of contact with his audience before launching into full-scale defence of the Christian faith. In witnessing, believers should first identify with their audience as this will likely compel them to listen if they feel a common bond with the minister.

Paul teaches all believers especially ministers of the gospel that sound reasoning is good as we endeavour to defend the faith. But it is very important to simply share the testimony of what Christ has done in our lives. It is equally important to note that Paul used his times of persecution as opportunity to witness. Little did his persecutors know that they were creating a platform for him to address the entire Sanhedrin. If we are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will always see increased opportunities to share our faith, even in the face of opposition.

***Question 2: What is the impact of our personal testimonies as we declare the gospel?***

Believers' testimony lends credence to the efficacy of the power of the gospel; it reinforces all our messages. No matter how we present the gospel, not everyone will accept our message and believe our testimony but we must faithfully and responsibly give it and leave the results to God.

**PAUL'S MIRACULOUS CONVERSION AND BAPTISM BY ANANIAS** (Acts 22:6-16; 9:3-17; 26:12,13; 10:22).

**“And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me”** (Acts 22:6). Paul at this point, considered his extraordinary conversion as a complete demonstration of the truth of Christianity. His sudden transition from a furious persecutor to a zealous preacher was proof of a supernatural touch that transcends human understanding. **“And one Ananias, a devout man accounting to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him”** (Acts 22:12,13). On arrival at Damascus Paul met with Ananias, a devout man according to the law. He was a disciple of Christ who observed the law of the fathers and lived upon the promise made unto the fathers; he had a good report of all. It was this disciple who ministered unto Paul to receive his sight.

***Question 3: What are the salient qualities that endeared Ananias of Damascus to the Lord?***

It is very instructive that God used a disciple like Ananias to comfort and confirm the faith of the Apostle. We observe in him that a true disciple must be devoted to God and His word; he must have a good report of all (Acts 22:12; 1 Timothy 3:7); he must be very sensitive to the Spirit and also be a man of prayer. These are qualifications for our being used by God. There are lots of Sauls on our streets that must be comforted and confirmed by our ministry.



There are many blind men and women we must, minister to for their eyes to be open to the mysteries of the Kingdom. If only we can become as devoted and Spirit-filled like Ananias of Damascus, the Lord will use us beyond our expectation. Ananias was also very courageous to meet a Saul of Tarsus. This courage came as a result of the holy lifestyle of the disciple. The righteous is always as bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1). Believers and ministers of the gospel should therefore rise up with courage and conviction to the door of ministry that is clearly open to them.

***Question 4: How can believers be faithful witnesses of what they have seen and heard?***

The Spirit charged Paul to witness of the Lord Jesus that appeared to him. As a faithful witness, he must declare both what he had seen and what he heard from the Lord. A faithful witness must be careful not to compromise his role; he must be courageous to declare the totality of the gospel. But he needs the power of the Holy Spirit to do the work faithfully. **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). All believers are called to be empowered to be true witnesses. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to move from his immediate environment (Jerusalem) to faraway mission fields witnessing of what he had both seen and heard of the power of the gospel.

**PAUL’S TESTIMONY OF HIS COMMISSION TO THE GENTILES** (Acts 22:17-21; 9:26; 2 Corinthians 12:2).

**“And it came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple; I was in a trance”** (Acts 22:17). After stating his miraculous conversion, Paul continued his defence by declaring his wonderful desire of preaching to the Jews instead of the Gentiles. As he was praying in the temple he had a vision in which he was commanded to hasten out of the city, because his former zeal in opposing the gospel would hinder his present preaching of it. Hence, he was commanded to

depart from the city of Jerusalem and preach that gospel to the despised gentiles.

We must understand from the Apostle's experience that carnal reasoning is apt to arise in the heart of God's servants and cause them to be stubborn to divine commands. Here the Apostle reasoned that he saw greater probability of doing well in his ministry among the Jews than he could hope for among the Gentiles. Believers are expected to instantly obey God's revealed will and subject their personal will and preference to His absolute will. Our blessing and success only come as we totally obey the will of God for our lives.

The Jews were supposed to be a light to the Gentiles but they had renounced that mission by becoming separatists. God's plan, however, was that the Gentiles would hear the gospel through Jewish Christians like Paul and Peter.

**THE MOB'S VIOLENT INTERRUPTION AND PAUL'S PLEA OF HIS ROMAN CITIZENSHIP** (Acts 22:20-30; Hebrews 11:36; Acts 16:37)

The Jews expressed Strong indignation and abhorrence to the mention of the word Gentile in Paul's defence. They believed Paul taught the people that the Gentiles might be saved without conforming to the law of Moses. They also felt his speech implied that the Jews were more hardened than the Gentiles and that he had a greater prospect in bringing the Gentiles to God than he had with regards to the Jews. It was for this reason that the Jews threatened to stone him as they considered him as the worst villain unworthy to live.

**“Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live”.** The Chief Captain took Paul away for safety ordering that he be brought to the castle where he could be further examined by scourging. This process of examination is by subjecting the person to serious torture and torment as to extract a confession, where a person is standing trial for a crime. It was often applied among the ancients. The usual mode is by rack, but with the passage of time various kinds of torments had been invented in order to extort confessions of guilt from the

accused. The whole practice is considered one of the most flagrant violations of justice and one of the foulest blots on human nature.

