

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 55

"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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BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

703 Lesson

DIVINE JUDGMENT ON ELI'S POSTERITY

MEMORY VERSE: “Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2:27-36

The previous lesson from this chapter described how little Samuel, like a lily in the mud, was preserved in purity in the midst of godless people like the sons of Eli. Hophni and Phinehas had sold themselves to wickedness by perverting the course of God’s offering and committing adultery with the women who congregated in Shiloh. As a result, the people of Israel began to abhor the sacrifice and offering of the Lord. The mild reproof of their father could neither change them nor appease God’s determined wrath. Their father’s indulgence strengthened their hands in evil.

Eli was a priest and a judge in Israel. His sons joined in the leadership as provided by the law. They were saddled with the responsibility of leading and judging others to keep the whole nation holy before God. Unfortunately, the seat of power was corrupted and polluted and a leader’s sin became a leading sin. They robbed God’s people of the joy of giving, sowing and reaping.

The despicable deeds of Eli’s sons attracted swift and unmistakable judgment from the God who is of “**purser eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...**” (Habakkuk 1:13). It is expected that those called to the service of God and His people should be careful to maintain good works lest they court His hot displeasure. Believers who minister in holy service are required to “**provide things honest in the sight of**

all men” (Romans 12:17) and build holy confidence in worshipers. They should not despise the Lord in word or action because He is a jealous God and a consuming fire.

Question 1: Why was Eli also guilty of the sins of his sons?

REBUKE AND CONDEMNATION OF ELI’S SONS (1 Samuel 2:27-29; 13:13; 2 Samuel 12:9; 2 Chronicles 24:20; Proverbs 27:5; Titus 1:13)

“And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh’s house?” (1 Samuel 2:27). The man of God sent to deliver this awful message was not mentioned; his identity may have been hidden for the purpose of modesty. Nonetheless, we are less concerned about the personality but the weight and fidelity of the message. The profligate and rapine nature of Hophni and Phinehas were public knowledge and Eli their father did less to rein them in. He had a chance to set things right in his family but he did not and seemed to prefer the honor and position of his sinful children to the honor and glory of God. The Lord had no choice but to wield the big stick because they failed to repent of their evil.

God asked Eli about five probing questions to indict and make him see the sinfulness of their sin. **“Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father... did I choose him out of all the tribes... did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire... wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice... and honorest thy sons above me...?”** These questions were as indicting as they were incriminating. Eli’s sons had impiously profaned the holy things and he bolstered them by not punishing them for their insolence and impiety. His reproof of them was unacceptable to God because he should have accompanied it with actions by relieving them of the sacred duties and sending them out of the Lord’s sanctuary (Isaiah 52:11). His action was taken as a tacit approval and indulgence of his sons and the Lord would have none of it.

Question 2: Why was Eli's reproof of his sons unacceptable to God?

In parental discipline, two essential ingredients are required: one, a firm resolve; two, a corrective action. Love and discipline must go together. Parents are not only to love and provide for their children; they are also to discipline them when they err, sometimes severely. The sons of Eli had grown to adulthood, perhaps, consecrated to the priestly ministry. Their father should have used his authority as high priest to restrain and punish them. When parents find their children in any evil way and leave them unrestrained, it amounts to honoring them more than God. **“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear. Open rebuke is better than secret love. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith”** (1 Timothy 5:20; Proverbs 27:5; Titus 1:13).

Throughout the Scripture, the Lord always rebukes sin and evil especially among His servants because He would not permit a desecration of His sanctuary or disobedience to His commandments. This He does often without respect of persons. Moses was rebuked sharply for dishonoring God at the waters of Meribah; David the king came under scathing reproof because he brought shame to the name of the Lord through his sins of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 12:9); Zechariah could not refrain from scolding the children of Israel for their disobedience and rebellion. Therefore, those who stray from the faith should not expect commendation from the Lord.

REJECTION AND JUDGMENT OF IMPENITENT SINNERS: (1 Samuel 2:30-34; 15:11,23-28,35; Leviticus 10:1,2; 1 Kings 2:27; Malachi 2:1-3,8,9; Romans 1:32)

God normally warns of impending judgment through His servants – a prophet, an angel or an anointed minister. As a matter of duty, a man of God warns, rebukes, exhorts, counsels and teaches people. The man of God in the text boldly declared God's message in a clear manner. He was courageous and timely in

the proclamation of God's message of judgment on the sinning house of Eli.

Consequent upon His denunciation of their sins, God rejected and reversed the eternal priesthood which He had conferred on Eli and his posterity. **"Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed"** (1 Samuel 2:30). He said, **"but now"**; this is a revocation of what had been promised earlier.

Question 3: How correct is the doctrine of eternal security in the light of God's revocation of His promise to Eli?

God cannot bless the people who have backslidden and returned to live in sin and rebellion. The righteousness of yesterday will not suffice for today should anyone turn to unrighteousness. Thus, the promise of an everlasting priesthood for the family of Eli was changed to show that the doctrine of eternal security is false and deceptive. Those who preach that once someone is born again nothing can separate such from God, even when they fall from grace or backslide, err. This claim is false in the light of several Scripture passages where God rejected those who served Him previously but later backslid (1 Samuel 2:30; Exodus 32:33; John 15:6; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Timothy 4:10).

It shows that it is possible to backslide and lose the experience of salvation. God has the power to reject one and raise another. He can exalt the meanest and put contempt upon the greatest (1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 113:7). He rejected Saul and raised David in his place to sit upon the throne of Israel. When David's son could not establish the kingdom in righteousness, He divided it and gave the larger part to Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:8). Again, when He found unrighteousness and unfaithfulness in Jeroboam, He vowed to remove him. **"Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now"** (1 Kings 14:14). Judas

Iscariot lost his place among the disciples of Christ and was replaced with Matthias.

Believers' security in Christ is conditional and depends on their abiding in Him and keeping His words (John 14:15). However, if we hold fast the beginning of our faith steadfast to the end and will not permit the challenges of life or the love of this world to affect our love for Christ, we shall be secure from the danger of backsliding.

Question 4: What were the prophecies against Eli and his posterity?

Details of the judgment on Eli, his children and their posterity are:

1. that he and his father's house (Ithamar) would be cut off;
2. his sons shall die in early age;
3. an enemy will take away the wealth of Israel;
4. his two sons shall both die in one day;
5. the remnant of his sons who survive would beg bread and silver from their successors;
6. they would not be extinct but they would not come to prominence, and
7. enemies would invade the land of Israel. All these were fulfilled on the family of Eli.

In rounding off the abasement of Eli's posterity, king Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord, **“that he might fulfill the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh”** (1 Kings 2:27). (Abiathar was a descendant of Eli, who had escaped when Saul slew all the priests in Nob [1 Samuel 22:20]).

Thus, the Lord would always visit sinning individuals with judgment unless they repent. The women that committed immorality with the priests were not guiltless. Though, the text did not specify the nature of their judgment, it was obvious that they would have received their share of punishment for their grievous sins (Leviticus 20:10). Women who aid and abet immorality in fellowship will face the judgment of God.

THE RAISING AND EXALTATION OF FAITHFUL SERVANTS (1 Samuel 2:35,36; 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 113:7; Hebrews 3:1,2; 1 Corinthians 4:1,2; Isaiah 54:14; Hebrews 5:4,5)

God raises faithful servants and ministers to replace those found to be unfaithful in the administration of His grace. From generation to generation, He would not leave Himself without faithful witnesses to keep up the torch of truth, no matter the degree of darkness. Even when there is a famine and dearth of truth, He will preserve a lone voice that would cry and show His people their transgressions (Acts 14:17; Isaiah 58:1; Romans 11:3,4). **“And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever”** (1 Samuel 2:35).

It is wrong to think that **“the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”** (Romans 11:29) when conditions guiding such calls are flouted. God’s promise to bless carries with it the conditions of walking in righteousness before Him. He has the capacity to reject one and raise another. It was not a surprise that the Lord raised alternative priests in place of the disgraced sons of Eli. If we are faithful, He deals more favorably with us than we deserve, but if we do otherwise, God’s work will never suffer for want of true godly men and women to carry it on. Unfaithful children would deprive themselves of divine blessings accruing to saints now and in eternity. It behoves ministers of holy things therefore, that they must not fail or falter in God’s service.

There are innumerable blessings, honor and promotion attached to the obedient and faithful servants of God. The Aaronic priesthood, for example, was laden with much good things, including peculiarly close relationship with God to mediate between Him and the people, divinely apportioned food from the offerings, specially reserved portion of meat and first fruit of crops, etc. Above all, God had avouched Himself to be their portion and inheritance.

Question 5: Mention the blessings attached to the priest's family in Israel.

If Eli's sons were faithful, they would have enjoyed the blessings continually but they chose otherwise. The priesthood continued in the lineage of Eli until unfaithfulness was found in Abiathar in the days of kings David and Solomon (1 Kings 1:25; 2:26,27,35). Had Abiathar remained faithful, the priesthood would have continued further in the lineage of Ithamar, Aaron's last son, but he was replaced with Zadok of the lineage of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron after Nadab and Abihu died for their sins.

Judgment awaits all who sin and refuse to repent. But God is merciful and willing to pardon all sinners and backsliders who turn to Him for forgiveness because He does not take pleasure in the death of sinners. The door of grace is still open today and everyone who comes knocking and pleading for mercy will be forgiven (Ezekiel 18:32; Isaiah 55:7; John 6:37; 1 John 1:9). As the promised fulfillment of a faithful priest, Christ has accomplished the work of atonement for all sinners, backsliders, believers and servant-ministers. If a sinner genuinely repents and manifests faith in His blood, he will experience pardon and redemption.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Cor.	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

704 Lesson

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO SAMUEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD” (1 Samuel 3:21).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

The previous study revealed the pronouncement of imminent judgment that should come on Eli’s household because of the corrupt practices and perversion of the priesthood by his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Being indulgent and negligent, Eli honored his sons more than the Lord. God’s unchanging response to decent into evil is a reversal of fortune, promised blessings or favor (1 Samuel 2:30,35). It was this thorny issue of profaning divine worship for which Eli failed to discipline his children and the divine displeasure it attracted that form the subject of God’s revelation of himself to Samuel.

Prior to this, Samuel lived a blossoming godly life in an ungodly environment created by the sinful lifestyle and practices of Eli’s children. This is God’s expectation: that a consistent godly life should precede and attract divine revelation and usefulness. Such **“shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”** (2 Timothy 2:21).

Question 1: Why did God abandon Eli, the aged and experienced priest?

God is no respecter of persons and His eyes are purer than to behold iniquity. He is merciful and loving but He does not condone sin in whoever and wherever it is found. God hates sin.

THE CALL AND ATTRIBUTES OF SAMUEL (1 Samuel 3:1-10; Amos 8:11,12; 2 Chronicles 15:3; 1 Samuel 2:11,18; Isaiah 52:11; Daniel 1:8; Genesis 39:2)

God called and commissioned Samuel at a time when the word of the Lord was very precious (scarce). **“And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.”**

Question 2: What can true believers do to prevent famine of the true word of God?

Prophets or servants of God to whom the people might have recourse for counsel or divine instructions were scarce at this time when Samuel ministered unto the Lord. The known and available priests were also defiled. The impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle provoked the Lord and made Him withdraw His presence from the people. The situation is not different in many religious gatherings today. A critical look at the entire world shows that the true and undiluted word of God is scarce. There is famine of the true gospel message. The modern gospel, centred on materialism, carnality and sensuality, has driven away the presence of God from many Christian gatherings. Worse of all, many people have cravings for sensational gospel message of half-truth. This situation calls for passionate prayers and urgent action of preaching the sound word of God by true believers to rescue the perishing before they are lost forever.

Question 3: Enumerate the good qualities found in Samuel.

“And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see.”

Eli the priest was aging with dimming eyesight while Samuel was growing up in the courts of the Lord. It was not aging but inability to maintain pure worship that also dulled his spiritual senses. Thus, divine revelation

was hard to come by. God found a replacement in the lad, Samuel, who emerged as a lily in the valley **“and ministered to the LORD”**. God always has substitutes for the indulgent, disobedient and unrighteous in leadership. Samuel was like Joseph amidst Jacob’s sons and like Daniel in Babylon. He had many good qualities. One, he was dedicated to God. He had laid his entire life on the altar, serving in the tabernacle. Two, he was incorruptible. He would not be influenced by the wayward lifestyle of Eli’s sons. Three, he was active and industrious. Four, he was available at his duty post in the tabernacle. He demonstrated readiness for divine assignment even in season and out of season. Five, Samuel was humble and obedient. He would always answer Eli: **“here am I, for thou didst calleth me”**, even at odd hours of the day. All these qualities positioned Samuel to hear from God and became a mighty instrument in His hand.

“And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli... Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.” It is important to note that God called Samuel three times but he had not known how God speaks to His children. He mistook the call of God for Eli’s and ran to him each time the call came. The same behaviour is common among many believers today. They run here and there in search of revelation because they are ignorant of the ways God speaks and by so doing, many have fallen into the traps of ‘church herbalists’, false prophets and fortune tellers in prayer houses. They think it is very difficult to know the mind of God in the choice of career, marriage, business, ministry and other life situations. Others resort to casting lots, use of fleece (Judges 6:37-40), tying objects on the Bible, prolonged unhealthy fasting and so on.

Question 4: How does God speak to His children today?

The truth is that God delights in speaking to His children and He does this in diverse ways. It may be

through the still small voice of the indwelling Christ (1 Kings 19:12,13); audible voice (Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17); dreams and visions (Genesis 37:5-11); intuitive perception in the heart (Luke 5:22; Acts 10:34); divinely arranged events (Acts 8:26-35; Genesis 24:12-22); the written and the spoken Word during personal devotion or through anointed ministration of His servants (Luke 24:32; Acts 2:37). Above all, the greatest revelation of God to mankind of all ages is the written word of God (1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21). The Word is the unchanging and sure standard of God's dealing with mankind. It cannot mislead. Believers therefore, must study and subject every leading to the word of God. No leading or revelation must go contrary to the written Word.

“And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child...” As a faithful and honest tutor, Eli, gave useful advice and guidance to the young prophet in the making. By teaching Samuel how to respond to the call of God, he demonstrated a good tutor-servant attitude. He was not envious of divine revelations granted Samuel. This is a good lesson for older believers and ministers who should consider mentoring of younger ministers as their responsibility. Mentoring may be through direct training programs, practical guidance, guided and supervised assignments, encouragement and prayers. Based on instruction received from Eli, Samuel knew how to answer God's call. Samuel, like Isaiah, responded, **“speak for thy servant heareth”**.

CONDEMNATION OF THE CORRUPTED PRIESTHOOD (1Samuel 3:11-14; Ezekiel 3:17-21; Ecclesiastes 8:11-13; Ezekiel 7:3; Acts 10:34; 1 Timothy 5:22; Revelation 3:16)

“And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end” (1 Samuel 3:11,12). The message of wrath came once again to ratify the previous warning from a prophet in 1 Samuel 2:27-36. The repetition was necessary because Eli did not pay proper attention to

divine warnings. As a father, priest and judge, he had the power to restrain, rebuke or remove his children from office but he did not. Hence, the punishment would be so terrible that everyone would be struck with terror and astonishment to hear that in one day, Eli's two sons have died; that Eli's neck is broken; and his entire family simmering in tragedy. This is a serious lesson for all and sundry that God is no respecter of persons. He will judge all categories of unrepentant sinners.

