



DAYBREAK

With

Bible Reading

October - December 2022

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work"

(2 Timothy 3:16 - 17, ESV).

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1. English Standard Version (ESV)
2. New King James Version (NKJV)
3. Life Application Study Bible (LASB)
4. New International Version (NIV)

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PREAMBLE

All Saints' Cathedral, Kampala's (ASCK), theme for the season is *Hope Beyond Affliction*. The theme is extracted from *Lamentations 3:19-23*, (ESV), "*Remember my afflictions and my wanderings...great is your faithfulness*". This has been a difficult season for most people; young and old alike, but our God has always been faithful! In the midst of these challenges, we find hope only in Christ! Let us endeavour to study and apply the Word; it is the weapon with which we shall defeat the thief, the tempter, the devil (*Matthew 4:4-10*). You will benefit from the Word only when you apply what you study from the Bible! The Word will turn us into humble persons, encourage us to serve God effectively and make us heroes/heroines for Christ! The Church is admonished not to be swayed by all kinds of false teachings that are common these days. As a believer engages daily in the discipline of Bible reading and study, she or he gets spiritual nourishment and hope. We encourage parishioners to read the Bible daily - that way, they may be rooted in the Word of God [*Psalms 119:7-8, 11*] in order to be fruitful wherever they are, and gain hope beyond difficulties.

"Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway" (Proverbs 8:34, NIV). Nothing is more blissfully profitable than "spending time with God", daily. You do not have to spend hours studying the Word of God and praying, just set aside 15 to 30 minutes every day, at an appointed time, preferably in the morning. Then, He will guard and guide you throughout the day. It is a cardinal error to go anywhere without talking to God. It is like setting out on a journey without fuel. "*...If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here" (Exodus 33:15, NKJV)*.

So, everyday, sit somewhere in inner silence and let God talk to you, through devotionals such as contained in this booklet, as you study His Word. Then pray about what is going on in your life and around you; in the lives of those you care about, in your nation and the world as a whole. In your prayer, talk to God like a friend, because He is, and let Him speak to you as well. Learn to listen to God and recognise His call, like Samuel eventually did (*1 Samuel 3.4-10*), by reading and studying His Word.

Dear Reader, in this year, 2022, we will continue to focus on *thematic issues* for each quarter of the year. For this fourth quarter, we will still examine issues centered on "Affliction" as our theme; **The Book of HOSEA – afflictions**

to Israel as a result of sin and God's judgment; The Book of ZECHARIAH – afflictions to Israel as a result of sin and God's judgment; and to Trust Jesus Christ always even in Distress; for which sub-theme, we will pick excerpts from all over the Bible; Genesis to Revelation.

Equip yourself with a good Bible, preferably NIV, ESV, NKJV, or LASB, a pen and a note book. If you can, please acquire a good Bible dictionary, commentary and a concordance. But central of all these, is the BIBLE as the critical authoritative reference.

Let it be known to all that the entire Bible is about God's redemptive plan for mankind. Jesus Christ Himself told His disciples that, "*...These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*" (Luke 24:44-ESV). Therefore, as you read the Bible everyday, figure out what the passage teaches about the Person or work of Jesus Christ and apply that teaching to your own life.

As you read the Bible, look out for a **command to obey**, a **promise to claim**, a **rebuke to heed**, a **sin to repent of** and an opportunity to share with another person. Most importantly, the essence of this publication is to facilitate godly transformation by applying the Word of God in your life. Be expectant to hear your loving Father tenderly give you direction every day, telling you; "...This is the way, walk in it..." (Isaiah 30:21).



The Very Rev. Canon Dr. Rebecca Nyegenye

The Provost

All Saints' Cathedral, Kampala.

❧ A READERS' GUIDE ❧

In this daily guide, the Bible Study for believers, each day's portion is structured as below;

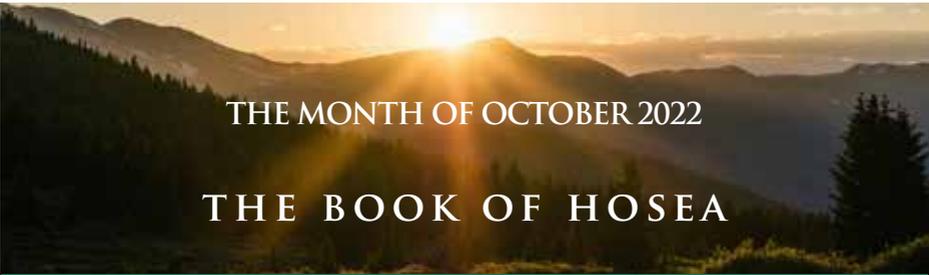
- (i) Referential indication of the reading for the day, with a summative statement of what it is about;*
- (ii) Brief notes for the day's text;*
- (iii) A meditation verse for the day; and*
- (iv) A suggested prayer.*