The Chief Captain who did not understand the defence Paul made to the people in Hebrew language, supposing from the violence exhibited by the Jews against him, felt Paul must have been guilty of a serious crime and therefore should be subjected to such a dehumanizing torture and torment so as to get a guilty confession from him.

***Question 5: Why did Paul, being a Jew, claim to be a Roman citizen?***

**“And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?”** (Acts 22:25). Paul was born in Tarsus, a city privileged by the emperor to share the same province with the Romans. Apart from his sound knowledge of the Scripture, as a Roman citizen, he knew his rights and responsibilities. Believers must be knowledgeable of the law of the land in which they operate. This will go a long way in preventing any unnecessary harassment or embarrassment from the society. As believers, we must employ lawful means which God has given to us to repel or prevent an injury. To prevent being scourged by the Jews, Paul Pleaded his privilege of Roman citizenship which exempted him from all trials and punishment. By law, a Roman citizen could not be punished until he had been proven guilty of a crime. Paul was eventually loosed based on his claim of being a Roman citizen to continue his defence before the council. We can see how God used persecution as an opportunity for Paul to witness to the people. When we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading. He grants us increasing opportunities of ministry even in the midst of stiff opposition and threats.

## **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	Revelation	19-20	Judges	16
TUE	“	21-22	“	17-18
WED	Matthew	1-2	“	19
THUR	“	3-4	“	20
FRI	“	5	“	21
SAT	“	6-7	Ruth	1-2
SUN	“	8-9	“	3-4

**END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES**

## BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

# 518 Lesson

## THE ACT OF SOUL WINNING

**MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Psalm 68:11)**

**TEXT: Acts 16:1-10**

**T**he New Testament opens with the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, They mirror the life and ministry of Jesus Christ on earth as He **“went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil”** (Acts 10:38) and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, The revelation of Christ in the gospels shows how He died, was buried and resurrected so that the world through Him might know God and be saved (John 14:6; 17:3).

***Question 1: What is the central task Jesus gave to the church and the consequences of neglecting it?***

At the end of His ministry on earth, Jesus emphasized to His disciples – representatives of the church – what task He was committing into their hands. This, simply expressed, is evangelism, or the Great Commission which imposes on the church the responsibility of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. The Lord expects that the whole church, with no member exempted, would take the challenge of spreading the gospel.

The importance of the gospel is stressed by all four books – Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21, Mark emphasizes the eternal destiny of everyone. If they hear and believe, they would be saved; if not they well be damned. The assignment of the church to the world, Luke says, will not be complete without the preaching of the gospel of repentance and salvation from sin. This became the sole activity of the early church. The story in the Acts of the Apostles was therefore not of

the building of their meeting places nor of mere church administration or social involvement in the various places where the disciples were scattered; it was the story of their evangelistic activities in obedience to the commandment of Christ: **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”**

**THE PASSION OF THE SOUL-WINNER** (Acts 15:36; Psalm 78:38; 111:4; Micah 7:18, 19; Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32).

Passion or compassion for the sinful and dying world is a feature, a characteristic of our loving God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not surprising that this virtue was found in Paul the apostle. So it should be with believers. When we repent of sin and are converted to Christ, the Spirit of God imparts to us the nature and moral characteristics of God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord (John 1:12,13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 4:4-7; 5:22,23; Romans 8:29). The secret and propelling force of Paul’s evangelistic activities was his passion for souls. His passion undermined the hazards associated with preaching the gospel. Thus, although he was aware of the dangers of returning to the regions of Galation where, in his first missionary outreach, he had been opposed and expelled (Acts 13:44,45,50), stoned and beaten (Acts 14:19), he determined to **“go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.”**

***Question 2: What characteristic may we identify with the right kind of passion for the gospel work?***

Passion for souls enables the soul-winner to express godly interest and friendship to people (Romans 15:24; Philippians 1:3-8; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; Proverbs 17:17; 18:24). A real soul-winner, like Paul, cannot be a recluse. It is therefore not a good practice to stay away from people on grounds of their sins. He, like Jesus Christ, loves and delights to see and help sinners find the way of salvation as well as help confirm and establish new babes in Christ (Luke 19:5-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:5-7; Mark 16:15). The command of Christ in the Great Commission is to **“go**

**into all the world**, (the world of sinners) **and preach the gospel to every** (not some harmless people, but every) **creature.**” If indeed you have been saved and know the truth, then you must take the saving gospel out to wherever man is found. Go and tell somebody about the Saviour. Talk about Him lovingly , simply, but firmly. Be enthusiastic about it. Speak of the gospel like you would tell a lovely and delightful story.

**THE PRIORITY OF THE SOUL-WINNER** (John 4:4-26,31-36: 9:4)

The priority of preaching the gospel was never in doubt in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He stopped at the well on the way to Samaria knowing that a woman would come for water, to whom He was ready to provide living water. **“Give me to drink,”** the Saviour asked her, not only to quench His thirst, but also to open up the way of presenting the gospel to the adulterous woman. In the ensuing conversation, she, ignorant of the truth was distractive. She spoke about the Lord **“being a Jew”** , and she **“a woman of Samaria”**, thereby pointing to the racial discrimination between them; she spoke about **“the well (being) deep”** and “from whence then hast thou that living water”, the Lord having nothing in His hand to draw with. She spoke about Jacob, the precursor of their race, and about Jacob’s cattle drinking from the well; she also spoke about the right place of worship, etc. But none of these could dissuade the Lord from the priority of the gospel which He wanted to present to the woman for her salvation.