Two, judgment delayed does not mean that it will not come. So, God's mercy and longsuffering must not be taken for granted. Three, sin has consequences. It degrades, demotes, destroys and damns in hell. Eli and his sons made light of God's standard, perverted the priesthood by making God's offering vile in the eyes of the people and they were condemned. Four, those who do not restrain or report the sins of others they know about are also guilty of encouraging its spread and will be judged.

Question 5: What should be the attitude of believers to sin?

CHARACTER AND CONSECRATION OF FAITHFUL PREACHERS (1 Samuel 3:15-21; 2:26; Proverbs 20:6; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:19-23)

“And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.” Samuel was always dutiful, opening the doors of the temple early in the morning for worshipers. But the revelation he received from God was grave that he did not want to divulge it to Eli. His aged mentor has attracted the anger of God and the tidings was grievous. Younger believers can also hear from God if they purge themselves from all filthiness and lead a holy life.

When Eli prodded to know what he heard from God, Samuel declared the message faithfully, plainly and fully as he received it. God is in need of faithful, courageous and uncompromising preachers all over the world. The truth is scarce. People wander about in search of clear undiluted and liberating truth of God's

word. Therefore, faithfulness is required in declaring the gospel message, the anticipated responses of the hearers notwithstanding (Ezekiel 3:19).

While some will respond positively, others will tow a similar path with Eli. “...**It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good**” was Eli’s response to God’s warnings. One wonders why Eli just resigned to facing God’s wrath rather than repent, set his house in order, discipline or remove his children from office. How can a priest be so obstinate knowing it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?

No one needs to perish in his sinful practices. The clear testimony of the Scripture is: “**He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy ...and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**” (Proverbs 28:13; John 6:37). Though a God of justice, He is also merciful, pardoning iniquities if there is genuine repentance and restitution. He forgave David (Psalm 51), the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10), the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11), and many others. This is good news for all categories of backsliders and sinners. If there is true repentance, there will be pardon and favor from God. “**And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground**” (1 Samuel 3:19). Samuel knew the Lord from childhood and retained divine presence to the end of his life and ministry. With a humble beginning as a servant who was faithful in opening the door of the tabernacle, he grew to receive and deliver God’s message faithfully to Eli and later became known as a prophet of God throughout the nation of Israel. “**And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD**” (1 Samuel 3:21).

<p>Question 6: How can ministers retain divine presence and anointing to the end of their lives and ministries?</p>
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Many ministers today have lost the presence, power, original vision and fresh revelation of God. Sins of disobedience, compromise, unfaithfulness, pride,

covetousness and pleasure-seeking are cancers that ruin once viable and vibrant Christian lives and ministries. If Christian servants will take care of their relationship with God, they will continue to enjoy His divine presence and revelation. Following the path of Eli and his sons will lead to a tragic end.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
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

705 Lesson

GOD'S GLORY DEPARTS FROM ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: "And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband" (1 Samuel 4:21)

TEXT: 1 Samuel 4:1-22

The previous chapter captured Samuel's call by the Lord into the prophetic ministry and his maiden message to Eli. It also recorded Eli's careless and indifferent response to God's clear warning of looming judgment (1 Samuel 3:18). The current text showcases the war between Israel and the Philistines to bring to fulfillment part of the prophecy of the destruction of Eli's house. "Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain" (1 Samuel 2:31,34; 4:11).

Question 1: What should be the responsibility of parents over their children?

Though it was Hophni and Phinehas that committed the grievous offense, Eli paid for it dearly because he failed to train them in the way of the Lord. When he heard that Hophni and Phinehas had been slain and that the ark of the Lord was taken by the Philistines, he fell off the seat and died. As parents and servants of God, it is our responsibility to train our children in the way of the Lord. The Scripture says, "**Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it**" (Proverbs 22:6).

DIVINE JUDGMENT AGAINST SIN AND COMPROMISE (1Samuel 4:1,2; Deuteronomy 28:15-68; 1Kings 21:20-24; Matthew 25:41; Jude 5-7; Revelation 14:11)

God hates sin and judges it severely wherever it is found. Sin provokes God to anger (Deuteronomy 9:18); incurs His hot displeasure (Psalm 6:1; 38:1), fiery indignation (Hebrews 10:27) and execution of great vengeance (Ezekiel 25:17; Nahum 1:2).

Question 2: Outline the sins of the sons of Eli that made the glory of God to depart from Israel.

In our text, the nation of Israel experienced God's fiery judgment in the form of humiliating and devastating defeat in the battle against their enemies. For the purpose of clarity and caution to believers today, the outline of what made the glory of God to depart from Israel is as follows: (1) the sons of Eli who were called into the priesthood with their father were sons of Belial. This means that they chose to serve the devil rather than God. They knew not the Lord, yet they went ahead to work for Him. (2) They served without regard to the standard of the service; they served in covetousness and for their personal interest, not to please God. (3) They robbed God in the offerings of His people. (4) They committed adultery with the women who gathered to worship and offer sacrifices unto the Lord. The sin of immorality whether in the church or outside the church is a terrible sin and drives away the presence of God and His glory from a believer or from the church. (5) They sinned with impunity. They were adamant even when they were corrected. (6) Eli was weak in bringing up his children in the fear of God. We need to examine ourselves because whether it is the leader or a member that commits sin in the church, it repels the presence and glory of God.

God did not leave Eli in doubt of His judgment. He sent clear warnings to him through an unnamed man of God and Samuel, but he remained passive. The men of Israel were also indifferent though the sins of the priesthood were common knowledge (1 Samuel 2:27- 36; 3:11-18; 2:17). Consequently, Israel suffered

a great defeat in the hands of the Philistines because they failed to reconcile with God first before going into the battle. Sincere repentance and restitution are necessary to secure God's awesome presence that guarantees victory in all battles of life.

The consequence of Israel's backsliding and empty religion was severe. They are summarized as follows: (1) the first battle recorded the death of four thousand Israelites (1 Samuel 4:2). (2) In the second battle, thirty thousand Israelites were killed (1 Samuel 4:10). (3) The ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11). (4) Hophni and Phinehas, priests and sons of Eli were killed in the battle. (5) Eli, on hearing that his two sons were killed and that the ark was captured by the Philistines, collapsed and died (1 Samuel 4:17,18). (6) Phinehas' wife, while mourning her husband, gave birth to a baby at the same time. **"And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband."** (7) Israel served the Philistines for over twenty years (1 Samuel 7:1-4).

When an individual or a whole church indulges in sin and goes on in the service of the Lord, he or she faces the danger of failure and defeat (1 Samuel 4:2; Judges 16:20,21). It is necessary that we set things right before it becomes too late.

Question 3: What urgent step should sinners and backsliders in the church take to escape God's judgment?

DANGER OF RELIGION WITHOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS: (1 Samuel 4:3-10; Isaiah 1:11-20; Matthew 23:13-33; Luke 18:9-14; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Romans 10:1-3)

"And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (verse 3).

Routed by the Philistines, the Israelites returned to their camp shocked and amazed at their defeat. The elders, conscious that their defeat was from the Lord, sought how they could gain victory over the Philistines. A reasonable question which ought to lead them to sincere self-examination was quickly abandoned for an urgent resolution to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh to the camp for their deliverance. The parting of waters of Jordan and the collapse of the walls of Jericho before the ark of the covenant of the Lord were the results of obedience to direct instructions from the Lord (Joshua 3:1-17; 6:8-20). The ark of the Lord which was a symbol of divine presence was to be a place of communion between God and His people (Exodus 25:10-22), not a magic wand that gives victory over the enemy. Israel was commanded to go to war at the inspired counsel and exhortation of the priest of the Lord (Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 20:1-4). Although this service was apparently not available because the priests were overtaken by spiritual blindness (1 Samuel 3:1), they never sought for counsel, at least from Samuel whose prophetic ministry had already been noticed by all Israel (1 Samuel 3:19-21; 4:1). Instead, they ventured into the battlefield in their spiritual darkness and superstition.

Question 4: Mention some shortcuts religious people take to escape the consequences of sin and why they are insufficient to secure victory.

Israel experienced the pain of defeat and death and learned that there is no shortcut to victory in the divine economy of grace. Many religious people today hang the symbol of the cross on their necks, embroider it on their garments or engrave it on their gates and sleep with a copy of the Holy Bible under their pillows hoping that these materials will attract the presence of God, deliver them from their enemies and destroy every evil work against them. This superstition is further perpetuated and strengthened by some false preachers who capitalize on it to make merchandise of their ignorant followers by selling to them various supposedly “anointed” materials like aprons,

handkerchiefs, water, oils, rings, chains, stickers, pictures etc., for supernatural healings, protection, favor and breakthroughs. But the question to all such superficial seekers who abandon the substance to go after the shadow is: **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him”** (Hebrews 2:3). It is evident therefore, that salvation from sin and its consequences will remain a mirage to all who do not exercise saving faith in Christ’s atonement on the cross with a gracious obedience to the demands of the gospel. In a nutshell, the fundamental keys to victory over sin and its woeful consequences are sincere repentance and steadfast righteousness.

“And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again” (1 Samuel 4:5). The response of Israel to the arrival of the ark of the covenant of the Lord in the camp was dramatic. They enthusiastically gave an earth-shaking shouting ovation to the perceived arrival of the Lord of hosts in the camp. This is reminiscent of the empty shouting and noise-making that goes on in many places of worship where the word of God is relegated to the background. Worship, prayer, fasting, material offerings/sacrifices and all other religious activities become vain and even offensive when they go contrary to the righteous principles of the Scripture (Proverbs 21:27; Isaiah 1:10-15; Mark 7:7).

Moreover, revival is not emotionalism and deafening noise of worship, but the heat of the sacred fire in the soul expressed as fruits of righteousness. The noise at Pentecost attracted the crowd, the apostles ministered to them and multitudes were converted. These converts continued steadfastly in the doctrines of the Lord and fellowship with the brethren. Indeed, this is true revival! (Acts 2:1-47).

<p>Question 5: What will be the inevitable end of all impenitent hypocrites who substitute religion for righteousness?</p>

Although the ignorant and superstitious Philistines were initially affrighted at the prospects of the arrival of the **“mighty Gods”** in the camp of Israel, they soon mustered courage and mobilized to fight valiantly with a determination to maintain their mastery over the Hebrews. Men may be deceived and intimidated by worthless external gimmicks, but the Bible declares that **“...God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”** and **“...the hypocrite’s hope shall perish: Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider’s web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure”** (Galatians 6:7; Job 8:13-15). The confident, hypocritical hope of the Israelites was soon dashed into irretrievable pieces as they suffered a more deadly defeat – thirty thousand foot soldiers were slaughtered by the Philistines (verse 10). This is the woeful picture of the fate of all hypocritical, religious sinners and compromisers who instead of repenting from their evil deeds cover them up with the filthy, self-righteous rags of religious activities. They will inevitably end up in delusion, disappointment and death if they refuse to repent.

DEPARTURE OF THE GLORY OF GOD (1 Samuel 4:11-22; Psalm 78:60,61; Hebrews 2:9,10; 2 Peter 1:3)

The glory of God denotes His honor, dignity, splendor, brightness, majesty and infinite perfections. The expression also refers to a visible, dazzling appearance indicative of God’s special presence especially in the Old Testament (Exodus 16:7-10; 24:9,10,16,17; 1 Kings 8:11; Zechariah 2:5). God reveals His presence by the manifestation of His glory. No wonder, Moses earnestly pleaded with God for His presence and glory while he led Israel through the dreadful wilderness. God’s presence and glory separated and distinguished Israel as His peculiar people of power and praise (Exodus 33:12-18). When God’s presence and glory leave a place or a people, all that remains will be dryness, dullness, dearth and death. Jesus told His disciples emphatically:

“...He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The inspired writer summarized all the calamitous consequences of the fall of man as coming “...**short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23). All men born into Adam’s fallen race may be appropriately called “**Ichabods**”. But Christ died to restore man to a life and destiny of the glory of God. The first step on the path to restoration is the possession of genuine salvation experience and purity of heart. This is a gracious transformation (Titus 2:11-14; 3:5). The second step is the literal transfer of all blood-washed saints in the rapture to be with the Lord forever in heaven. This is a glorious translation (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Question 6: State five important lessons derivable from the events in our text.

Believers learn a number of lessons from this significant event in the history of the children of Israel. First, God’s warning about the judgment of sinners will surely come to pass (1 Samuel 2:13,34; 4:11). The seeming delay of divine judgment is an expression of God’s tender mercies and longsuffering toward the sinner since He is “...**not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**” (2 Peter 3:9).

It will be wise for sinners to run into God’s outstretched arms of love while the door of mercy is still open. Those who abandon themselves to drink the abominable water of the pleasures of sin “**because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily...**” (Ecclesiastes 8:11) are laying up to themselves “...**wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**” (Romans 2:5). Second, the message from a man of Benjamin who ran out of the army to Shiloh was concise and cutting. He was dispassionate and faithful in telling all that he saw at the battlefield. Gospel ministers must first be partakers of the salvation they seek to present to others; and, they must be faithful in it (2 Timothy 2:6; 1 Corinthians 4:1,2; Jeremiah 48:10; Acts 4:20).

Third, the anxious and fearful disposition of Eli, the high priest, leaves little to be desired. Our text recorded that he “...**sat upon a seat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God**” (verse 13). He knew God’s threats of judgment would be fulfilled (1 Samuel 3:18).

Also, he was so weakened by compromise that he released the ark of God to the camp in the custody of his corrupt and polluted sons. A spiritually strong and God-honoring leader would have politely but firmly turned down the request of the elders to bring the ark out of Shiloh to the camp. The compromise of Eli was multi-faceted; no wonder he was expecting the worst to happen. Fear and anxiety are indicative or symptomatic of spiritual malady. The righteous man who stands in the will of God has great peace and boldness (Proverbs 28:1). Although it is clear from our text that Eli was more concerned about the safety of the ark of the covenant than that of his sons (verse 18), this greater concern did not translate into definite actions of enforcing repentance and restitution to defend God’s glory by removing his sons from the priestly office. Fourth, we observe the virtuous soul of a dying woman. The burden of Israel’s misfortune swallowed up the joy of childbirth and the comfort of caring neighbors. With her last breath, she named her child “**Ichabod**” to perpetuate the memory of this sad event when the temple at Shiloh became empty and ordinary – void of the presence and glory of God. Finally, God’s departure from the people is invariably the departure of everything that is good. Shiloh, which was a famous city of Ephraim (Judges 21:19-23) soon faded into insignificance with the permanent removal of the ark of God. It became an inglorious example of God’s fiery indignation against sin (Jeremiah 7:12,14; 26:6,9). The city abandoned by the Lord of glory is left desolate (Matthew 23:37-39). There is no sufficient reason for glorying in the whole of the universe except in Christ (Jeremiah 9:23,24).

In conclusion, sin and compromise rob people of peace on earth and paradise in eternity. The divine stroke of chastisement is intensely felt on earth and will be

interminably felt in the flames of hell. Those who take pleasure in sin and jeopardize the eternal happiness of their souls are not wise. Repent now before it is too late.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
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	Deut.	1
SUN	Philippians	1-2	“	2-3

706 LESSON

GOD CHASTISES THE PHILISTINES

MEMORY VERSE: “And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god” (1 Samuel 5:7).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 5:1-12

In the previous chapter, the predictions of the Lord concerning the house of Eli had begun to be fulfilled: Israel was disgraced in an encounter with the Philistines which made them to bring in the ark of God to the camp. The result of this was fatal as Israel was smitten and the ark captured. The aftershock of this defeat put the city of Shiloh in confusion and made Eli to faint, fall and break his neck. His daughter-in-law also fell into emergency labor, bore a son, but she died afterwards.