It is suggested that you acquire and maintain a notebook for your Bible study. It is further recommended that (i) You start off your quiet time with a short prayer, confessing your sins and seeking God's forgiveness, and then invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you listen to God through His Word; (ii) then read the text slowly and meditatively; and (iii) equally so the attendant notes, noting the suggested daily takeaway (or takeaways) italicized in the notes, which you should try to manage as your "spiritual shield" for the day.

As you read and meditate: (i) take notes of any important convictions you encounter, including but not limited to (ii) the pick for the day as italicized in the notes, and (ii) also note down your own picks as per the final paragraph of the preamble.

Structure your notebook into your daily notes with dates and the relevant reading. At the end of the study of each theme, you may read through all the notes you have taken on the theme in order to "gather the sheaves" you have harvested from the Book, noting in particular, the holiness and goodness of God.

God bless you as He speaks to you through His Word.



THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2022

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

When Yahweh told Hosea that he must marry a prostitute, Hosea surely questioned what he was seeing and hearing. For Israel, adultery was a thing punished by death (Lev.20:10), and here was Yahweh telling Hosea to marry that kind of woman! But there is an important purpose for God's command to Hosea. Hosea's marriage will portray how Israel perverted their covenant relationship with Yahweh, their marriage with God. Much distress will come upon Israel because of their unfaithfulness to their Creator, Saviour, Lord, and Husband.

God no longer speaks to us as He did to the prophets, viz in dreams and visions (Num.12:6). Now He speaks to His people through His Scripture, the 66 books of the Bible. God's Word is a precious gift. We should be very thankful and love God's Word, because we love God. We should study it and meditate upon it because it is the only source of wisdom regarding what God wants us to believe and do. Therefore, we must be very careful to understand it correctly. What a wonderful day it will be when we see Jesus face to face, and hear Him speak directly to us.

In our meditations on the Book of Hosea, we shall be looking for the principles of redemption, which means, how God brought us out of sin, death, condemnation, and hell and brought us into His Kingdom; and how God purchased for us forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, for His own treasured possession (Deut.26:18). Since redemption is accomplished by the Redeemer, let us look out for lessons about Jesus Christ and His redeeming work on our behalf.

SATURDAY, 1ST OCTOBER 2022. GOD COMMANDS HOSEA TO MARRY A PROSTITUTE; TEXT: HOSEA 1:1-9

The LORD (“*Yahweh*” in Hebrew) is commanding Hosea to take a prostitute for his wife; so, he married a woman named Gomer. The reason for God’s command is because God will use Hosea’s marriage to illustrate the adulterous ways of Israel toward their husband, Yahweh. Israel abandoned Yahweh, and they loved and served false gods. This is not for just one generation, but all the subsequent ones. They were all spiritual adulterers. When Hosea and his wife had children, Yahweh told Hosea to give them horrifying names that described the people of Israel, namely: *No Mercy and Not My People*. (*What are the full names listed in verses 4,6,9?*).

Adam was faithless and did not stay true to Yahweh. The nation of Israel also was faithless, and any other person or nation would be faithless. God alone is faithful, and He will have faithful worshippers. So, God the Father sent His eternal Son, Jesus, to accomplish perfect righteousness for His people. Jesus obeyed the Father perfectly, and *His righteousness is put into our accounts*. Jesus also paid our sin penalty when He died on the cross. Therefore, we who belong to God’s grace in Christ are now accepted by God as righteous. God also gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. The Holy Spirit makes us to be more like Christ, and He strengthens us and gives us grace to have desires and abilities to live as a faithful bride to Jesus. We will not do that perfectly; there will always be successes and failures. Please trust Jesus alone for your salvation.

Meditate on verse 6. What is God promising in this verse?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I pray for Your forgiveness. Cleanse me with the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 2ND OCTOBER 2022. GOD RECONCILES HIS PEOPLE BACK TO HIMSELF; TEXT: HOSEA 1:10-11

The previous verses in this chapter were very frightening. Yahweh was promising destruction to His own people because they were committing spiritual adultery against Him. He is the One who made Israel, saved them, and joined them to Himself by covenant. But they abandoned Yahweh and served idols, false gods. God declared them as “No Mercy and Not My People”, and He justly promised to destroy them. But God is also gracious, and in these last two verses of the

chapter He promises salvation and reconciliation. Those who were called “*Not My People*” (v.9) will be called “*Children of the Living God*”. Yahweh will make His people to be greater in number than the sand on the seashore. By this figurative language God is promising forgiveness and restoration beyond any human expectation.