***Question 3: What necessary precautions must we take in order to save more people?***

Sinners in their ignorance pose many distractions in our attempts to reach them with the gospel. Even within some believers may be found with distracting actions which conflict with the main goal of preaching the gospel. But the believer, like Jesus , must set his eyes on his goal, yielding no grounds to any distractions. We can see in Paul, who having set his heart to **“go again and visit our brethren in every city** “ where he and Barnabas had preached the gospel in their first missionary journey, the refusal to be distracted with the companionship of John

Mark (Act 15:36-39). Paul chose Silas for the journey and they were recommended by the brethren.

**THE PERSONS FOR SOUL-WINNING** (Acts 16:1-3; I Timothy 3:1,7).

Paul and Silas were now set to accomplish the task of the gospel (Barnabas, having departed with John Mark to Cyprus). They came to Derbe and Lystra where Paul met and chose Timothy to accompany them on the work.

***Question 4: Why are sinners not permitted to preach the gospel?***

Timothy proved to be a fit person for the task of the gospel. An early salvation experience under the tutelage and instruction of his mother, Eunice and grandmother, Lois, had both grounded him in the knowledge of the Scripture and prepared him for the ministry (2 Timothy 1:5,6; 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:2). We learn from Paul's choice of Timothy that God pays great attention to the character of preachers and ministers of the gospel. He will not permit sinners to bear His holy word (Psalm 50:16; 2 Timothy 2:21; Isaiah 52:11).

**PRECAUTIONS OF SOUL-WINNERS** (Act 16:3; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22; Matthew 10:16).

Like a shrewd businessman takes some investment precautions to enable him maximize profit, so the soul-winner has certain precautions to take as he takes the gospel among unwilling, hurting, resentful and careless sinners. Timothy, Paul must have seen, presents a bridge into the world of the Jews, his mother being a Jewess and into the world of the Gentiles, his father being a Greek. But seeing the Jews would not accept Timothy being yet uncircumcised, Paul fulfilled the rite by circumcising him in order to reach the Jews. There is merit in Paul's action when seen in the light of the counsel of Jesus Christ that among the heathen with whom we share the message of the gospel, we should be wise as serpent, yet harmless. We learn also that Paul's action was not a weakening of his belief in total salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by mere circumcision as the Jews claim (Ephesians 2:8,9). **"I am made all things to all men"**,



Paul says, **“that I might by all means save some”**(1 Corinthians 9:19-22)

**PRESENTATION OF SOUL-WINNERS** (Acts 16:45,5; Jude 3: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Revelation 22;18,19; Jeremiah 26:2; Deuteronomy 4:2; 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

At the close of his first missionary journey, Paul had resorted to Jerusalem, the seat of the apostles and elders, to certify certain doctrinal issues as it pertained to the Gentiles. There a decree or Letter was sent to the churches of the Gentile world which Paul had helped to establish. On his return, in full obedience to the charge of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, Paul and Silas **“delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.”**

***Question 5: How do we contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints?***

What we present as the gospel is very important to God. Anything short of the total Gospel of repentance and remission of sin by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone and the teaching or doctrines of Christ, contravenes the essence of the cross of Christ (Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:47; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Mathew 28:19,20). We do not dethrone Christ to elicit support or faith in our local assembly or church nor do we present our pastor or any man as saviour. Jesus alone is our message. To the Word of God, we must neither add nor subtract a jot. Preaching the Word with the total doctrines of Christ with nothing else, **“were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”**(Acts 16:5).

**THE PLACE OF SOUL-WINNING** (Acts 16;6-10; 1 Peter 1:1).

The choice of where and to whom to preach the gospel at a given time is the prerogative of the Holy Ghost. Evangelism is like gathering the fruits of a tree. Some fruits may be ripe enough for the harvest, others may not be ready yet. To indiscriminately pluck down all the fruits on the tree, ripe and unripe, will gender havoc. This was the lesson Paul was to learn: that though the gospel is meant for

every creature every where to the uttermost part of the earth, all places are not ripe for the gospel harvesting at the same time. Only the Holy Ghost knows who is ripe for the gospel at a particular time for the soul-winner to throw in the sickle for the harvest.

Note, though, that a fruit that is unripe for harvest one day will become ripe another day. For instance, Galatia, Bithynia and the rest of the then Asia to which Paul, Silas and Timothy **“were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word,”** eventually received the gospel, and many people in those regions were saved (Acts 19:10; 1 Peter 1:1-5; Galatians 1:1-4).

The lessons we learn from this include the apostles total dependence on the leading of God: they did not act by their more feelings. They were sensitive to the Holy Ghost who forbade them to go to some places, but permitted them to go to Macedonia, for the **“assuredly gathered that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”** (Acts 16:10).