This study therefore focuses on the aftermath of the ark seized by the Philistines and the judgment it brought upon their idol and inhabitants of the cities it was taken to. God defended His name and glory and proved to the world that He could not be compared with any other god. **“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images”** (Isaiah 42:8).

THE CAPTURE OF THE ARK OF GOD (1 Samuel 5:1-5; 4:11-17; Psalm 78:60-64; Jeremiah 7:12-14; Leviticus 26:17; Deuteronomy 28:25; Joshua 7:8,12)

“And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod”. There was a battle between Israel and the Philistines and Israel could not stand before their enemies, but was roundly defeated. The ark of God which was the symbol of divine presence among the Israelites was captured. The defeat and humiliation would have been impossible **“except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD hath shut them up”**. Prior to this time,

“the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore” (1 Samuel 4:7). They knew that the God of Israel could not be confronted whenever He fought for His people. They must have heard of how He fought against the Egyptians, inflicted numerous plagues on them, showed signs and wonders, and finally overthrow their armies in the Red Sea. They were not unaware of the exploits of Joshua when he fought a confederacy of armies and defeated them because the Lord was on his side.

But Israel lost this heritage of steady victory because of sin and rebellion and the Philistines prevailed against them. **“Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies...”** (Joshua 7:12). When saints sin, defeat ensues and sinners become emboldened to desecrate holy things and blaspheme God.

Question 1: What led to the capture of the Ark by the Philistines?

On capturing the ark, the Philistines immediately took it to Ashdod one of their five strong cities and placed it beside their god, Dagon – the deity of fertility whose worship extended over Syria as well as Mesopotamia and Chaldea. Dagon was represented by a monstrous combination of a human head, breast and arms joined to the belly and a tail of fish; the upper part resembling a woman, the lower, a fish.

It was customary in all nations then to dedicate the spoils of war to their gods, so they thought it was proper to bring the ark into Dagon’s shrine. David deposited the sword of Goliath in the house of God (1 Samuel 21:8,9). When Saul was killed in Mount Gilboa, the Philistines put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth (1 Samuel 31:9,10). Three possible reasons would have informed their decision to place the ark in their temple. One, to pay some religious respect to it in conjunction with Dagon or as a trophy of victory in its honor with a possible plan to offer sacrifice as they did when Samson was captured (Judges 16:23,24).

Two, to dishonor the true God by declaring Him inferior and subject to their false god. Three, to give glory to themselves and boast of their power and military prowess.

Obviously, they placed the ark beside Dagon with a feeling of triumph and as a mark of subjection, submission to it and a humiliation to the God of Israel. But the God of Israel proved Himself to be stronger than the strongest. To their shock, **“when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD...”** (1 Samuel 5:3). Determined not to accept this reality or to prove that it was a coincidence, **“they took Dagon, and set him in his place again”**. To their utter humiliation, **“when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him”** (1 Samuel 5:4). It is utter abomination to equate the God of heaven with the idols of this world. There is only one God and beside Him there no other. Any god or idol beside Him is merely a contraption of men’s imagination (Isaiah 45:18).

From the capture of God’s Ark by the heathen, we learn that He will not honor the misuse of the Ark of the Covenant if the covenant itself is broken and negated by His people. This informed the Psalmist’s lamentation: **“...he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance”** (Psalm 78:60-62). To put the Bible or any religious material under the pillow will do no one any good unless its content is believed and practiced. Another lesson is that God sometimes allows the wicked to triumph for a while so that He will prove His power and glory. **“And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and**

upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen” (Exodus 14:17). **“...The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?”** (Job 20:5).

Question 2: What can we deduce from the way God allowed the capture of the ark?

Analysing the fall of Dagon, we agree that: 1) it is utter sacrilege to place the ark of God beside Dagon, an idol made with hands. 2) It is folly to equate the God of Israel with any other god. 3) God is capable of defending Himself and does not need the help of any man. 4) The idols of this world are works of men, powerless and need to be helped by their makers to be able to stand. 5) The only God worthy of our worship is the God of heaven. **“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name”** (Deuteronomy 10:20).

CALAMITIES UPON ASHDOD AND GATH (1 Samuel 5:6-10; Jeremiah 50:2; Ezekiel 6:4,6; Micah 1:7; Exodus 9:3; Deuteronomy 28:27; 1 Samuel 6:5; Psalm 78:66; Acts 13:11)

As soon as the ark of God was placed beside Dagon, the power of God was in manifestation. He took it upon Himself to plead his own cause since He does not need anyone to fight for Him. The sojourn of the Ark in the house of Dagon taught the Philistines that their victory over Israel was not due to the supremacy of Dagon over Jehovah, but God’s permission to teach Israel some lessons.

“But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof”. Apart from the humiliation of Dagon, the Lord went ahead to punish the Philistines for their insolence. Rather than repent from their sins, they chose to move the ark from Ashdod to Gath and then to Ekron. The downfall of Dagon did not teach them enough lessons. It is not good to wait until there is retribution or sickness as a result of sin before one repents. The best time to amend our ways is now

(2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:15; 4:7). Instead of repenting, many sinners choose to change church or relocate to another city.

Question 3: When is the best time for a sinner to give his life to Christ?

The hand of the Lord was described as being “**heavy upon them**” and “**against the city**”. The destruction His hand sent among them progressed from a great destruction to a deadly destruction. He destroyed them by cutting them off; the rest of the people were smitten with emerods in their secret parts. “Emerod, severally translated “hemorrhoids” or “piles”, “boils” or “tumors” refers to an infectious type of bubonic plague whereby the lymph glands in the groin are enlarged and inflamed and made very painful. The pains were unbearable and wide spread throughout their coasts. “**And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach**” (Psalm 78:66). The Lord has promised that He would wound the head of his adversaries and those who refuse to recognize His lordship. Even if they seem to prosper in wickedness, His judgment will eventually catch up with them (Psalm 68:21). It’s no use kicking against the pricks because those who do can never prosper. It is indeed “**a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**” (Hebrews 10:31). Thus, God would have honor even out of the revolt of the people. The fall of Dagon before the Ark is a demonstration that Satan will certainly fall before the Kingdom of Christ and that truth will surely triumph over error in the end. “**And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly**” (Romans 16:20).

CARRIAGE OF THE ARK BACK TO ISRAEL
(1 Samuel 5:11,12; Genesis 20:7,17; Psalm 2:12)

As it was obvious to the Ashdodites that the presence of the Ark was the cause of the plague that befell them, they relocated it successively to Gath and Ekron – two other chief cities of the Philistines – but the same plague broke out and raged fiercely that the lords of the cities could think of no other solution than to resolve to send it back to the land of Israel as quickly

as possible. **“So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there”** (1 Samuel 5:11). They finally realized that the booty they seized as a spoil of war has turned to be their undoing. They must hastily return it to its place. Some people are not as wise. They retain objects and loots which continue to be objects of reproach and spiritual leakages in their lives. As long as one retains stolen goods, church money, someone else’s spouse (like Abimelech - Genesis 20:7,17), and refuse to make restitutions, one would court the judgment of God.

From the efforts the Philistines made to retain the ark, we learn that devices of men against the Lord are foolish and vain (Proverbs 21:30). Secondly, man’s continued resistance to God’s will causes increased misery. Thirdly, man’s efforts against God afford opportunities for a wider display of His power. Fourthly, what man is unwilling to do in the beginning, he will, after much suffering, be constrained to do in the end (Psalm 119:17).

Question 4: What lessons do we learn from the way the Philistines waited till they were punished before returning the ark?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Galatians	1-2	Numbers	31
MON	Philippians	3-4	Deut.	4
TUE	Colosians	1-2	“	5-6
WED	“	3-4	“	7-8
THU	1 Thess.	1-3	“	9-10
FRI	Luke	1	“	11-12
SAT	“	2	“	13-14
SUN	1 Timothy	1-2	“	15-16

707 Lesson

THE ARK RETURNED TO ISRAEL

MEMORYVERSE: “And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you” (1 Samuel 6:3)

TEXT: 1 Samuel 6:1-21

The victory of the Philistines over Israel was short-lived as we found them simmering in divine displeasure in the preceding chapter. No doubt, God allowed the Philistines to defeat Israel in battle for profanity, sacrilege and sinful indulgence of the family of Eli. That also means He would not condone similar sins in the instruments He used to mete out justice. As a holy God, He proved His distaste for the idolatrous lifestyle of the Philistines and His supremacy over their idol. Ignorant of the fact that the Ark symbolized His holy presence, word and power, they sacrilegiously moved it to Dagon’s shrine, to Ashdod and to Ekron and engaged in consultations among themselves while their people suffered disease, death and destruction until **“the cry of the city went up to heaven”**. Following seven months of continual divine chastisement, the Philistines consulted with their priests and diviners and were advised to return the ark to its place. But first, they had to contend with the questions of **“what shall we do to the ark of the LORD?”**, and how shall **“we send it to his place”**. These two pivotal questions are what form the fabric of our present study in this chapter.

RELUCTANCE TO RETURN THE ARK AND RESULTANT PUNISHMENT (1 Samuel 6:1,2; Romans 1:19; Revelation 9:20,21; 16:9; Proverbs 27:22; Proverbs 29:1)

The Philistines were ignorant of God’s ways and attributes. As a result, they had doubts with regards

to the source of the calamity that had befallen them. They never knew that their victory over Israel was because the latter had sinned against God. Rather, they ascribed their victory to their prowess and the power of their god, Dagon. They were confused as to how disease and death could follow a resounding victory over Israel. They never knew the Ark they had taken had the divine presence. Theirs was a combination of spiritual ignorance and confusion leading to reluctance in releasing the Ark of God. **“And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD?...”** (1 Samuel 6:1,2).

Question 1: What can believers learn from the reluctance of the Philistines to promptly return the ark to Israel?

On two previous occasions, they had asked this same question (1 Samuel 5:8,11) and were told, **“send away the ark of God of Israel and let it go again to his own place that it slay us not”**. Rather than heeding the counsel at once, they chose to assemble a third council of priests/ diviners on the same issue (1 Samuel 6:1). This is reminiscent of Balaam, the apostate prophet, who though knew the express will of God, presumptuously decided to pester God for a change of mind to his own hurt (Numbers 22:12,19-22).

Believers and sinners alike should understand that prompt obedience to God’s revealed will always attract His blessings. Delay is dangerous. Had they taken the counsel for damage control, many of their people would not have died.

Question 2: Cite other examples in the Scripture where people inquired about divine truth but treated the answer with levity.

Some people are not sincere about the questions they ask. Pilate asked rhetorically, **“What is truth?”**, but was not interested in the answer (John 18:38). Felix insincerely **“sent for Paul and communed oftener with him”**, but **“hoped ...that money should have been given him of Paul that he might loose him...”**

(Acts 24:26). Christ told the rich man who inquired how to enter the kingdom to sell all, give to the poor and follow Him. The rich man found the answer was beyond his expectation of consecration. These represent the attitude of some people in the church today. It is surprising that some sinners are perplexed at their calamities and woes but will not forsake their evil ways (Exodus 9:34,35; Revelation 9:20,21; 16:9). Man's fallen nature loves to linger in self-will and unbelief rather than obey the commandments of God (Genesis 19:16,22; 1 Kings 18:21; Judges 5:15, 16; Genesis 43:10; Isaiah 26:10). It sometimes takes deadlier divine blows for sinners to repent of their evil deeds.

Question 3: What can we learn from the continued chastisement of the Philistines and their final submission to divine plan?

After God's continuous chastisement of the Philistines, they finally accepted to return the ark. Jonah and his co-travelers also unsuccessfully tried to resist the chastisement of the disobedient prophet (Jonah 1:4-16; Proverbs 19:21). Under heavy chastisement, Pharaoh and the Egyptians feigned repentance but soon relapsed into hardness of heart once the judgment was lifted (Exodus 8:8-15; 9:27,28,34,35). Sinners should be warned not to take God for granted by hardening their heart as sudden judgment can catapult them into hell if they refuse to repent and receive Christ. The purpose of divine chastisement is to make people "**learn righteousness**" (Isaiah 26:9).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S SUPREMACY
(1 Samuel 6:3-9; Act 3:19; Hebrews 10:12; Isaiah 43:7,21; 1 Peter 2:9)

"And they said, if ye send away the ark of God of Israel, sent it not empty, but in any wise return him a trespass offering..." (1 Samuel 6:3-9). The priests and diviners acknowledged that the Philistines had trespassed by taking the ark hostage. Their prescriptions for trespass offering were five golden emerods, five golden mice, a new cart, driven by two

milch kine **“which no yoke has come upon”**. Yielding to idolatrous inclinations, they urged the Philistines to make images of emerods and mice but they strongly enjoined them to **“...give glory unto the God of Israel”** in open acknowledgment of His sovereignty over all the earth and other gods, **“peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land”**. Accompanying this wise counsel to give trespass offering and glory to God is a warning against further delay occasioned by hardness of heart (verse 10). The counselors made allusion to the deadly consequences of recalcitrance in acceding to divine demand by the Egyptians for the release of the children of Israel from captivity.

From the counsel of the priests and diviners, we learn that some people know what God requires and counsel others to do it but they would not. It is obvious that as idol worshipers who touched the ark of God, they trespassed. Even in Israel, it is only the people chosen by God that could touch the ark; any Israelite who violated this would die. All who have trespassed God’s commands are required to repent and exercise faith in Christ who is our final trespass offering. **“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”** (Hebrews 10:12). Besides, God created and redeemed men to live/show forth His praise and glory (Isaiah 43:7,21; 1 Peter 2:9). Believers have a duty to warn sinners of the impending judgment of God on the obstinate.

RETURN AND RECEPTION OF THE ARK IN ISRAEL (1Samuel 6:10-18; 5:7-11; Deuteronomy 5:32,33; Job 34:31,32; Joshua 1:7,8; Proverbs 4:25-27; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Titus 1:5)

The Philistines heeded the counsel of the priests and diviners. **“And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh,**

and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh" (verses 10- 12). The Philistines carried out the detailed instructions and set the ark on the carriage to be taken to Israel. The ark was received at Bethshemesh, a city of Levites situated twenty-four miles west of Jerusalem. It was a frontier post between Judah and Philistia. That was why the kine went straight to it. The wonder here was that the animals followed the right way to the city. And when the lords of the Philistines "**had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day**", carrying home to their country this final confirmation to their earlier fear that, "**the LORD hath done us this great evil**".

Believers learn prompt obedience to divine counsel through His ministers from the foregoing. "**Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitudes of counselors, there is safety**" (Proverbs 11:14). Two, Christian workers and ministers are required to entirely consecrate to God in the same manner the kines, deprived of their calves and later given freedom of choice but did not submit to their bestial instincts of returning to their detached calves. The kines "**turn not aside to the right hand or to the left**" in doing the will of God (1 Samuel 6:12; Numbers 22:28-30; Jonah 2:10). Three, as the lords of the Philistines demonstrated thoroughness in returning the ark of God to Israel, ministers should do nothing less when it comes to doing God's will. Four, as the ark of God was borne by a "**new cart**" drawn by two milch kine "**on which there has come no yoke**", believers should serve God in "**newness**" of life, without any "**yoke**" or "**yeast**" of sin, malice, grudge, bitterness, or unequal yoke of compromise, hypocrisy and duplicity in their lives (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). Lastly, the people of Bethshemesh rejoiced that the ark which symbolized the presence, power and glory of God among the children of Israel had returned. Believers need to rejoice at the restoration of spiritual revival, power and glory.

Question 4: Does God's acceptance of the heathen priests' counsel imply that believers should consult or listen to idol worshipers?