Restoration and forgiveness were not achieved by ignoring the problem of sin. *God dealt with sin justly and permanently*. Yahweh put the sin and guilt of His people onto Jesus, and Jesus paid our death penalty for our sin. Justice is accomplished when sin is punished, and mercy is accomplished when we are not punished directly. By the work of Christ, God is both just and merciful; we receive mercy because *our sin has been punished upon Jesus*. Christ’s resurrection shows that His work is permanent. Salvation is something only God can do. Humans cannot even do the smallest part, because we are naturally dead in sin (*Eph.2:1*); which means we are not able and definitely not willing. Reader, *please trust the work of Jesus for your full salvation*.

Meditate on verse 9. How are you going to respond to this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I thank You for forgiving me my sins. I am now free and Your child. Amen.

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MONDAY, 3RD OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL TRUSTED IDOLS, WHICH CANNOT PROVIDE HELP;
TEXT: HOSEA 2:1-13

There are two foolish things about idolatry. The *most foolish thing* is to leave Yahweh, the Creator and Provider of everything, the One who said He would give Israel everything they needed. The other foolish thing is to trust in things that cannot provide anything. The people of Israel did not even realize that it was Yahweh who was faithfully providing everything they had. They thought their good things came from their idols (false gods). So, God caused Israel’s life to suffer bitter distress – famines, warfare, etc. The purpose of the distress is to force Israel to leave their idols and return to Yahweh (vv.6-7).

Today, we understand Israel’s idolatry as silly and ridiculous. Why would anyone trust in statues they make? But we really are no different; only the idols are changed. We say we trust in the Lord, but we are actually trusting in witch doctors, jobs, politics, money, exercise, etc. Those are the good things, which the Lord gives us. But if we trust them and not God, keep in mind that God can take them away at any moment. We can lose jobs, friends, health, etc., and

witch doctors serve the devil; so, do not trust them. All that remains is Jesus, which is why God sends us distress. Distress causes us to turn back to the Lord. Jesus not only takes care of the biggest problem (salvation from hell), but even the smaller things. *Jesus Christ is the Lord over all people and all things.* Please trust Jesus for salvation, and for daily provisions, and be grateful for all He gives.

Meditate on verse 7. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may we see the emptiness in many unnecessary things we pursue, abandon them, and then return to You. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 4TH OCTOBER 2022. GOD'S PROMISE OF RESTORATION AND WHOLENESS;
TEXT: HOSEA 2:14-23

Once again, God promises to restore His people from their waywardness and bring them back to Himself. As before, He warns of judgment, then promises restoration. In this passage, God speaks about Israel as if they were His wife. He will bring her into the wilderness, which is the result of famine, drought, war, etc. Yahweh forgives Israel's spiritual adultery (which is idolatry, the worship of false gods and not Yahweh) and betroths (promises marriage) Himself to Israel. God never abandons His people entirely; but they must face discipline before He restores them.

Everyone who belongs to God's grace belongs to God's people. When God spoke through Hosea and said, "Not My People" are now "You are My People", Apostle Paul says God was including people of other nations, not only Israel (*Rom.9:25*). So, if you trust Jesus as your Saviour, then you belong to His people, and you are part of the bride of Christ (*2 Cor.11:2; Rev.21:2*). So, when you wander from God by sinning, the Holy Spirit will urge your conscience to repent; otherwise, He will send disciplinary distress to you so that you stop sinning and return to the Lord. The reason you are not eternally condemned is because your sin penalty was already paid for by Jesus, when He died on the cross. Now you can receive God's gracious forgiveness and restoration.

Meditate on verse 15. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, I pray that You turn all my challenges into victory. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH OCTOBER 2022. GOMER RETURNS TO HER HUSBAND, AND ISRAEL RETURNS TO YAHWEH; TEXT: HOSEA 3:1-5

Apparently, Gomer left Hosea sometime after the third child was born. She then moved in with some other man, although they were most probably not married. Hosea went to bring her back to himself, paid a fee for her (a small amount, likely paid to the other man), and exhorted her to stay with him for the rest of their lives. This is what God planned to do toward Israel. He would bring the nation of Israel back from her idolatry (spiritual adultery), and He would make them to be His people, His bride. But the price God would pay was not an insignificant amount. The price to be paid was His own life in exchange for hers.