In conclusion, effective evangelism involves having the right passion, directed toward the right priority, by the right persons, who take the right precautions, to make the right presentation, in the right place.

***Question 6: State the role of the Holy Ghost in choosing who and where we may preach the Gospel***

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	Matthew	10-11	Samuel	1
TUE	“	12	“	2
WED	“	13	“	3-4
THUR	“	14-15	“	5-6
FRI	“	16-17	“	7-8
SAT	“	18-19	“	9-10
SUN	“	20-21	“	11-12

# 519 LESSON

## FOLLOW-UP AND DISCIPLESHIP

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do” (Acts 15:36).

**TEXT:** Acts 14:21-28; 15:35,36,41

**F**ollow-up is an important and an inseparable part of the Great Commission. Yet, many believes do not appreciate the depth of Christ’s command to “**go ye therefore, and teach all nations**” (Mathew 28:19). According to authorities in the Greek language, the original translation actually reads “**go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations**”. The great Commission does not terminate with winning souls; rather, it continues with teaching and training them until they are mature enough to stand and teach others.

New believers must be completely cared for and helped until they are brought to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. If every believer will resolve to respond to the Lord’s command to the church, the work will be done within a short time. Indeed, the Great Commission demands that new converts, who have just come to the kingdom, be nourished and trained in the Scriptures for the establishment of their faith and full integration into the body of Christ.

What then is follow-up? Follow-up has been described as the conservation, maturation and multiplication of the fruits of evangelism. It is an essential part of church planting aimed at conserving new converts through consistent exposure to the truth of God’s word. It is affirmed to be the “spiritual paediatrics” of parenting in soul-winning, that is, the parental care given new converts to bring them up to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness.

During follow-up, soul winners are able to stand side by side with their converts and teach them the fundamentals of the Christian faith until they grow to maturity.

***Question 1: Explain what is meant by follow-up.***

**NECESSITY OF FOLLOW-UP** (Mathew 28:19; Acts 15:36;14:21,22)

The new-birth experience is, no doubt, a marvellous one. But as the natural babe needs feeding for growth and training for maturity so does the babe in Christ requires the milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2; Proverbs 4:11-13). For new Christians to attain the spiritual height that the soul-winner yearns for, they need to be **nourished** (John 21:15) with the word of God. It is the responsibility of the soul-winner to feed these “**lambs**” and “**sheep**” of Christ. Another is **encouragement** (Acts 14:21,22) during persecutions because of their decision for Christ and times of harsh realities of life. They also need **guidance** and instruction (1 Corinthians 8:1-13) on how to overcome temptations. Although most of the converts’ questions may sound childish to mature believes, the soul-winner should be around to answer them. New converts also require **training** (Proverbs 22:6) on the fundamentals of the Christian faith and how to develop good Christian habits. One of the characteristics of new converts is the tendency to seek clarifications on various subjects regarding their new-found faith in areas such as choice of friends, restitutions, time-management, etc. They need to be guided appropriately because “**Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety**” (Proverbs 11:14).

Moreover, new converts need **intercessory prayer** (Luke 22:31,32; Colossians 1:3, 4,9-11), an aspect of follow-up that must never be overlooked. Prayers must be offered without ceasing for these new babes. Paul’s letters to the new churches reveal the importance he placed on personal intercession. “**We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers... Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in**

**your faith?**”(1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:10). If we fail to pray for the new converts, the enemy may take advantage of their ignorance. Finally, they need **fellowship** (Act 2:42) even after they are established in faith.

Follow-up takes time, attention and love and each soul-winner is expected to give whatever it takes to conserve, mature and integrate each soul won to Christ. Every believer is called into the ministry of soul-winning and must not only win souls but also disciple them to become truly mature Christians.

***Question 2: Why is follow-up very important to Christ and the church?***

**METHODS OF FOLLOW-UP** (Mark 3:14; Act 14:21, 22; Philippians 2:19-22; 1 Thessalonians 3:10).

Jesus Christ, the greatest soul-winner, evolved the best follow-up and discipleship methods. He kept His converts for a period of three-and-a-half years and taught them the word of God. Moreover, He trained them on various methods of evangelism, By this, we understand that after conversion, the soul-winner must endeavour to teach and train new converts so as to mature them and turn them to vessels for the expansion of God’s kingdom. He or she can delegate the work of the ministry to them in areas they can be involved but with close supervision to ensure that they do not derail.

Paul, the great soul-winner and church-planter, declared, **“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us”** (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8). From his follow-up and discipleship training methods, we observe, first his use of personal contact (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8; 3:10). He knew, like a parent to a new-born babe or a shepherd to the flock and a teacher to his students, that personal contact is essential. The closer the soul-winner is to his converts, the safer they are and the farther the wolves will be from them.