The counsel of the priests and diviners worked in this instance because God wanted the ark returned. The diviners drew inspiration also from their knowledge of history of God's judgment on the Egyptians and urged their people to submit. Knowledge of past judgment of God upon the unrepentant should make believers untiring in soul-winning. Christians are forbidden to consult diviners. Note that their counsel was a clear departure from God's express command on the mode of conveyance of the ark, yet He had mercy on them. His clear command that only His chosen and holy priests should bear the ark was irreversible (Numbers 4:15; Deuteronomy 31:9). On the other hand, when king David attempted to carry the ark on a "**new cart**", God smote Uzzah and he died (2 Samuel 6:3,6,7) because He expected them to have complied with His command on this subject from the laws He gave to them (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). Therefore, when David realized this bitter truth, he later warned the priests, "**None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order**" (1 Chronicles 15:2,13). Believers need to endeavor to do all things decently and in order.

REPERCUSSION FOR RIDICULOUS CURIOSITY (1 Samuel 6:19-21; Exodus 19:21; Numbers 4:15,20)

"And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men: and the people lamented because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter" (verse 19).

Question 5: What admonitions can we learn from the chastisement on the men of Bethshemesh?

Though God overlooked the improvised use of a “**new cart**” by the Philistines in returning the captured ark to Israel, He would not condone similar ignorance from those to whom His word had been committed. Thus, the Scripture rightly warns that “**that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more**” (Luke 12:47,48). The men of Bethshemesh with the priests were expected to know the law of God governing the handling of the ark. Christian servants are expected to “**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**” (2 Timothy 2:15; Deuteronomy 17:18-20). Besides, all believers should be careful not to overstep the boundary of grace or breach the demands of God during merriment, celebration, festivities, weddings, burials, naming ceremonies, etc., like the men of Bethshemesh. The Scripture enjoins us to be sober, watchful, prayerful and transparent in godliness in view of and readiness for the Lord’s return (Philippians 4:5).

The main content of the ark is God’s law/word. The Word is as immutable and unconquerable as God Himself. Paul the apostle affirms this truth in his epistle to Timothy that “**the word of God is not bound**” (2 Timothy 2:9). At the time of the early church, the word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20). God’s presence and power in His word will continue to prevail as it did among the Philistines.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Timothy	3-4	Deut.	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	Hebruews	1-2	“	28

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

708 Lesson

SYMBOLS OF LAW AND GRACE

MEMORY VERSE: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

TEXT: Galatians 4:12-31

From the preceding chapters of this book, it was obvious that false teachers who gained inroad into the Galatian church convinced them to rely on their own works for salvation instead of the grace of God received through Jesus Christ. Paul the apostle set out to correct the erroneous course the Galatians had chosen by pointing out that no one could add anything to what Christ had already accomplished on the cross at Calvary for the salvation of sinful humanity. Sometimes, there is the temptation in many to believe that they need to add something to God's perfect plan of salvation. That is why many Christian assemblies rely so much on water baptism, confirmation, holy communion, keeping the ten commandments, holy water, anointing oil, pilgrimage to Israel and other practices as prerequisites for inheriting the kingdom of God.

In order to recover the Galatian Christians from the impressions made upon them by the Judaizers, Paul used symbols in the text to address and explain exhaustively the issues of law and grace. He pointed to their previous perfect state in Christ and present perverted stand in error. For this purpose, he presented to them their weakness and folly in allowing themselves to be drawn away from the doctrine of justification by faith to bondage of the law of Moses. In addressing this grievous issue, he still expressed his affectionate concern for their spiritual well-being. He was passionately jealous for his **"little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"** (Galatians 4:19).

SIGNS AND CAUSES OF DEFECTION IN THE GALATIAN CHURCH (Galatians 4:12-18; 3:1-5; 4:9-11)

Paul wrote to challenge the Galatian church over their defection from the truth of the gospel they had previously received. After reminding them of the great affection they formerly had for him and his ministry, he called them to a realization of their present behavior towards him which was contrary to what they had professed. He did this in order to make them ashamed of their defection from the truth which he had preached to them.

Question 1: What major lesson do we learn from the way and manner Paul rebuked the Galatian brethren?

Paul's approach to the sad development in the spiritual state of his Galatian converts leaves many invaluable challenges and lessons for contemporary believers, especially Christian leaders. First, while rebuking the brethren in the church, he made them know that he was not talking to them because of personal injury or affront done to him. This teaches that in reproofing others, leaders should make it clear that their action or reproof does not come from any private annoyance or resentment but from a sincere regard for God's honor and His gospel, and the desire to promote the people's welfare and happiness. Second, before rebuking the defecting Galatians, Paul lovingly reminded them of the great affection they previously had towards him thus: **"And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus...for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me"** (Galatians 4:14,15).

How uncertain and unreliable the respect and praise of man are! It is better to wait and obtain divine approval than seek the praise of men. However, Paul began with the bright picture of the tender relationship that existed between him and his Galatian converts. He affectionately addressed them as brethren, though

he knew their hearts were to a great extent evidently alienated from him. He magnified their former affection to him so that they might be the more ashamed of their present behavior towards him. Appreciation and commendation of the good qualities and activities in others is an effective method of preparing their hearts to receive admonitions.

Question 2: From the example of the Galatians, how would you identify the tendency towards defection in a believer?

“Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?... Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:15,16). The evidences of defection among the Galatian believers were clearly revealed in the negative changes that had taken place in their lives at this time. These signs include: (i) shift from living in the Spirit to a life in the flesh (Galatians 3:3); (ii) unwillingness to promptly obey the truth they had learnt (Galatians 3:1);

(iii) loss of the first love, zeal, excitement and enthusiasm manifested at the initial point of salvation (Galatians 4:15; Revelation 2:4); (iv) dwindling reverence and affection for spiritual leaders and ministers; and, (v) outright hatred and disaffection for God-sent ministers for telling the truth. Every sincere and heaven-bound believer should constantly test his/her present spiritual state on the litmus paper of spiritual condition to know whether he/she is still in the faith (1 Corinthians 10:12). Although true ministers may sometimes create enemies for themselves by the faithful discharge of their duty as was the case of Paul, they must not forbear speaking the truth for fear of offending others and courting their displeasure.

Question 3: What major factor was responsible for the defection of the Galatians from the faith?

Certain Judaizers deliberately destabilized Paul's new converts in Galatia. This they did by imposing on them the rite of circumcision and the yoke of the Mosaic Law as additional requirements for salvation. Paul wrote to convince the Galatians of their sin and

folly in turning away from the truth of the gospel. He emphatically explained that legal requirements of the law such as circumcision have nothing whatsoever to do with the operations of God's grace in Christ for salvation under the new covenant.

In his determined desire to convince the Galatians of their sin and folly in departing from the truth, Apostle Paul gave them the character of those false teachers who preyed on them to make them realize that they had no reason to accept error from self-serving false teachers. They showed a great deal of pretended and suspicious zeal, affection, respect for the Galatian believers but they were not sincere. Their chief aim was to misdirect their affections from Paul and the truth to themselves. Whatever pretenses false teachers may make, they are usually more concerned with their own interest than that of others, and will not hesitate to tarnish the reputation of others as a means of raising theirs.

SUPPLICATION FOR BACKSLIDERS IN THE GALATIAN CHURCH (Galatians 4:19,20; Luke 22:31,32; Galatians 6:1,2; James 5:19,20; Ephesians 6:18)

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.” Beyond verbal rebuke of his erring Galatian converts, Paul here expressed his affection toward them and the tender concern he had for their welfare through his earnest intercession for them. His character was remarkably different from that of the false teachers who interacted with the Galatian Christians. Paul's affection for them was not dependent on their attitude towards him. He desired to be present with them because he sought not theirs but them. The false teachers, on the other hand, pretended to love them but were rather after their own interest. While they were regarding him as their enemy, he assured them of his parental affection as he called them his children. This underscores the fact that he had been the instrument of their conversion to the Christian faith.

Question 4: What was the motivating factor in Paul's intercession for the Galatians?

The utmost expression of his concern for them and earnest desire for their spiritual welfare and prosperity is the vivid metaphor of the pangs of a travailing woman in birth for them. He earnestly desired that Christ be formed in them so that they might become Christians that are truly confirmed and established in the faith.

There are useful lessons from the foregoing. One, faithful ministers should always show an unflinching tender affection towards those whom they are called to minister to. Two, true ministers have a primary duty of interceding for weak, erring, confused, deceived, discouraged, backsliding and defecting church members rather than criticizing, castigating and hastily disciplining or giving up on them. Sharp and rash public rebuke which is not preceded by sustained secret intercession will miss the mark and destroy rather than edify those we seek to help. The chief point of our travailing in prayer for such members is that Christ may be formed in them, that they may be renewed in the spirit of their minds, conformed to the image of Christ, and more fully settled in the Christian faith and life (Ephesians 3:14-19). Three, Christ is not fully formed in men till they are weaned of trusting in their own righteousness, and made to rely only upon Him and His righteousness.

SYMBOLIC ILLUSTRATIONS AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LAW AND GRACE: (Galatians 4:21-31; Genesis 21:9-14; Romans 10:1-5; 3:24-28; Ephesians 1:7; 2:5-9; Titus 3:3-7; 2:11-15)

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman” (Galatians 4:21,22). The Apostle illustrated the difference between believers who trusted in Christ only and those Judaizers who depended on the law. He used the story of Isaac and Ishmael to draw a comparison. By drawing their attention to the

records of the Law, he introduced the subject in such a striking and impressive manner that was proper to convince them of their folly in departing from the truth. On that basis, he authoritatively questioned the desire of the Galatian Christians to be under the law considering its intricacies. In a dramatic and systematic manner, he unfolded the mystery surrounding the two covenants. Paul's discussion here has three elements, namely, historical allusion, allegorical interpretation and practical application.

First, he set before them their history by making allusion to and highlighting the different states and conditions of the two sons of Abraham. He pointed out that while Ishmael was by a bond maid, Isaac was by a free woman. The former was born after the flesh, that is, by ordinary course of nature and the latter by promise. Second, Paul provided allegorical interpretations of these historical records to show their spiritual import and significance.

Question 5: Briefly explain what Hagar and Sarah were meant to typify.

Paul admitted that these things are an allegory, implying that apart from the literal and historical sense, Hagar and Sarah were meant to represent, typify or prefigure the two different dispensations of the covenants. Hagar represented that which was given from Mount Sinai which tends or leads to bondage and further typifies Jerusalem that now is and is in bondage with her children. This refers to the Jews who, remaining in their infidelity and adhering strictly to that covenant are still in their bondage. Sarah, on the other hand, was meant to symbolize or prefigure Jerusalem which is above or the state of Christians under the new and better dispensation of the covenant. This covenant is free from both the curse of the moral law and the bondage of the ceremonial law, and serves as a mother of all (both Jews and Gentiles) who are admitted into this state as a result of their faith in Christ.

Third, Paul made a practical application of the

relationship between Ishmael and Isaac to present believers. **“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now”** (Galatians 4:28,29).

Question 6: Identify those described today as being born after the flesh and those born after the Spirit.

Today, sinners and backsliders are in the category of those said to be born after the flesh. Christians, who have accepted Christ, rely upon Him, seek justification and salvation by Him alone represent those born after the Spirit. We have become the spiritual, not the natural seed of Abraham and so are entitled to the promised inheritance and the blessings therein. Those born after the flesh almost always persecute those born after the Spirit. They persecute them through evil speaking, hatred, misrepresentation, denial of rights and privileges at workplace and attempting to frustrate their evangelistic activities and outreaches.

The main idea in the comparison is that Sarah and Hagar symbolized the old and new covenants. While Hagar represents the Mosaic Law that brought bondage, which has been cast out and abolished (verses 24-25,30), Sarah represents the new covenant that gives freedom from bondage and brings man to God, making them children of His by the new birth (verses 26-31). Just as Hagar and Ishmael were cast out of Abraham’s home and received no inheritance with Isaac, so the ceremonial Laws of Moses and the gospel cannot mix. They are two different contracts. One is abolished and the other is still in force. In spite of the persecutions believers face today, true Christianity will continue to flourish forever.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Hebrews	3-4	Deut.	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

709 Lesson

MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL LIBERTY

MEMORY VERSE: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

TEXT: Galatians 5:1-21

The preachers of circumcision had brought their influence to bear on believers in the Galatian church and this resulted to confusion among the brethren. These preachers were Jews who professed faith in Christ but still kept to the Mosaic Law. Their teaching was in conflict with the New Testament teaching of salvation through faith in the vicarious death of Christ. Regrettably, some Galatian believers had fallen for this error. In this epistle, Apostle Paul debunked this erroneous teaching and earnestly contended against any kind of mix-up of grace and the law. He urged the believers not to turn to the weak and miserable principles of the law so as not to be enslaved again. He pointed out that those who try to be justified by the law alienate themselves from Christ and have fallen from grace. For him, liberty in Christ entails constant watchfulness and godly living devoid of the works of the flesh.

Question 1: What do we derive from Apostle Paul's boldness in debunking the error of circumcision?

The apostle emphasized that anyone that relapsed into circumcision is obliged to keep the entire law and such a believer has subsequently fallen from grace and the benefits therein. He maintained that grace could only be appropriated through faith which works by love. He was unequivocal in condemning false teachers, denouncing them boldly as enemies of the gospel of Christ. He charged Timothy, saying: **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they**

will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:2,3). Similarly, faithful preachers of the gospel should be bold and unapologetic in exposing false preachers and their heresies.

The Apostle also urged the Galatian believers to uphold the spiritual liberty which Christ has procured for all true believers. This apostolic exhortation is in conformity with the admonition of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to the Jews who believed in Him: “... **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”** (John 8:31).

DENUNCIATION OF THE MIX-UP OF GRACE AND LAW (Galatians 5:1-10; 2:21; Matthew 9:16,17; Hebrews 8:6-8; 10:9; Acts 15:1-21; Colossians 2:8-10,13-17)

The Jewish preachers of the doctrine of circumcision had made an incursion into the Galatian church. Their message to the Gentile believers was: “...**Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”** (Acts 15:1). This is contrary to the gospel of salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ which Paul the apostle had preached. Some of the brethren in Galatia were confused. Before now, brethren in the Antioch church had been confronted by the same preachers when Paul and Barnabas were on the missionary field. These men always took advantage of the absence of the Apostle to preach false doctrine. This shows the importance of diligent and watchful leadership over God’s Church. Moreover, all believers should have full understanding of the word of God to enable them detect any deviation from the truth. Like the Apostle, the church should confront false doctrine by Declaring Apostolic Word Nationwide (DAWN).

On the futility of mixing grace and the Mosaic Law, Jesus had taught that “**No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new**

wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved” (Matthew 9:16,17).

Question 2: State why adhering to the Mosaic Law is unnecessary for believers in Christ.

The Scriptures declare that believers are: complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10); He made the only perfect offering for sin (Hebrew 10:14); fully satisfied all the requirements of the law for our salvation (John 19:30); liberated us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13); there would not have been any need for Christ to die if righteousness could be secured through the law (Galatians 2:21); there was no perfection through the law (Hebrews 7:19).

The Apostle reminded the brethren of how they fared well in the faith in time past and wondered how they had so easily turned out of the way. He expressed displeasure that those who sowed this evil seed and confusion in them could not have been sent by the same Lord who called them. He declared that a little corrupting influence, if not rooted out, would spread and cause much damage (Verses 7-9). Wherefore, believers should watch against little corrupting influences lest they spread and destroy the entire body (Song of Solomon 2:15).

DEMAND TO RETURN TO SPIRITUAL LIBERTY: (Galatians 5:10-18; Jeremiah 35:15; Isaiah 1:18-20; 55:6, 7; Luke 15:11-24; Ezekiel 33:11,13-16; Revelation 2:4,5)

Paul expressed his confidence that the Galatian believers would listen to him and return to their liberty in Christ. **“I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be”** (Galatians 5:10). He declared that the frequent persecutions he had suffered were due largely to his uncompromising commitment to the gospel of salvation through Christ by grace and not by the works of the Law.

Question 3: What is spiritual liberty?

Paul urged the believers in Galatia to return to spiritual liberty in Christ and free themselves from bondage to the works of the flesh. He persuaded them that Christ has set us free from the demands of the Mosaic Law which required circumcision and other ceremonies.

Spiritual liberty refers to the freedom the gospel grants believers through the new covenant in Christ. The old covenant was one of bondage, legalism, rites, ceremonies (which ultimately lead to spiritual death), while the new thrives on freedom, righteousness and life. However, believers are warned not to abuse or use this liberty for an occasion to sin (1 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). This warning became necessary so that believers would not assume that their liberty from the ceremonial laws meant that they were free to do whatever they liked. It does not mean that we are free from God's standard of righteousness, otherwise called the moral law. Rather, it means that we have been set free from bondage to sin and released unto good works (Ephesians 2:10).

Furthermore, the Apostle explained that Christian liberty is couched in love whereby the believer esteems the welfare of others above personal gains and privileges. True love is found in service to others not self; it takes pleasure in giving than receiving, reaches out than recoils, and sacrifices to make others happy and fulfilled (Romans 13:10; Galatians 6:2). Above all, it shows others how to find true liberty in Christ by sharing the gospel of grace.

Question 4: Mention the steps backsliders need to take to return to the love of Christ.

God wants those who have turned away from the true faith to return to the fold. Like the prodigal son who lavished his resources with riotous living and later realized his folly, backsliders are persuaded to return to the love of Christ while the door of mercy is still open. Those who abandon their faith in Christ for the law **“...have forsaken me the fountain of living waters,**

and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). There is a clarion call to them to return to their first love before it is too late. The following steps are necessary for backsliders to return to Christ: 1) recall their former position in Christ (Revelation 2:5); 2) repent of their backsliding (Revelation 2:5); 3) renounce false doctrine and false teachers; 4) return to Christ; 5) re-establish fellowship with people of like-precious-faith; 6) resist any temptation to detach from Christ.

In order to remain steadfast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, the Apostle enjoins us to walk in the Spirit. **“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh”** (Galatians 5:16). The Christian life is sometimes represented as a journey. To be able to reach our destination safely, we are to **“walk in love”, “walk circumspectly”, “walk in newness of life”, and “walk in the light”** (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 5:2,15; 1 John 1:7). We can accomplish this under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Question 5: How can spiritual liberty be maintained?

Liberty from spiritual bondage can be maintained through the Spirit’s continued indwelling and obedience to His leading (Galatians 5:18). Life by the Spirit is neither legalism nor license. It is a life of faith and love. The Holy Spirit does not move in us to gratify our fallen desires and passions, but to guide us in the path of righteousness. To maintain spiritual liberty, the believer must be steadfast in the faith and not rely on the observance of the Mosaic Law (Galatians 5:1-13); obey the truth of the gospel constantly (Galatians 5:7); walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16); be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18); crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24); manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23); and, live in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

DAMNATION FOR DESCENDING INTO CARNALITY:
(Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Romans 1:18-32)

In order to leave no one in doubt, Paul the apostle sets forth the works of the flesh. These are the out-workings of the sinful nature in unregenerate men. **“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”** (Galatians 5:19-21). The presence of any of the above sins in anyone is a clear indication that the grace of God is absent. Where grace to overcome these sinful passions is absent, an individual has no relationship with Christ. For those who knew Christ before, relapsing into sin is indicative of sliding back from faith in Christ.

Believers should not make the mistake of embracing unconditional eternal security. Those who go into sin after they had been born again lose heaven’s favor except they repent and come back to the faith. The moment one is cut off from Christ he withers away. The Spirit of God who spoke through the Apostle was emphatic that anyone who manifests these works of the flesh cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Anyone who descends from the life of grace in Christ has forfeited his liberty and the consequence is that he becomes enslaved to carnal passions. The consequence of this is that such will be rejected by Christ and will suffer eternal agony in the lake of fire. For this reason, believers should not toy with their salvation experience but guard it jealously knowing that its price is great. **“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot** (1 Peter 1:18,19). A believer should be ready to give up everything to keep his salvation. It is unfortunate that many are giving up their faith for mundane things of the world.

However, the Lord expects us to hold fast our profession till the end. It is only then that we can be assured of a place in God's kingdom. Perdition awaits those who turn back from the Lord (Hebrews 10:38,39).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING		EVENING	
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

710 Lesson

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

MEMORY VERSE: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23).

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26

The fruit of the Spirit is a biblical term that sums up the nine visible attributes of a true Christian life. The original Greek term translated as “fruit” is singular, signifying that there is just one fruit with nine attributes. It is worthy of note that the righteous are likened to a tree that are endowed and expected to bear fruit of righteousness. In Galatians chapter 5, Paul explains what fruit a righteous tree bears. It is arguable whether one who does not bear this fruit is truly a Christian.

Question 1: What is the fruit of the Spirit?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” The fruit comes from the Spirit and not from the Christian’s human spirit. It is this same Holy Spirit that convicts the sinner to get him born again and leads him in the path of righteousness. The fruit of the Spirit is God’s divine personality and character traits that are imparted in the Christian. These true Christian virtues are collectively called **“the fruit of the Spirit”** and couched in the best words in Galatians 5:22,23. Here, we have the exact definition of the total Christian personality and a beautiful resumé of Christ’s sermon on the mount represented in a most digestible form. It is the character of Christ reproduced in the Christian through the Holy Spirit.

Some people produce the fruit of human efforts. They strive, struggle, labor and by a great exercise

of the will produce some fruits – good culture, courtesy, calmness (outward), kindness – which are commendable to human beings. But these products of natural effort are not the fruit of the Spirit revealed in Scripture.

The true source of the fruit of the Spirit is God. “... **From me is thy fruit found**” (Hosea 14:8). God is the Source of all grace and goodness and it is His ultimate purpose to mold and transform believers into the express image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ teaches that the believer who detaches himself from God ceases to bear fruit (John 15:6). This shows that it is wrong to feel, think or believe that once you are saved you are always saved. A Christian who does not bring forth the fruit of the Spirit stands in danger of being cast away and rejected.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: (Galatians 5:22,23; Ephesians 5:9; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 3:18; John 13:34,35; 1 John 4:7-13; Romans 6:22; 2 Corinthians 3:18)

Grace, virtue and character are the basic essence of the Christian life and testimony. Paul the apostle, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, states the nine characters of the fruit produced by the Spirit of God in the believer, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22,23). The singular composition of the fruit of the Spirit which embodies nine virtues underscores the fact that they are to function in clusters. Explanation of each of the fruit is necessary, as follows.

The first is **Love** (1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Romans 13:10; John 13:34,35; 1 John 4:7-12). Love is the basic essential life of Christ which expresses itself in all the nine fruits.

Question 2: How does love embrace all other fruits of the Spirit?

A Christian writer beautifully illustrates how the eight other fruits are subsumed in love. He said: “Joy” is love exalting; “peace” is love reposing; “longsuffering” is

love enduring; “gentleness” is love refined; “goodness” is love in action; “faith is love confiding; “meekness” is love with a bowed head; “temperance” is true self-love, and so that the whole sum of Christian living is just loving”. Love, therefore, is the crowning grace which brings us to completeness, perfectness and spiritual maturity. It binds all other virtues together in harmony and unity.

Second, **Joy** (Isaiah 61:10; Jeremiah 15:16; John 16:22; Acts 8:8; 1 Peter 1:8). Joy is a spiritual feeling of great delight, pleasure and satisfaction that comes from the Lord. It is more than outward happiness. Jesus is the source of joy. The way into this joy is repentance and practical confession of faith in Christ. Money, mansions, might or material wealth never gives this joy; they only give transient happiness. The book of Acts talks about people being filled with joy in the Holy Ghost following their experience of salvation (Acts 8:6). Paul said, “**The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost**” (Romans 14:17). This joy transcends troubles and challenges of life; it leaps over tough circumstances and abides through problems, pains and even death. It is unspeakable!

Third, **Peace** (Philippians 4:7; Romans 5:1; Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 26:3). It is the state of Spirit-enabled restfulness, calmness, serenity and freedom from anxiety, fear or worry in the soul of the believer. As the Source of true peace, Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. The heart that receives Him as Lord and Savior will begin to experience peace. The peace He imparts is the quiet, potent, gracious attitude and goodwill that meets the bitterness of others with good cheer and repose. This peace is calm in crises, untroubled in trial and determined in disaster.

Fourth, **Longsuffering** (1 Corinthians 13:4; Colossians 1:11; 3:12; 2 Peter 3:9; Exodus 34:6). Longsuffering is more commonly called endurance or patience. It is the powerful capacity of selfless love to bear all things and forge ahead even in adverse situations. It is the generous willingness to try to understand

difficult people, disturbing events and unwelcome situations that God allows to come our way. This quality of character was beautifully displayed by Christ “**who for joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...**” (Hebrews 12:2). Longsuffering possesses the attributes of discipline, forbearance and equanimity.

Fifth, **Gentleness** (1 Thessalonians 2:7,11; 2 Timothy 2:24; Psalm 18:35; James 3:17). Gentleness is sweetness of temper, affability and courteousness. Gentleness is God’s enduring quality in the centuries of His dealing with man. The gentleness of God has drawn man to Him with a bond stronger than steel. Gentleness, the fruit of the Spirit is different from natural gentleness which is exclusively enjoyed by loved ones. Gentleness which grows out of the Spirit is enjoyed by all our friends as well as our persecutors, revilers, scorers, scoffers and all who speak evil against us. Gentleness is loving, appreciating, caring, tending, accommodating and correcting a friend, child or partner in a sweet, yet firm manner.

Question 3: Explain any four of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in our text.

Sixth, **Goodness** (Genesis 45:5-8,15; 1 Samuel 24:17; Acts 7:60; 1 Thessalonians 5:15). Goodness refers to the spiritual quality of being virtuous and kind towards others. Goodness is God’s special peculiarity and He puts a great emphasis upon it. Christ Himself “**went about doing good**”. The Christian whose life reflects goodness is one with a notable purpose, strong character, reliable conduct and trustworthy lifestyle. He is good, gracious, generous, gentle, peaceful and joyful in the business of making others happy. Goodness takes away any sense of pride or arrogance.

Seventh, **Faith** (1 Samuel 17:37; Psalm 37:3,5; Isaiah 26:3-4; Psalm 125:1). Faith, in its general sense, is our basis for belief. It is the divinely implanted principle of inward and wholehearted confidence, trust in and

reliance on God and all that He says. This faith makes the believer rely on God, exercise confidence and assurance in the church, believe the leadership of the church and the brethren. The basis of our faith is love. The Christian, who is full of faith, loves to the point of trusting and yielding himself faithfully to the service of the church and his fellowmen. Faith, therefore, is active. It pushes on, perseveres and remains loyal even when there are reverses and disappointments.

Eighth, **Meekness** (Luke 6:29; 1 Peter 3:4; Galatians 6:1; Numbers 12:3). Meekness is the very true nature and character of Christ. The meek is gentle, pliant, flexible but firm and frank. He is strong, courageous and mild. He uses his strength and courage to defend the glory of God. The meek sees the good virtue in others and gives his best to help the brethren to live a happy life. The meek Christian is submissive, quiet, kind, soft and patient especially with the weak.

Ninth, **Temperance** (Titus 2:2; Proverbs 16:32; 2 Peter 1:5-7; James 3:2). Temperance is also called self-control, moderation or self-restraint. It is the outward sign of a well-disciplined life. Temperance means bringing the whole person – body, soul and spirit – under subjection and to do just what Christ wants him to do. Here, the entire body's appetites, drive, desire, instincts are governed by God.

CONDITIONS FOR FRUIT-BEARING (John 15:1-8; Psalm 1:1-3; John 12:24; Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 9:10; Psalm 92:13,14; 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Many think it is impossible for someone who has not been baptized in the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of the Spirit. But this is wrong because the virtues in Galatians 5:22,23 are not called the 'fruit of the baptism in the Holy Spirit'. Besides, mere membership of a church does not qualify anyone to bear the fruit of the Spirit, neither does tithing our income or being involved in church activities guarantee that.

Question 4: What are the conditions for fruit-bearing?

Possessing the fruit begins with being born again. This means therefore that everyone that would bear fruit must first establish a living relationship with Christ, the true Vine. *Second*, there is the necessity of abiding in the Vine to continue to bear fruit. The power to overcome sin, do good and flourish in the grace of Christ comes from Him. **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”** (John 15:4,5).

Third, believers need to have God’s nature of holiness imparted into them to bear fruits that glorify Him. *Fourth*, death of the old man is crucial to bearing fruit (John 12:24). The old life with sinful appetites and passions inhibit God’s grace so that it does not find full expression. Therefore, those who hope to flourish in God’s grace must put to death the old corrupt life (Colossians 3:5). *Seventh*, there is need for fellowship and communion with Christ (Romans 7:4). It is a natural prerequisite that there cannot be fruitfulness in marriage without the union and fellowship of the couple. In the same breath, believers who wish to bear fruit of grace must abide in regular and continual fellowship with Christ

Unlike ‘branches’ that are severed from the vine resulting in their withering away, believers who remain with the Lord and bear fruits enjoy abundance of the juice from the Vine.

Question 5: Mention some of the benefits of bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Christ, in the fifteenth chapter of John commends fruit-bearing Christians and condemns fruitless Christians. **“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”** (John 15:2). The benefits of the fruit-bearing Christian life include assurance of answered prayers (John 15:7); fulfilling the purpose of

our redemption of bringing glory to God – **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:8); revelation of true discipleship – **“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”**; greater usefulness in the service of God; present and eternal rewards from God.

CRUCIFIXION OF THE FLESH AND WALK IN THE SPIRIT:(Galatians 5:24-26,16; Romans 8:1; 13:14; 1John 2:6; Colossians 2:6).

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lust. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Believers must be resolute and determined to constantly crucify the flesh with all its corrupt affections and lusts. The reason is, living in the flesh displeases God, leads to spiritual death (Romans 8:4-6,13) and loss of inheritance in God’s kingdom. The Christian life demands that a believer should not only die to sin, but also live unto righteousness; should not only oppose the works of the flesh but also walk in the Spirit.

Question 6: What does it mean to walk in the Spirit and what is the sure way of being free from sin’s bondage?

Walking in the Spirit does not mean being fanatical, lawless, unteachable and irrational as it is in some Christian assemblies today. Neither does it mean introducing ‘strange fire’ in the fellowship or in the church. To walk in the Spirit means to pattern our lives after Christ, to mortify the deeds of the flesh and to have the fear of God and submission to Christ. Fruit-bearing continues as we are rooted and grounded in Christ (Ephesians 3:17,18), live in constant and total separation from the world, and lead a life of holiness, submission and obedience to God (Romans 6:22). Christ’s unchanging word is, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”** (Matthew 12:24).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
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

711 Lesson

BELIEVERS' DUTY TO THE FALLEN

MEMORY VERSE: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

TEXT: Galatians 6:1-5

In the previous chapter, Paul the apostle had admonished the Galatian brethren to realize that Christ's substitutionary death on the cross was to fulfill the primary purpose of freeing them from ceremonial laws and works of the flesh. Thus set free, they were expected to be spiritually consistent so as to bear fruit of the Spirit. While he condemned the works of the flesh, he enjoined them to live and walk in the Spirit.