Second, intercessory prayer was another method adopted by the early church (Act 12:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-6; 3:10). In his ministry, Paul spent much time interceding for new believers. Also as Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith should not fail (Luke 22:31, 32), we should pray for new converts. A man of God once said that it is better to spend ten minutes praying for them every day than to spend one hour praying for them in their crisis situation. Third, personal representatives (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-24) can be sent to new converts where the soul-winner, their spiritual father or mother, is not able to personally reach them. For example, whenever Paul was unable to personally visit new believers, he would send a trusted personal representative, like Timothy, to help him do the necessary follow-up. The representative must be someone who shares the same vision and can convincingly pass the message to the young converts. However, that there could be delegation does not mean that the soul-winner should abdicate his or her responsibility. Fourth, in these days of information and communications technology, we can reach our converts through the electronic mail (e-mail), Internet, telephone, short-message-service (SMS) and so on. Finally, letter- writing can be used to encourage, teach, warn and guide new converts (Acts 15:20, 23-29; 2 Corinthians 13:10; 2 Peter 3:1; Luke 1:3, 4). As parents are responsible for loving, feeding, protecting and training their children until they reach the age of maturity, so too, every soul-winner and church-planter has these responsibilities towards the new converts.

**ESSENTIALS OF FOLLOW-UP** (Matthew 25:34-40; 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8, 11)

Shallow spiritual life and low standard of Christian living are the products of dearth of doctrinal teaching in many Christian assemblies. There are marked differences between a convert and a disciple. Our visitation therefore must be purposeful and goal-oriented.

To instruct, nurture and mature new converts in the faith, first, we must make them understand the word of God that their sins have been forgiven and that they are now children of God if they have sincerely repented and

accepted Christ (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:16). Secondly, we must teach them how to live the new life and the principles of spiritual growth (Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:1 – 3). Thirdly, we need to guide them on how to maintain a personal, private devotion (Quiet Time) everyday (Mark 1:35; Joshua 1:8) Fourthly, we need to encourage them to share their testimony with others (Mark 5:19; John 1:40-46; 4:28-30).

Fifthly, we need to show them the importance of attending church services regularly (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42-47). Moreover, we need to teach them the importance of maintaining a regular prayer life for strength and victory (Luke 18:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18). Besides, follow-up progresses on the wheels of visitation and caring; hence, caring should be part of our follow-up efforts and should not be done only when new believers come to church. Rather, we are to meet them where they are – home, work place, hospital wards or prison – and show genuine love and concern for their spiritual growth and physical welfare ( Matthew 25:34-40; 1 Thessalonians 2:7,8,11).

As soon as the salvation of the new convert is ascertained, he must be shown the importance of getting baptized in water. The new believer must be taught the significance of water baptism from the Scriptures. He must be made to realize that it is God’s ordinance and command to be observed after conversion (Matthew 28:19; 3:13-17; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 8:38, 39; Romans 6:4, 5). Every new convert therefore should be enjoined to yield to this important injunction.

***Question 3: Why is it important to baptize new converts as soon as possible?***

**CHURCH GROWTH THROUGH FOLLOW-UP AND DISCIPLESHIP** (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2:1, 2; Acts 11:25, 26)

Follow-up and discipleship training have multiplier effects on the church; they equip members for the task of rapid evangelization. The urgent call for world evangelization will be mere day-dream without giving serious consideration to discipleship training. Only well-taught, serious-

mindful and heart-committed disciples can shoulder the responsibility of leading others and pasturing church. We cannot have capable hands to handle our new church locations except we give serious attention to the subject of discipleship.

Follow-up, if properly done, will lead to the multiplication of disciples. If, for example, each of us wins a soul and trains the convert to go out and win another soul every six months, in five years we would have evangelized our communities for Christ. If a hundred dedicated Christians in a community individually and devotedly preach the gospel to just one person and follow-up the converts vigorously for six months, at the end of the sixth month, there would be two hundred dedicated believers, If these two hundred dedicated Christians would, as well, get one convert each and disciple the same within six months, at the end of one year, there would be four hundred devoted Christians in that community. If this process of one person winning and discipling another person in six months were continued, at the end of the five years, the number would have grown to 102,400 memberships without embarking on expensive religious crusades. Although souls that may be won from this method of evangelism might not seem to be many initially, the growth will be phenomenal if it is sustained. In the Scripture, John the Baptist led Andrew to Christ (John 1:35-40), and Andrew, in turn, led Peter to Christ (John 1:40-42) and Peter, at Pentecost, led 3,000 to Christ (Acts 2:37-41) and those converts of Peter led multitudes to Christ (Acts 11:19-21). It is only when we get to heaven that we will be able to ascertain the number of converts that came into the Kingdom through the ministry of John the Baptist.

***Question 4: What are the benefits of follow-up and discipleship?***

The mission of multiplication, evangelization, and gospel saturation can only be realized through the vision of disciple-making. Apostle Paul in his missionary endeavors exemplified the challenge of discipleship and breakthrough in evangelism (Acts 19:9, 10). Spiritual training is a lifelong process. After the disciple has been integrated to



the service of the Lord, this should not be seen as an end in itself. Further training for constant improvement will definitely be necessary.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Matthew	22	1 Samuel	13
TUE	“	23	“	14
WED	“	24	“	15
THUR	“	25	“	16
FRI	“	26	“	17
SAT	“	27	“	18-19
SUN	“	28	“	20

# 520 Lesson

## INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

**MEMORY VERSE:** “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

**TEXTS:** Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Peter 1:16-21

The level of confidence which every individual has in God is a direct reflection of his confidence in the Bible. Full persuasion on the genuineness of the claims of the Bible and the certainty of the rewards that it promises every faithful pilgrim at the end of life’s journey make men surrender to the Lordship of Christ, obtain salvation which is its singular goal and live by its principles and precepts which it demands. Its claims can only be held as genuine if its source is known and believed to be divine. This is why this study is of utmost importance to all.

**INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE** (2 Peter 1:21;2 Timothy 3:16,17)

***Question 1: Explain the inspiration of the Bible***

Inspiration of the Bible means the inexplicable power and influence the Spirit of God exerts on writers to unerringly express what God intended them to communicate as a revelation of His mind and will. The writers’ peculiar character, style, mental endowments and circumstances did not affect the message God passed through them to His people and all humanity. The Spirit’s guidance in the choice of words they used preserved them from all errors of omissions and commission. The Greek word, “Theopneustic”, translated inspiration in the English Bible literally means, “God-breathed”, which denotes the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the holy writers for exact record of the words and will of God. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these holy men

qualified and enabled them to make infallible records of divine truth concerning the will of God to man. Written by divinely inspired men, the Bible therefore is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction authored by God for man's salvation. The Bible is inspired from Genesis to Revelation. It contains the principles by which God will try and judge all human conducts, creeds and opinions at the end of life. The Bible is inspired to secure truth and unity in the records of various men used in writing its different parts. It is also inspired to make men that believe wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15), to give eternal life through faith in the eternal Son (John 20:30,31), attain perfection (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Psalm 19:7) and to qualify men whose lives have been transformed by it for eternal inheritance in heaven.

**FALLACIES ON BIBLICAL INSPIRATION** (Isaiah 8:20; Luke 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1,11; 1 Peter 1:11 1 Corinthians 14:13-19; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

***Question 2: Mention three erroneous views people hold about inspiration of the Bible.***

There are various erroneous views about Biblical inspiration. Some people hold the view that the writers of the Bible had the same natural insight into truth which all men possess to some degree and which some (like poets, philosophers, musicians and scientists) have distinguished themselves in its use. Called the Initiation Theory, they claim that inspiration is a higher development of man's natural insight into truth placing Bible writers alongside geniuses like Cicero, Caesar, Shakespeare or Newton. This is wrong because the writings of none of these people affect lives to any comparable degree nor give the same hopes as the Bible. Morally depraved mortal men cannot produce an immortally purifying book as the Bible. Other people declare that the Bible is inspired in as much as the writers were believers in the true God who enjoy illumination since **“as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”** (Romans 8:14). This is called the Universal Christian Inspiration Theory. This theory puts all regenerated believers on the same plane as Bible writers; but it is wrong. Advocates

of Mechanical Inspiration or Dictation Theory teach that God just used the writers of the Bible as stenographers or secretary / transcribers of the words He dictated to them, not allowing them the use of their intellect and faculties. The notable observations about the personality traits of different writers like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, John and others disprove this theory.

Others still erroneously hold the theory of Partial Inspiration establishing that only certain parts of the scriptures are inspired while others are not. Some go further to say that only the thoughts (and ideas) of Bible writers were inspired but not their words (or writings). This is called Thought Inspiration. These theories are all wrong. The only aspect of the Bible that we cannot prove its inspiration is that which was done after the canon of the scriptures was completed. This is simply the chapter division (by Stephen Langton in 1228 A.D.) and the verse division (by Robert Stephen in 1551 A.D.).

The Bible-approved view of inspiration is that both the thoughts and the words of the writers were divinely inspired. They were not absolutely left to themselves to use the words of their choice but the words were coordinated and divinely directed in their selection. This view is known as verbal, plenary or Full Inspiration. Both the words and thoughts of the writers were influenced by the Holy Ghost. However, they still had the freedom of the exercise of their moral agency in heeding the instruction of the divine Spirit as we see in their various methods of writing. In the Holy Writ, there are different parts of our subject – Revelation and Inspiration. Revelation essentially discovers new truth while inspiration superintends (or guides) the communication and recording of that truth. There are instances of inspiration with or without revelation (Luke 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1,11 ) as well as inspiration with illumination (1 Peter 1:11; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19). Though every part has equal bearing to the central theme of redemption, yet there is nothing to suggest that any part is more inspired (or superior) than others. **“All scripture is given by inspiration...”** (2 Timothy 3:16).

**EVIDENCE OF FULL INSPIRATION** (Luke 24:44; 11:51; Matthew 23:35; 4:1-11; 5:18; Exodus 4:10-12; 2 Samuel 23:1,2; 2 Peter 1:14-21; Psalm 119:9,11; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

***Question 3: Mention two “internal evidences” and three “external evidences” to prove that the Bible was authored by God.***

There are various evidences that attest to the fact that the Bible is inspired of God. Examination of its internal claims (or self-evidence) as well as external claims leads any sincere seeker to the conclusion that, without doubt, the Bible has a divine origin. We shall acquaint ourselves with a number of these evidences.