In our text, the Apostle admonished the Galatian disciples concerning their responsibilities toward one another in Christian service and drew their attention to the possibility of faltering. Believers are not to be indifferent to the spiritual welfare of fellow brethren. Joseph, though in prison, was mindful of the well-being of his fellow inmates (Genesis 40:1-8); and Paul the apostle, in spite of the torture of incarceration, was more concerned about the care of the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28). A major lesson from Paul's admonition in this text is that believers should be concerned for the physical as well as spiritual welfare of their fellow brethren.

Question 1: What do we learn from Paul's admonition to restore believers overtaken in a fault?

THE POSSIBILITY OF BACKSLIDING (Galatians 6:1; 1Corinthians 10:5-12; Song of Solomon 2:15; Hebrews 12:1; 2 Peter 3:17; Revelation 2:14; Ezekiel 16:49; 1 Corinthians 5:6,8; Matthew 24:12,13)

The statement “**if a man be overtaken in a fault...**” addressed to “**Brethren**” shows the possibility of

believers falling into sin. Although the principle of living in the Spirit is no mere idealism, the Apostle knew perfectly well that some believers through carelessness could falter and derail. Christ predicted that in the last days, **“because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”** (Matthew 24:12). John the beloved also affirm this truth when he said, **“...these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 John 2:1). The possibility of believers sliding into sin nullifies the doctrine of eternal security as false, misleading and condemnable. Believers’ security in Christ is guaranteed as long as they remain steadfast to the end (Hebrews 3:6,14; Matthew 24:12,13; 1 John 5:18). And those who keep themselves in faith enjoy the blessedness of being kept by God (Jude 21,24,25).

<p>Question 2: What is the danger of believing the doctrine of eternal security?</p>

A believer who is **“overtaken in a fault”** could be described as a person who has committed an act of sin rather than one who is habitually sinful. Such a brother is to be assisted by spiritual and more mature believers. The consequence of a believer being overtaken in a fault is that it leads to spiritual weakness. The major causes of being overtaken in a fault are self-confidence (1 Corinthians 10:12), carelessness (Judges 18:7; Isaiah 32:9,10), prayerlessness (Matthew 26:40,41), secret sin (Proverbs 9:17,18), ungodly association (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; James 4:4), frivolity and worldliness (1 John 2:15-18), and absence of profitable daily quiet time (Joshua 1:8).

As Christians, we should strive earnestly to maintain a consistent spiritual life by separating from all compromisers (Romans 16:17; Nehemiah 13:28; Proverbs 14:7), having no fellowship with false prophets and false teachers (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 6:3-5), refusing to read books, watch or listen to recorded messages of false ministers (2 John 9-11).

COMMITMENT TO RESTORATION OF THE FALLEN:

(Galatians 6:1,2,5; Romans 14:1; 15:1; 1 Corinthians 9:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Isaiah 35:3,4; Genesis 40:1-8; James 5:19,20; Luke 22:31,32)

The text outlines how a weak believer overtaken in a fault could be handled by other strong and abiding brethren. It is in sharp contrast to the law which decreed judgment on offenders in the posture of a holier-than-thou attitude (Isaiah 65:5). In Greek, the word 'restore' means *katartizo* which is used for mending fishing nets and perfecting human character. It also means conversion from a deplorable and miserable state to a glorious one (Luke 22:31,32). Also, it implies to share in the burden of the fallen believer to make it lighter through prayer, intercession, visitation, caring and counseling.

To carry out these God-given assignments, we should bear in mind that whatever we do must not be to please self. **“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”** (Galatians 5:13). Our service to the burdened brethren demands sacrifice. Except we are willing to sacrifice and bear long, the necessary edification may be absent from the fellowship. Also, self-denial and humility are necessary if we shall bear one another's burden.

Question 3: How can steadfast believers restore those overtaken in a fault?

Interestingly, the Scripture provides the formula and pattern for restoring believers who fall. The Apostle pointed out that it is the responsibility of strong and spiritual believers to raise the fallen. He, however, hinted that it should be done with meekness and gentleness knowing that each of us is susceptible to temptation daily. Paul's concern that the brethren should be conscious of the burdens and weaknesses of others could unwittingly lead to a sense of superiority complex and carnal boasting; so, in verse five, he calls to mind the propriety of looking inward for personal evaluation (2 Corinthians 13:5). By this, he

meant that one should look at the weakness of others only for purpose of compassion and not for comparison (2 Corinthians 10:12-18).

Question 4: What attitudes should believers who seek to restore those who are fallen avoid?

From the admonition of Paul, it is necessary that every believer jettison any form of boasting or carnal comparison (Luke 18:9-14). However, the Scripture commands that **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). In Galatians 6:2, the **“law of Christ”** that believers are called to fulfill includes all the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ found in the New Testament. And the sum of all the commands is love for God and fellow men. Note the wide difference between the law of Christ and the Law of Moses in Hebrews 10:28 where it is stated that **“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses”**. While the Law of Moses promised life for obedience, it gave no power to obey it. It could only encourage obedience by the fear of punishment. But the law of Christ, on the other hand, is a loving instruction for those who already have life. Believers are enabled to keep its precept by the power of the Holy Spirit propelled by the love of Christ.

SPIRITUALITY OF HUMBLE AND WATCHFUL SERVANTS: (Galatians 6:1,3,4; 5:1; John 15:4,5; 1 Corinthians 16:13; John 8:30,31; Hebrews 3:6,14; Jude 23,24; Revelation 2:25,26)

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (Galatians 6:1,3). Apostle Paul identifies the spiritual role of steadfast brethren in the family of God. These are brethren who have been delivered from the clutches of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21); are bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) and walking and living in the

Spirit (Galatians 5:24,25). To be spiritual means to be governed and directed by the Holy Spirit in every facet of life (Revelation 1:10; Luke 2:25-27; John 4:23,24; Romans 8:9- 11). It also means to possess the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5; Romans 8:6), to be strong in the Lord (Romans 15:1; Ephesians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1,2) and to worship the Father in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24).

Question 5: What does it mean for a believer to be spiritual?

Spirituality is a state of freedom from sin and error, fervency, current graceful ability to obey God's word, a state of complete self-crucifixion, surrender to be possessed, controlled and used by the Spirit of God. To be spiritual, one must ensure he has the following: (i) sound salvation experience (Matthew 18:3; Psalm 11:3; Ephesians 6:17), (ii) sanctified heart (Matthew 5:8; Psalm 24:3,4; Acts 24:16; 1Thessalonians 5:23,24), (iii) Spirit-filled life (Ephesians 5:18; Revelation 1:10; Galatians 5:16,18,22- 24), (iv) the enlivening word of God (Acts 20:32; Ephesians 6:17b; Matthew 4:4), (v) supplicating grace (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17), (vi) strength from above (Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:17), and (vii) steadfast walk with the Lord (Hebrews 3:6,14; Galatians 5:1).

Believers who are spiritual need to be watchful while making efforts to restore the erring to avoid fallen into the same error. If anyone thinks he is standing, the Scripture warns that such should take heed so as not to fall. Godly fear and hatred for sin should characterize believers who make sincere efforts to restore backsliders. **“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”** (Jude 23). Since the contemporary society is filled with tempting sounds and dazzling sights, there is need for constant watchfulness. **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5:8).

Question 6: What should be the attitude of spiritual believers who make effort to restore the spiritually weak?

It is clear that all mortals were fashioned out of the same dust. Thus, when we see a brother commit sin or overtaken by a fault, we should remember that it could have been us but for the unmerited grace of God. For a Christian to develop superiority complex is a form of self- deception. Certainly, we should never think that bearing one another’s burden demeans our status. Believers should be warned against the habit of comparing themselves with others and finding justification for self-satisfaction and pride. Apostle Paul cautions that we shall be examined individually at the judgment seat of Christ and not in comparison with others. Therefore, we should take heed to ourselves so that we might be able to rejoice in our work rather than in the failures and vicissitudes of others. Above all, spiritual and restored believers must maintain holiness in life and service till the end to be saved.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
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

712 Lesson

THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

MEMORY VERSE: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7,8).

TEXT: Galatians 6:6-18

Paul the apostle, in this segment of his epistle to the Galatian church reminds believers of their binding duty of supporting the ministry and the needy members of the church with their God-given resources. But in doing this, he did not allow the appeal to degenerate into arm-twisting and high-pressured emotional gimmicks that are rampant in some assemblies today. It is interesting to note that he used the word “communicate”, which is a derivative of the Greek word “koinonia” which connotes fellowship, sharing and distribution. This then means that giving and hospitality are aspects of believers’ fellowship.

Paul used the epistle to stir up their liberality and beneficence to faithful ministers and members of the church. It is obvious from the Apostle’s exhortation and his earlier warnings about false teachers that the love of the Galatians to the word of God and His ministers had grown cold. It was, therefore, needful to stir them up by reminding them of the unfailing and unchangeable law of sowing and reaping.

Christian liberality and beneficence in general, towards the gospel minister is here compared to the seed sown and the harvest obtained. Likewise, the eternal destiny of every man is anchored upon the present input to his flesh or spirit. The Apostle revisits the issue of circumcision, which teachers whose interests are selfish and directed to sway believers from the true gospel had taught them, pointing out that their

foundation did not avail anything in justification and salvation. He concludes the epistle with a benediction preceded by a firm charge not to trouble him over this clear gospel for which he had sustained the mark of slavery to Christ.

Question 1: How is Christian giving related to fellowship?

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY AND WARNING AGAINST SELF-DECEPTION (Galatians 6:6,9,10; Hebrews 13:16; Psalm 126:5,6; Job 4:8; Hosea 8:7; 1 Corinthians 6:9; James 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17,18; Romans 2:4-6)

Christians of all ages are expected and commanded to support the gospel work through sacrificial giving. **“But to do good and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”** (Hebrews 13:16).

Question 2: What should be the Christians’ proper attitude to giving?

Believers are to realize that every gold of theirs belong to God and must not be kept away from Him. Christians are, therefore, to submit themselves to God and be willing to give with a heart glowing with gratitude and loving confidence that God will not forget their labor of love. They should know that the reason God places material blessings in their hands is to promote His kingdom on earth. We are stewards of God’s manifold blessings. God owns us and all that we have.

Question 3: Explain the purpose of Christian giving and reasons some people do not give for God’s work.

Some Christians shun giving in the church for various reasons. One, they follow the example of carnal members in the church. Two, some feel that the demands are too many and too frequent. Three, others feel that people take advantage of their liberality to begin to make personal demands from them. Four, few also feel that their liberality is not acknowledged and rewarded by men. Five, there are those who fail to recognize the true purpose of Christian giving.

The purposes of Christian giving are: to sustain the ministry, support the weak and needy members, subdue human greed, supply seed for the future, and open doors for divine blessings especially to members of the household of faith. This is because the God of heaven who has enjoined these duties provides the means, creates the opportunities for the performance and rewards us in due season.

The apostle warns the Galatian church about the unchanging fact that insensitivity to this duty stemming from selfish excuse cannot be a smoke in God's eyes but self-deception on the part of the disobedient. Thus, the apostle likened Christian liberality to the seed sown with the expectation of a harvest in quality and kind that depends on the measure of input.

COMPREHENDING THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING: (Galatians 6:7,8; Genesis 8:22; Luke 6:38; Job 4:8; Proverbs22:8; Hosea 8:7; Romans 2:4-6; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Question 4: What is the law of sowing and reaping?

From creation, God set laws to govern life on earth and regulate the choices and actions of men. Sowing and reaping is called a law or principle God established from the beginning. His covenant with Adam and all creation is: **“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease”** (Genesis 8:22). This law works for sinners and saints alike. Sowing conjures a picture of a farmer planting seeds of crops he intends to harvest in future. The businessman calls it investment. Relating to the Scripture, it is written that **“...to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward”** (Proverbs 11:18). Every man is a sower who will reap his harvest.

The implication of this law is that there are consequences of choices and actions. Many tend to

make choices without considering the consequences and live their lives as if there are no consequences. The deception is in thinking that there are no consequences when, in fact, they are just delayed. It is not until later years that the truth becomes clear and we discover just how true they are. Too many today dwell on the present without regard for the future. There is a price to pay for all choices and actions and God will not be mocked. This law grants us insight into the future by enabling us to consider what kind of consequences we can expect from our actions. It is then a matter of faith to believe God for what He has promised.

The law of sowing and reaping is universal and applies in both spiritual and physical realms. Everything in nature reproduces its kind. Life is like echo, you get what you give out. Harvest follows sowing; effect follows cause; so every man will reap what he sowed. Those who sow to the flesh (those who indulge their flesh in all forms of sensuality living) will reap corruption, sorrow, pain and damnation, while those who deny their flesh and cultivate the spirit in obedience to divine demands will reap peace and eternal life. As the seed is sown, so shall the harvest or reward be to the sower in the present and the next world. Any labor directed to please the flesh shall come to corruption and perdition, while a labor in the spirit and fear of God will of necessity produce harvest that will last forever with God. This principle is unchanging.

Question 5: What are some life implications of the law of sowing and reaping?

There are some basic truths about the law of sowing and reaping. One, what we will be tomorrow will depend on what we do today. The right or wrong choices that we make today will affect the rest of our life. It is imperative that we sow good seeds of obedience to the word of God. In future, they will blossom into a harvest of righteousness, not just for us, but also for our children and grandchildren. As the saying goes, “sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit;

sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny”.

Two, reaping is not always immediate. So, there is the danger of growing weary in well-doing because of opposition to good in our own nature or the outward hindrances we may meet from a gainsaying and persecuting world. But we must remind ourselves of the importance of perseverance. God promises that we will reap if we persevere.

Three, there is no shortcut to prosperity. Our hands must continually be on the plow as opportunity or the season provides us to sow by doing well to others and working hard. While it is the time of sowing, let us sow the good seed; and let our love be, as the love of Christ, free and manifested to all. Let us help all who need help according to the measure of God-given grace in our lives. But let our priority be people of the household of faith.

Paul here sounds a note of caution to men who presume they can mock God by their false profession and hypocrisy. **“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatian 6:7). “Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him?” (Job 13:9).** God cannot be mocked or deceived. He sees through every man’s work and activity; He tries the hearts and the reins. This warning is for people who excuse themselves from duties of lending support to their ministers and needy members in the church, pleading poverty as reason; people who vainly entertain the hope of enjoying divine approval and reward while neglecting true piety; and people who run after the world and the things of the flesh while putting the garb of religion. Paul exhorts true believers not to be weary in well-doing. Christians are not to deviate, withdraw or exempt themselves from their religious duties.

APOSTOLIC AFFECTION AND BENEDICTION:
(Galatians 6:11-18; Philippians 3:2,3; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Philemon 1:25; 2 Timothy 4:22; Colossians 1:24)

It is clear from the foregoing that the apostle's closing remarks was to deliver the believers in Galatia from doctrinal errors they had imbibed from the false teachers and Judaizers. To achieve his purpose of winning back the misguided believers, he highlights the erroneous ways of these people, proving how vain it was for them to follow their pernicious ways. The false teachers are merely satisfied with making some religious impressions. They emphasize the external forms and rituals of religion while neglecting the real spiritual aspect and tried to compel others to do so. They also repose confidence in the flesh and not in the spirit, as men-pleasers who shun the cross of Christ.

Question 6: What are the characteristics of false teachers and seducers?

The apostle further charged his adversaries to give him no further trouble or disturbance, either by destroying his doctrine or detracting from his authority because he bore in his body the marks of his sufferings for Christ. It was customary for slaves to bear the names or stamp of their owners on their bodies. Paul's scars of wounds received for Christ's sake indicated to whom he belonged, and in whose service he was. This was the point of his boasting in contrast to the Judaizers who boasted in the circumcision mark in the flesh of their followers. Paul gloried in being the slave of Jesus Christ. This should be the attitude and path of every heaven-bound believer.

In concluding the epistle, the Apostle gives a parting benediction on those who will take heed to his corrections and instruction saying, **“as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”**. He also prayed that the grace and favor of Christ might remain in their spirit. It is interesting to note that Paul called them **“brethren”** despite rebuking them. This is the spirit of a concerned father and minister which should be emulated by believers with spiritual children.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
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

713 *Lesson* CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE DURING PERSECUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11,12).

TEXT: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Persecution is suffering for righteousness' sake or suffering for biblical principles and beliefs the Christian upholds. So, everyone who has repented of his sins and received Jesus as Savior and Lord is bound to suffer persecution. All categories of believers – young believers, older believers as well as fathers and mothers in the Lord suffer one form of persecution or the other at different stages of their Christian life. Persecution, therefore, is not a strange experience for the believer in Christ. **“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering...”** (1 Peter 4:12,13).

Question 1: What is persecution? Mention the kinds of suffering that cannot be regarded as persecution.

Believers need to understand that persecution or trial of faith is not (or even a part of) the Great Tribulation. While persecution is suffering for Christ's cause, the Great Tribulation is a worldwide unparalleled suffering of unbelievers during the reign of Antichrist after the rapture of the saints.

Besides, believers who suffer as a result of their unscriptural attitudes to others or wrong doing should not hide under this Christian precept and claim they are suffering persecution. That is why the

Scripture admonishes believers to maintain good works before men. To suffer as a result of any of these sinful attitudes can not be for Christ's sake. **"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."**

Christ predicted that believers would be persecuted as He was persecuted. **"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me"** (John 16:1-3). Therefore, no believer is exempted from it.

PERSECUTORS AND SCOPE OF PERSECUTION (1 Peter 4:12-19; John 16:3; Galatians 4:29; Acts 7:2)

Question 2: What are the identifying marks of those who persecute believers?

Christ revealed the identity of persecutors as those who have not **"known the Father, nor me"**. Sinners and backsliders are the ones the devil inspires and uses to persecute believers in his attempt to dissuade them from continuing in the Christian faith. This is the uniform testimony of the Scriptures. **"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."** Persecution then can come from unbelieving relations, co-workers, bosses, fellow- students, teachers or anyone that the believer chances to have interactions with. Though persecution generally comes from people who are yet to be born again, carnal believers also do allow themselves to be used by the devil to stand in the way of other brethren.

Question 3: In what ways can the believer be persecuted?

Suffering persecution can take different forms. It can be mild as verbal assault, serious as physical assault or critical as martyrdom. A righteous believer can be evil spoken of or hated, have his promotion withheld

in the place of work or have his entitlements seized by his parents, be denied jobs that he is qualified for, be beaten, etc. for his principled stand on the word of God.

It is interesting to note however that the persecution the believer suffers today cannot be more than what Christ suffered. Christ suffered all forms of persecution during His earthly ministry. Thus, He is our Example, not only in conduct but also in suffering.

PERSECUTION: A COMMON EXPERIENCE OF SAINTS: (Matthew 24:13; Mark 10:38,39; 2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:33; Matthew 10:17,18; John 9:28,34; Jeremiah 38:6; 1 Peter 1:6; Matthew 5:39,40)

Question 4: Mention some believers in the Bible who experienced persecution.

To prepare the minds of His disciples for what they were going to suffer when He eventually leaves the world, Christ declared that they would be persecuted. This was essentially part of the beatitudes He taught on Mount Olives. Persecution is the lot of every Christian. Old Testament believers had their share of persecution. Joseph was hated and sold by his brethren for relating his God-given dream. Moses was derided by some as he led Israel under God's guidance through the wilderness. Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and other prophets were plotted against for upholding the scepter of righteousness as were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for their stance in worshiping the only true God.

Persecution did not end with the Old Testament dispensation as some erroneously believe. The truth needs be told that in any Christian assembly where persecution is no longer the experience of members, compromise with the world exists either in doctrine or lifestyle. The reason is, the devil who is the god of this world is highly intolerant of a holy lifestyle and truth such as Christ lived and preached. The Lord Jesus Christ was vehemently persecuted by the religionists of His days for declaring the good news of the kingdom. He was spoken against, falsely accused

and finally arrested and killed because He claimed to be the Son of God. His forerunner, John the Baptist, was given a similar treatment. The early church leaders (and members) were also persecuted by the religious Jews as well as pagan Gentiles wherever they preached the gospel. While some were arrested, whipped and jailed, others were martyred for **“speaking in the name of the Lord Jesus”**. Paul the apostle went through similar experiences after his conversion and in the course of his obedience to the heavenly vision. The believer therefore, must bear in mind that doing the will of God or obeying His commands does not exempt him from being persecuted. The Scripture affirms that **“...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Timothy 3:12).

Question 5: Why are believers persecuted?

Christ, addressing His “brethren” who did not believe in Him said, **“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil”** (John 7:5,7). Since inception, the society has always hated anyone who walks contrary to the course of the world and its accepted norms. Religionists have always despised non-conformists to existing tradition. As our lives and preaching expose and rebuke sin and its foolishness, we are bound to be persecuted.

CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDE DURING PERSECUTION
(1Peter 4:12-19; Matthew 24:13; 1 Peter 2:21-23; Luke 21:14-19; 21:28; 2 Corinthians 4:17,18; 1 Peter 1:3,4)

Question 6: How should believers react to persecutors during persecution?

It is obvious from the Scripture that every sincere and practicing Christian will go through persecution like our Lord Jesus Christ did. But while going through it, certain principles of behavior are expected of him: sinlessness, non-retaliation and submission to God.

Whatever we, as believers, go through in the world - however bitter our neighbors, superiors or peers are to us because of the faith - the Bible is clear as to

what our attitude should be. As our perfect Example endured, blessed and prayed for the forgiveness of those who persecuted and crucified Him, so we are instructed to forgive our persecutors. We are to bless those who curse us, rejoice for every opportunity to suffer for His sake, patiently cleave unto the Lord and His Word and be ever conscious of the eternal weight of glory reserved in heaven for us (2 Corinthians 4:17,18; 1 Peter 1:3,4).

When we do these, we are promised divine help. As the Lord promised (Isaiah 51:12,13) and as He stood with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:14-30) Daniel (Daniel 6:16-23), Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-20) and many others, He will uphold us in all experiences throughout our stay on earth. If we patiently hope and cleave unto Him, love and faith will open the door out of every dungeon for us. Heaven's windows for an immeasurable outpouring of divine blessings will be open unto us. We must not allow persecution, which the Bible calls our light affliction, to becloud our view of our promised eternal inheritance. Rather, we need to renew our consecration and commitment to the Lord as we remain in unbroken communion with Him to see us through whatever we may be passing through. Or, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”** During persecution, believers must hold to their Christian convictions. Since Jesus did not compromise with the world to avoid suffering persecution, believers must not. The time of persecution should be made a time of unceasing prayer for our persecutors and for grace to suffer shame and reproach for his name without sinning. We must not recant to avoid suffering; our conviction must remain intact because **“in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Romans 8:37-39).

BENEFITS OF SUFFERING PERSECUTION

(Matthew 16:25; 5:10-12; Mark 10:30; 13:9-11; Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 124:1-8; 129:1,2; Daniel 3:8-25; Revelation 1:9-18; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8)

Though it is the will of God to suffer persecution, some believers are afraid of it, hence their resolve to be secret disciples of Christ. They are ashamed to identify with the Bible or Bible-believing people for fear of ridicule. They do not profess to know Christ openly because of the privileges they presently enjoy which might be denied them. Such a life leaves much to be desired as they will not be able to bear fruit as expected. Such people are also not far from compromises that affect their loyalty to Christ. Obviously, love of material things and weakness of faith in God's omnipotence underpin such a lackluster lifestyle. Theirs is not a demonstration of wisdom as standing for nothing or being of a double standard smacks of cowardice. Christ revealed that those who seek to save their own lives will lose them, while those who trust in the Lord and lose their lives – opportunities and privileges that should have been theirs were it not for their profession of faith in Christ – will gain them. Again, those who deny Christ before men risk being denied by Him in heaven. The believer needs to note that persecution is part of his light affliction that cannot in any way compare with the suffering that awaits sinners and those who deny Christ in hell.

Question 7: Mention some blessings believers who endure persecution with Christ-like attitude stand to enjoy.

The believer who endures persecution with Christ-like attitude will have the Spirit of Christ and glory rest upon him. His also will be the blessedness Christ pronounced during His teaching on the kingdom life. **“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake... for great is your reward in heaven...”** (Matthew 5:10-12). Persecution fires the believer's longing for his real,

eternal home. That is why it is part of saints' promised blessings (Mark 10:30; Acts 5:41). Persecution opens rare opportunities for believers (Mark 13:9,10). The Philippian jailor and his house, for instance, would not have been saved were it not that Paul and Silas maintained Christian attitude of peace, endurance, prayer and praises unto God. Thus, the gospel spread when believers endure persecution and stand firm on their Christian conviction.

Persecution provides opportunities for believers to enjoy the comfort of the Spirit during tribulation as promised by Christ. Obviously, God does not forget His children in the fire of trials of faith. Those who endure will discover God's promise of protection, preservation and provision (Isaiah 43:1,2; Psalm 27:10) to be true and sure. And such discovery strengthens the faith of the believer to continue to grow into maturity of godliness. It is clear from the cases of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Peter and John the beloved that special revelation and the divine presence and ministration of angels attend intense suffering and persecution of saints. Above all, the believer who endures persecution and continues in the race to the end will be saved and given a crown of life. So, **"blessed is the man that endureth temptation (persecution): for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"** (James 1:12).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Matthew	10-11	1 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

714 Lesson

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).

TEXT: Luke 4:1-12; James 1:12-16; Jeremiah 35:1-10

Salvation from sin, the blessedness of it, the moral agency of man, the purpose of Satan at thwarting the will of God for the redeemed and the possibility of believers spiritual downfall make the subject of temptation a crucial one to consider. To begin with, Satan does not want anyone to be saved from sin. So, he wages war against everyone who is saved from sin to make sure he does not continue in the real experience of salvation, and thus, disqualify him from enjoying the benefits of salvation here and in heaven. But since he cannot force the Christian to sin, he takes advantage of the free moral agency of man to make choices. He coats wrong, sinful practices in living and attractive colors and urges man to choose and damn the consequences which he hides from him.

God however, urges the Christian who seeks to enjoy abundant life to align his choices with His (Deuteronomy 30:15). This is because in His goodwill, He has ordained that believers be conformed to the image of His dear Son and walk according to the guidance of His all-knowing- seeing-powerful Spirit. Unfortunately, most believers are “blind” and “deaf” in a sense that they do not see and know who is behind some subtle suggestions that appear to be good. **“Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD’S servant?”** (Isaiah 42:19 with Job 33:14). Note that temptation is

not sin; it is when the believer yields to temptation that he sins.

Question 1: What is temptation and how do sinners and backsliders fare during temptation?

Temptation is a common experience of all men - saints and sinners alike. In our lead text, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ was not spared. Just as it was with the Lord, temptation is an enticement or a suggestion (in thought, feeling or action) to sin or do evil. It cuts across age, race, social class, color, spiritual level or estate in life. No saint lives long enough or grows enough in grace to get rid of it.

Pitiably however, sinners and backsliders do not have the power and strength with which to overcome temptations. This is because they, by their lifestyles, are of and controlled by the devil (1 John 3:8; John 8:44; Ephesians 2:2). Sin weakens and robs the sinner of spiritual energy to resist continued indulgence in it. The only way to receive the initial deposit of divine strength with which to live and maintain a righteous life is salvation through Christ. The sinner/backslider must repent of his sins, confess them to God and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord (John 1:12). Although temptations, like the circumstances around them, may differ from one person to another, the believer needs to know the different sources of temptation to be able to overcome them.

SOURCES OF TEMPTATION (James 1:14; Matthew 4:1; 1Chronicles 21:1; Genesis 3: 6; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Corinthians 2:11)

Question 2: What are the sources of temptation?

Satan is the source of temptation. He and his spirits or human agents delight in bringing temptations in the pathway of Christians with the purpose of making them to fall.

God is never the author of temptation or sin. **“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil,**

neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13,14). God can never be blamed for sin though men in their desperate attempt to break loose from responsibility for their actions often heap blame of their failure on God. What then is God's place in the spectrum of temptations? The Apostle James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, posits that temptation begins with man's desire which may be perfectly legitimate by itself, but which leads away from God-appointed goals to baser, inferior and transient ideals. Indeed, the devil tempts the believer with what he is craving for. It, therefore, means that the first and greatest source of temptation is the heart. The enemy within – pride, lust, revenge, envy, etc. – is greater, fiercer, more ravenous than the enemy without. No wonder the Bible in Proverbs says, **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"** (Jeremiah 17:9). And Christ in the New Testament notes: **"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man"** (Mark 7:21-23). Temptation comes when one **"is drawn away of his own lust..."**. Satan, however, is he who does the 'drawing away'. Satan sees the propensity to sin in the heart and then fans the smoldering coal into a full-blown flame. This is the first source of temptation.

Second, the flesh is another source of temptation. The inordinate cravings of the flesh in the areas of appetite and immoral urge lead men to temptation. Undue closeness between opposite gender especially amongst young people, often spark unholy, carnal feelings of lust and uncleanness.

Third, apparently close and indispensable pals like neighbors, relatives or even parents can be sources of temptation. A neighbor can impress some unscriptural idea, practice or sentiments on our

mind and evoke the base nature in us. Relatives can craftily edge us out of the counsel of God and set our feet on the quicksand of sin. Non-Christian parents, can lead us into wrong marriages, get us into unscriptural or even sinful work environment, gently blow the breeze of spiritual coldness on our heart and make us lose grip of our consecration.

Fourth, over-confidence or being self-opinionated more often than not, proves a source of temptation. Fifth, looseness during courtship between intending couples leads to temptation. Sixth, the believer's weakest point, his besetting sin is a sure spot for or source of temptation. Seventh, greed and inordinate ambition is another. The craze to get-rich-quick or sit tightly close with the opposite gender on a motorcycle ride is a modern source of temptation a believer must avoid.

Question 3: Mention some Bible characters who fell into temptation. How and why did they fall?

The fall of some Bible characters, which flags the teaching of eternal security as false, highlights pitfalls believers need to avoid. Quest for new, higher knowledge or spiritual enlightenment and willingness to learn from any source – even from Satan – without consultation with her husband made Eve to fall. Quest for greener pasture and independence without counting the cost made Lot to pitch his residence near a city doomed for destruction. Willingness to satisfy the appetite at whatever cost was Esau's undoing. Achan, Gehazi, Balaam, Judas Iscariot and Demas are in the same class with the covetous; their apparently blossoming life and ministry hit the rocks as a natural consequence. David, Amnon, Solomon, Samson all committed immorality because of their lust-filled eyes. For restlessness, wandering carelessly and aimlessly in the company of the ungodly, Dinah was also involved in sexual immorality. Besides, unequal yoke in marriage was what made Samson's fall more terrible (Genesis 3:6; 13:10- 13; 25:29-33; Joshua 7:21; Judges 14:17; 16:17; 1 Samuel 13:12; 1 Kings 11:1,4;

Mark 10:35-37; 2 Peter 2:20; Genesis 34:1,2; Hosea 7:9; Proverbs 22:24,25; Joshua 25:12,13).