The testimony of Christ, the claims of the Bible writers and the observable peculiarities of its internal evidence are in agreement on this subject. The Lord Jesus Christ, second in the Godhead and the **“express image of the invisible God”**, affirmed tenaciously that the Bible is the Word of God during His earthly ministry. He held it in high esteem and used it as a weapon to defeat the tempter (Matthew 4:1, 11). He quoted from it time and again during His ministry and after His post-resurrection appearances, and declared that no jot or tittle of it would pass away unfulfilled (Matthew 5:18). In the 3,779 verses of the four gospels, out of which 1,934 were spoken by Christ, 180 verses were quotations from or references to the Old Testament. This implies that nearly one out of every ten words spoken by Jesus was taken from the then available canon of Scripture. Undoubtedly, the Saviour approved of the divine authorship of the Bible. He also promised that the Holy Spirit was to come to lead them into all truth and inspire the writing of the New Testament.

Self-testimony, intellectuals believe, is valid evidence. The Bible claims divine inspiration and is replete with such expressions as, **“Thus saith the Lord”**, **“The Lord said (or spoke) unto me”**, **“The word of the Lord”** and so on (Exodus 4:10-12; 2 Samuel 23:1, 2). For instance, the phrase **“Hear ye the word of the Lord”** occurred in the book of prophet Isaiah more than twenty times. The New Testament contains similar statements (1 Corinthians

11:23-25; 2 Peter 1:14). Every part of the Bible is inspired by God. Results follow as a man reads and obeys the instruction of the scriptures: his life is cleansed and he is kept from evil (Psalm 119:9, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The way the Bible teaches against and denounces sin (even in the life of some of the writers) is not known with any other book on earth. Its origin must be from above. It has never been added unto or enlarged since the last book was written, yet it is complete and applicable to every generation. Above all, the New Testament attests to the Old Testament as sacred (Matthew 21:42; 22:29; 26:54,56; Luke 24:25,26,44,46; John 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2,11; 18:28; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Galatians 3:8,22; 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 3:16).

Moreover, its sixty-six books written in three different languages by about forty writers over a period of more than 1,600 years all exhibit wonderful unity in their presentation and revelation. Its writers include kings, peasant, philosophers, fishermen, poets, musicians, scholars and shepherds. Note also the fact that over three thousand of Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled and proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

**UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE** (Genesis 2:7; Joshua 10:12-14; 2 Kings 20:8-11; Isaiah 40:22).

***Question 4: How unique is the Bible compared with other books?***

The Bible is unique in many aspects. As stated already, its wonderful unity in the face of the diversity of the background and experiences of its writers is bewildering enough to be taken as an aspect of uniqueness. No other book has been circulated or translated into as many languages as the Bible. Presently, the Bible is in print in many languages. "Pile them, if you will, on the left side" a writer highlights the difference, "but place your own Holy Bible on the right side – all alone by itself.... there is a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought." Besides, unlike many other books which get outdated (if not reviewed in a couple of years) the Bible has refused to get outdated since its over 1,800

years of existence. All these are aspects of its survival and divine preservation. Many kings and emperors, philosophers and scientists have fought against the Bible, some destroying as many copies as they felt were in existence but the Bible is still very much alive today. Voltaire predicted its extinction within a hundred years after his death but he has been proved wrong. His very house was (in less than half the time) turned into a Bible publishing house! Emperor Diocletian's government fought much to exterminate the holy Book but divine providence had it that Constantine, his successor, ordered the printing of the same at government's expense for people to read and become God-fearing. No one has ever succeeded (or can ever succeed) in the fight against the Bible.

Further proof of its uniqueness and inspiration is found in how it has stood through great criticisms. Like Christ's Church, the Bible is an **“anvil that has worn out many hammers”**. It's like the bush that Moses saw burning but was not consumed. Intellectuals from various disciplines have advanced many arguments against the facts of the Bible but one by one, they have all (by later discoveries) been proved wrong. Only a book with an origin greater than man can withstand such criticisms. History and Archaeology also prove the historicity and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

The fact that most men of renown that have made impact in world history have either been people who had their faith in Christ and the Bible or had great respect for the same also prove that the Bible has a divine origin. A British Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone once remarked: “I have known 95 of the world's great men in my time, and of these, 87 were followers of the Bible.” Abraham Lincoln, John Bacon and Isaac Newton and a number of others are believed to have professed belief in the word of God. Men like Napoleon Bonaparte, Lord Tennyson, Francis Bacon, Mahatma Gandhi and George Washington and many others (from their statements), are known to have great respect for the Bible even though they do not profess genuine faith in the Saviour.

Scientific discoveries have always proved that the Bible is full of divine inspiration. Comparative anatomy supports

the fact that man is a special class of the vertebrate creation (being) so far in “intelligence quotient” from the nearest species. Chemical analysis of the components of the body reveal that at least fourteen of the elements in man are found in the soil proving man’s creation “**out of the dust of the earth**” as the Genesis account reads (Genesis 2:7). Computerized calculation of the number of days that have transpired since the creation of the earth have also confirmed the fact of a “**missing link**” as recorded in the accounts of Joshua 10:12-14 and 2 Kings 20:8-11. It took a long time before geographers came to agree that the earth was spherical, a fact that had been penned down by the instruction of the Creator Himself in Isaiah 40:22, years before the research. All these and an almost innumerable others prove the fact that the Bible is inspired of God and make us to say with the thoughtful writer who advised: “Never compare this Book with other books. Comparisons are dangerous. Never think or never say that this book just contains the Word of God. It is the Word of God:

***“Supernatural in origin, eternal in duration  
Inexpressible in value, infinite in scope,  
Regenerating in power, infallible in authority  
Universal in interest, personal in application  
INSPIRED IN TOTALITY.  
Read it through. Write it down. Pray it in.  
Work it out.  
And then pass it on.”***

**BENEFITING FROM THE BIBLE** (Romans 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8).

***Question 5: How can the believer maximally benefit from the word of God?***

Many do not want to accept that the Bible is the word of God because of the consequences of such profession of faith in it. They would be bound by its principles and precepts that spell doom for the fleshly and careless. They do not want to obey the laws of God that charts a restricted path for the godly and prescribes unpopular, holy lifestyle



for heavenly pilgrims. Others profess faith in the Bible but live without its precepts. This is as damnable as the attitude of those who reject it as the word of God. “A man that is endued with the powers of reason, by which he is capable of knowing, serving, glorifying, and enjoying his Maker, and yet lives without God in the world, is certainly the most despicable and the most miserable animal under the sun”, a writer decried. Unbelief in or rejection of the word of God is as sinful as willful disobedience of its known precepts. **“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them”** (2 Peter 2:21). God relates with people on the basis of their attitude to His word because He honours His word more than His name. His words reveal His person, character, desire, dislike, demands, condition of relationship with Him, His expectations of man, promises and blessings for those who enter into relationship with Him and punishment for the obstinate. He does not listen to the prayers of those who do not listen to the preaching or reading of His words. **“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination”** (Proverbs 208:9).

So, God expects everyone to cultivate the attitude of hearing, reading, studying, delighting or meditating on His words and obeying its precepts (Romans 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8). Everyone who allows the word of God to affect his life will be convicted, cleansed and saved from sin (Psalm 19:7-11; John 15:3); enabled to live a victorious life over sin, self, the flesh, the world and Satan; equipped for holy, fruitful service; helped to obtain all the inheritance of saints through the promises of God and preserved to make heaven in the end. Since **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”** (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), we must approach the word with reverence and openness of mind to derive the stated benefits from it.

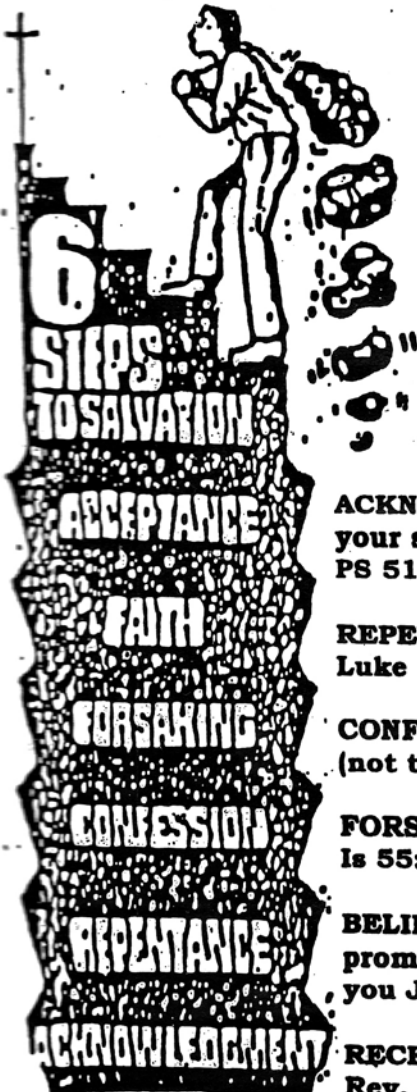
## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING			EVENING
MON	Mark	1	1 Samuel	21-22
TUE	“	2-3	“	23-24
WED	“	4-5	“	25
THUR	“	6	“	26-27
FRI	“	7-8	“	28-29
SAT	“	9	“	30-31
SUN	“	10	2 Samuel	1-2

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

# DISTRICT CHURCHES DIRECTORY

1. Bronx: 213 E. 144th Street (718) 292-7883
2. Brooklyn: 140 Saratoga Avenue (718) 919-1166
3. Queens: 188-21 Suffolk Drive, St. Albans, NY 11412 (347) 200-3301
4. New Jersey: 23-39 South 20 Street, Irvington (973) 202-3989
5. Staten Island: 144-146 Morningstar Road, Staten Island, NY 10303 (917) 238-2258
6. Spring Valley: 95 North Main street, Suite 1 (845) 709-6058



**ACKNOWLEDGE**  
your sinfulness  
PS 51:3-5

**REPENT OF YOUR SIN**  
Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19

**CONFESS** them to God  
(not to Priest) 1 John 1:9

**FORSAKE** all known sin  
Is 55:7

**BELIEVE** that GOD is true to his  
promise to forgive and clean  
you Jn: 6:37 1 Jn 1:9

**RECEIVE JESUS** into your heart  
Rev. 3:20 Jn 3:17



## **DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, USA**

[www.dclm.org](http://www.dclm.org)

### **DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES**

#### **SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE**

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

#### **MONDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Rockland County	7:00 PM
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#### **TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

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

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

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

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

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

**Pastor W.F. Kumuyi – General Superintendent**  
**Your Spiritual Welfare is our Concern**