THE PURPOSE OF SATAN IN BRINGING TEMPTATIONS: (John 10:10; 1Chronicles 21:1-4,7,14; Job 1:8-11; 2:9; Luke 22:31; 2Corinthians 11:13,14; Daniel 8:25; 11:21,24,32a; 1Thessalonians 2:9-12)

The ignorance of some saints in the Scriptures concerning the purpose of Satan in orchestrating their downfall made him to achieve his devices against them. But the word of God exposes his purpose for bringing temptations to Christians. **“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10). The devil plans, calculates and develops strategies to carry out his devices in a well- structured and organized manner. Whatever God stands for, Satan stands against; whatever God loves, he hates; whatever God appreciates, he devalues; whatever God builds, he wants to destroy. When **“Satan stood up against Israel”**, David was ignorant of his devices. He became the devil’s target because God found him a man after His own heart. The same way, Satan hates and seeks to destroy the believer who has a similar testimony of divine approval. Rather than provoke physical warfare through another Goliath in which David would have brought his experience to bear, he came through an unfamiliar terrain. He **“provoked David to number Israel”**. Through this unrecognized method, he achieved his aim of destroying seventy thousand Israelites. Numbering the people of God is not a sin if it is commanded by God. But it is Satan’s device to influence a believer to do what is good but not commanded by God. Believers need to know therefore, that anything that does not originate from God is from Satan.

When God testified of the godly private and public life of Job, Satan told God that Job would **“curse”** Him if the divinely bestowed blessings were taken a

way. God, knowing that the devices of Satan will not always succeed against committed believers, proved the devil wrong. He brought suffering upon Job for him to blame or “**curse**” God. When Job did not do that as Satan expected, he inspired his wife through a suggestion that he should “**curse**” God but Job held to his integrity. The point here is that Satan operates through demon-inspired suggestions. Obviously, when God exalts a man, Satan wants to pull him down; if He blesses a man, Satan wants him to lose that blessing; when God saves a man, Satan will want him to backslide.

Seeking to prevent a glorious experience such as Peter had at Pentecost and his usefulness thereafter, Satan sought to sift him like wheat. When Peter sliced off the ear of the high priest’s servant and denied the Lord thrice before the little maid, he did not know Satan was subtly behind the scene. Sometimes, he comes in a cheerful way as an angel of light. Crafty and deceptive, some agents of Satan appear peaceful, generous, profitable and cheerful with the purpose of destroying the believer. They also use flatteries and miracles that originate from the devil to deceive believers. But we must determine to overcome.

VICTORY FOR THE CHRISTIAN (Matthew 4:1-11; Genesis 39:7-13; Proverbs 22:24,25; James 1:16,19,21; Jeremiah 35:5-10,12,14,18,19)

Whatever form or shape a temptation may take, the joy of heaven is to see a believer come forth victorious. And true enough, some Christians always enjoy victory in times of temptations. Others struggle under strain and stress without overcoming.

Question 4: How can a believer be victorious over temptation?

The cause for such a miserable spiritual life is a result of living too near to the border line. One who persists in walking near a precipice is in far greater danger of tumbling over than one who seeks to tread on sure ground. The Lord was victorious because, first, He did not rush with a light heart into temptation, nor shirk it. He confronted it bravely when he must

face it. It is only in such a spirit that we can hope to resist temptations successfully. If we handle temptations prayerfully, victory is sure. The defeat of the devil, the tempter, in his encounter with the Lord in the wilderness assures us that we will overcome him if we resist him through the power of the Spirit.

The second secret of victory in temptation is single-minded devotion to do God's will. Anything less than a wholehearted determination to please God regardless of the cost would give the enemy an edge in the battle. Joseph's victory in Portiphar's house and in prison were the results of single-minded devotion to do God's will. Essentially, victory in temptation is obtained through knowledge of and obedience to the word of God (Psalm 119:9,11).

Besides, there must be a strong passion for Christ to do His will, to keep a vital, living relationship with the Lord and to always exalt and honor Christ in word and deed. Genuine enduement with the power of the Holy Ghost gives us victory over temptations in doctrinal pollution, worship adulteration and false fellowship.

Question 5: What principles must a believer bear in mind during temptation?

Victory is secured as we carefully and prayerfully follow some biblical principles especially the ones derived from the acrostics: victory, vigilance, integrity, circumspection, trust, obedience, righteousness and yieldedness. In summary, the Christian pilgrim on his way to heaven will have victory over every temptation as he rejects evil (Proverbs 1:10-15), lives righteously (Proverbs 4:20-27; Isaiah 33:14-17; Titus 2:11,12), obeys God (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 27:10; Acts 5:29), lives by faith (Hebrews 10:38), endures in times of temptation (James 1:12) and depends on divine help (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Dallying with the devil is disastrous. To overcome temptation, we must **“Resist the devil and he will**

flee from you” (James 4:7). We must **“fight the good fight of faith”** (1 Timothy 6:12). And above all, we should take the shield of faith with which we can quench all the fiery darts of the devil (Ephesians 6:16). To take sides with the devil or his agents is to invite defeat. It is important to note that the spiritually lame or sick cannot muster enough strength to fight or resist evil; so is the spiritually sin-sick. Thus, it is the pure in heart who triumphs.

The Scripture offers some practical helps on how to overcome temptations and the tempter. (i) Abstain from all appearances of evil – do not go to places (brothels, bars, etc.) where you can be tempted. (ii) Reject legitimate offers/favors that lead or predispose you to sin, like the Rechabites did. (iii) Flee outrightly from persons who want to coerce you to sin, like Joseph and Christ did. (iv) Like Christ, quote relevant Scripture verses to counter those who misinterpret and misapply the Scriptures to lure you into sin. (v) Part with sinful friends because they can influence you to do evil. (vi) Depend on the Spirit of God to show you God’s way out of temptations.

PRESERVATION FROM TEMPTATION AND THE OVERCOMERS’ BENEFITS (Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-16; James 1:2-4,12; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Timothy 4:18)

Question 6: What are the benefits that believers who overcome temptations and the tempter enjoy?

The devil designs temptations to destroy God’s children but God’s grace is abundant to make them overcome. The saints who were most used by God were also those who were most severely tempted. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and Paul all had their fair share of severe temptations but they overcame by the grace of God.

When we overcome temptations, our Christian character is developed and strengthened. If there were no temptations, we would lack the toughness of spiritual fiber needed to forge ahead. It takes the heat of fire to refine gold.

God permits temptations as a trial for the perfecting of the Christian’s spiritual life. But He limits Satan in the temptation he thrusts on His faithful servants (Job 1:12; 2: 6; 1 Corinthians 10 :13). He also overrules those temptations which are permitted to fulfill His own glory to the edification of the saints and the humiliation of Satan. Victory is sweet for those who endure and overcome temptation. The believer’s faith in Christ is strengthened so as to keep overcoming in subsequent temptations. “Each victory will help you; Some other to win”, says a songwriter. Besides, the believer who overcomes in temptation knows more about the way and faithfulness of God and His unfailing promises. For standing firm and consistent, he bears fruits to the glory of God. He also ultimately receives a crown of life at the end of life.

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

715 Lesson

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

MEMORY VERSE: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28,29).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:3-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16

The resurrection of the dead is a cardinal doctrine of the Bible. God’s word teaches the resurrection of the dead as the immortality of the soul. Since God imparted His undying breathe into man at creation and he became a living soul, every human being born into this world has had a never-dying soul.

Death is, therefore, not the end of life. Everyone will live forever after physical death either in a desirable or damnable eternity. Every individual who has ever lived will resurrect, some to honor and glory and others to everlasting shame and contempt. “**And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt**” (Daniel 12:2).

Question 1: Explain the meaning of the resurrection of the dead?

As a fact, all who die in this world will undergo physical resurrection before the Great White Throne Judgement. The body will be resurrected to join with the soul to meet the Lord, either to be admitted to His bosom in peace or to be eternally banished in hell to face punishment and torment.

SCRIPTURAL TRUTH ON EXPECTED RESURRECTION OF ALL MEN (John 6:40; 11:25; Matthew 16:21; 22:23-32; 28:1-20; Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:14,19; Daniel 12:2; Psalms 16:10; 17:15; Hebrews 11:35; Mark 6:14-16; Philippians 3:8-11; 1Peter 1:3; 3:21; Revelation 20:4,6,12,13)

The all-knowing Christ and Prophet of God declared that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall live again. This truth of resurrection of the just and unjust rings through the teaching of Jesus Christ. He reveals that **“this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day”**. Christ’s discussion with Martha after the death of Lazarus shows that she had imbibed this truth (John 11:24,25). Rather than rebuke her for expecting the resurrection of her brother in future, Christ declared that: **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”** Shortly after this, He demonstrated His teaching by raising Lazarus to life – a foretaste of the final resurrection of the dead.

The Sadducees heard and understood Christ’s teaching on this subject but did not believe it. In order to ensnare Him, they asked to know the status of a woman who got married to seven different brothers and died one after the other, including the woman. Their inquiry was: **“in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her”**. Responding, Christ declared that **“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”** (Matthew 22:29-32).

Christ authenticated His message as divine by predicting that He would rise from the dead the third

day after crucifixion. And it happened. An occult man, Lauron William de Lawrence of Chicago, United States attempted to equate himself with Christ by boasting that he would rise the third day after death. On the set date of his resurrection – September 11, 1936 – a thunder-strike silenced him as a mortal forever.

Question 2: Cite some specific statements of Christ and other saints on resurrection of the dead.

Glorious resurrection was the hope of Old Testament saints. They believed and spoke about it. Job spoke specifically of his eyes and flesh seeing God after worms have destroyed his body; Isaiah did not mince words about the earth casting out the dead; Daniel pointed to the awakening of many that sleep in the dust, some to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting contempt; and David also expressed his hope and joy of seeing God's face after death. These and other saints in Scripture endured severe persecution so **“that they might obtain a better resurrection”** (Hebrews 11:35).

Many New Testament saints and angels who witnessed Christ's resurrection believed and proclaimed it (Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:19-21). Prior to His death and resurrection, Herod, a wicked king and the generality of the people of his day believed in the resurrection of the dead (Mark 6:14-16).

Paul and Peter believed and proclaimed it as pivotal to the Christian life and hope (Acts 17:18,32; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:21). In fact, Apostle Paul reveals that no one can be saved without faith in Christ's resurrection, which is the basis and guarantee of our future resurrection. **“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming”** (1 Corinthians 15:16-23; Romans 10:9). He further contended with those who discountenance this truth and encourage epicurean living among Corinthian believers that: **“why stand we**

in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing ...If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die". The hope of future resurrection makes believers persevere in faith and in His service in spite of all odds. Believers will be the most miserable if the dead rise not.

Question 3: How should believers live in the light of the truth of future resurrection of the dead?

The form to be associated with the resurrected body of the just is exemplified by the glorified body that Jesus, the first fruit, had after His resurrection (Luke 24:36- 43; John 20:11-20,24-31; 1 John 3:2). All resurrected bodies will be immortal (Daniel 12:2; Mark 9:42-48). Resurrected bodies of saints will possess different degrees of glory. **"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead"** (1 Corinthians 15:39-54).

In the intervening period between death (when the body and soul are separated) and the resurrection, one may ask: Where is the soul? The soul of a saint of God goes immediately to meet God in heaven. The repentant malefactor on the cross received forgiveness and assurance of Jesus: **"Today shall thou be with me in paradise"** (Luke 23:39-43). Righteous Lazarus died and was **"carried by angels into Abraham's bosom"** where he was comforted (Luke 16:19-31). Stephen, at death said, **"I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God"** ready to receive him (Acts 7:54-60). Paul was **"willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord"** (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Many other Scripture references confirm that the soul of the saint rejoices in God's presence at death (Philippians 1:21-23; Ecclesiastes 12:1,7). On the other hand, when a sinner dies, his soul goes immediately to hell. In hell, he is conscious; he can see, feel and hear (Luke 16:19-31).

The timing for the resurrection to life of the just and resurrection to judgment of the unjust is well spelt out in the Scriptures in accordance with the ordained program of God.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION OF LIFE (John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; Revelation 20:4-6)

The resurrection of the saints of God variously described in the Scriptures as resurrection of life (John 5:28,29), resurrection of the just (Luke 14:13,14), a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35) and the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6) has four phases: (i) The resurrection of Christ, the first fruit (1 Corinthians 15:3,4,12,20,23). (ii) The resurrection of the Church-age saints at the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16). (iii) The resurrection of the tribulation-period saints (Revelation 20:3-5). (iv) The resurrection of Old Testament saints at the second advent of Christ to the earth (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19).

All the saints of God that ever died would resurrect in the first resurrection. Not a soul will be left behind. What joy! What triumph!! **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”** (Revelation 20:6).

Question 4: Highlight the four phases of the first resurrection.

THE SECOND RESURRECTION TO DAMNATION: (John 5:29; Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15)

The second resurrection is still part of God’s program but deals with the unsaved dead. There is a difference in time of one thousand years between the first and second resurrection (Revelation 20:5-15). The second resurrection is also described as the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29). There will be everlasting punishment and torment in the lake of fire for all who partake in the second resurrection who missed the first resurrection and whose names are not found in the Book of Life (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15).

All who peddle or believed in false teachings on the resurrection of the dead (2 Timothy 2:17,18; Matthew 22:23-32; 1 Corinthians 15:16-20) and other doctrinal untruths will also be part of the second resurrection.

As in the early church when Hymenaeus and Philetus erred concerning the truth by teaching that the resurrection was past already, thereby making a shipwreck of their faith and that of all those who followed their false doctrine, there are many false teachers today who **“know not the scriptures nor the power of God”** and overthrow the faith of many. Today, many false teachings on the resurrection of the dead abound having the same devastating effect on all who believe them. Among such doctrines are: annihilation and purgatory. Annihilation simply means “total destruction” or “complete obliteration” of an object. As a false doctrine, peddlers say the final punishment of human beings results in their total destruction rather than their everlasting torment. They believe that God will grant immortality to only those who are saved and will completely destroy sinners. Purgatory, as a fake doctrine, is said to be an intermediate state after physical death in which those destined for heaven “undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven”. Both doctrines of annihilation and purgatory are not supported in Scripture. Christ spoke repeatedly about hell as a place where no one is exterminated while purgatory is a doctrine of licence to live without restraints and seeking to be purged in this world. No verse of Scripture supports purification after death.

The doubt, unbelief and scoffing of sinners will not prevent the complete resurrection program of God for both the saved and the unsaved, the same way it did not alter the resurrection from the dead of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ (Acts 23:8; 2 Timothy 2:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23; Romans 3:3,4).

The resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of the saints form the foundation of our Christian faith. **“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ**

raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead!" Those who disbelieve and contend against the resurrection of Christ are not saved and do not have hope of future resurrection.

PARTAKING OF RESURRECTION OF LIFE (Ephesians 2:1,2,4-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:14,16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Romans 16:17; Luke 21:36; 1 Timothy 4:13,15,16; Hebrews 10:25; 12:14)

Question 5: What should sinners and believers do to avoid resurrection to damnation?

To partake in the resurrection of the saved, there must first be a spiritual resurrection in the present life, whereby the spirit is quickened from death in trespasses and sins, and the whole being renewed in the glorious likeness of God to a life of righteousness. Saved, believers must avoid erroneous teachings and teachers, pray and watch, feed on God's undiluted truths and obey them, abide in fellowship with the children of God, continue to overcome temptations, endure trials and live in holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

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 ANY TIME). THEREFORE,
ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.**

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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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Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
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