All humanity is naturally far from God. In fact, all humanity is by nature spiritually dead toward God, with no ability and no interest in turning to Him. We all are naturally content and happy to live without Him. Amongst the world of spiritually dead humanity are God's chosen people, who are living lives without God. But in order for them to be brought to Him, a penalty must be paid for their sin, a large penalty, an eternally large penalty, and only God is able to pay it. God the Son, *Jesus Christ, paid the death penalty that His people deserved,* and His resurrection proved the payment was complete and accepted. For the church, being married to Jesus, the perfect Husband, is a great blessing. Please trust Jesus as your Saviour, submit to His Lordship, and live eternally in His love.

Meditate on verse 5. How are you going to apply it to your life?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I pray for this nation that it will turn back to You. Amen.

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THURSDAY, 6TH OCTOBER 2022. FAITHLESS ISRAEL HAS NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD; TEXT: HOSEA 4:1-3

Yahweh's prophet, Hosea, is preaching, again, about Israel's sins. There are three categories listed in 4:1, these are: *the people cannot be trusted personally*; they have *no love* toward others; and their relationship with God is ruined. Then several sins are listed more particularly, the first five are according to the commandments, and the last two state that one evil leads to another evil – no improvement, no repentance. Their sins have even impacted the environment, because when God justly sends a judgment like drought against the people, it also affects the land, animals, and fish, just as when Adam's sin brought a curse against nature (*Gen.3:17; Deut.28:23*). It is as if nature is crying out against Israel's sin.

The Good Message of Christ, that saves us from God's condemnation and gives us eternal life with God, also touches creation. During the earthly ministry of Jesus the Redeemer, He also showed His Lordship over nature. For example, in *Matt.8:23*, when Jesus was on a boat with His disciples, while He was asleep, a storm came upon the lake. The frightened disciples called out to Him for help, and He calmed the storm by His word. In future, when the Lord sets all things right, there will be no more storms, no drought, etc. *We who belong to God's grace in Christ will live in a perfect existence where there will only be perfection* – no sin in us and no curse around us. Even now, for example, you can do good to the environment around you and, thus, show that the Redeemer is reversing the curse through you.

Meditate on verse 3. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, heal our land that is mourning because of sin. Forgive Lord. Amen.

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FRIDAY, 7TH OCTOBER 2022. THE PRIESTS OF ISRAEL ARE GUILTY OF LEADING THE PEOPLE ASTRAY; TEXT: HOSEA 4:4-11

Yahweh narrows His focus of accusation and points to the priests as being a major cause of Israel's sin. For Israel, one of the responsibilities of the priests was to teach the Word of God to the people (*e.g., Ezk.44:23-24*). But the priests of the 10 northern tribes (the Kingdom of Israel) were usually corrupt and false. Because they did not teach according to God's Word, the *people were "destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (4:6). The people were not taught God's Word, so they naturally lived disobedience to it. Of course, each person is responsible for his/her disobedience (*Ezk.3:18*), because everyone is naturally guilty. But the priests were also responsible for Israel's condemnation because they did not teach God's Word.

The Apostle James writes, "*... we who teach will be judged with greater strictness*" (*Jam.3:1*). In other words, everyone will be judged, but teachers will be judged more severely. Jesus Christ is our great and perfect High Priest, Prophet, Apostle, and Teacher. We all must sit at the feet of our Great Teacher, Jesus, and listen carefully to His Word (the Bible), believe and do as He teaches. But He teaches through the ones He has chosen to teach, the elders and ministers. So, be very careful to listen to your teachers. *To disobey your elders, if they are correct, is to disobey Christ Himself*. For those of you who are teachers, be very sure that you are correct. You and the things you teach will

be judged by Christ, and you do not want to be responsible for teaching in error and leading your people astray.

Meditate on verse 6. What is God teaching you in this verse

Heavenly Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us to know and accept You; the source of knowledge. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 8TH OCTOBER 2022. THE IDOLATRY OF ISRAEL LEADS NATURALLY TO IMMORALITY; TEXT: HOSEA 4:12-19

Going to Mount Sinai after deliverance from Egypt, gave people of Israel a sense that they were closer to their gods. So, they built their places of false worship on the hilltops and mountains. They also liked to be under trees because it is nice to have shade when sinning. The idolaters prayed to the idols they made from wood and stone, hoping to get wisdom and answers to their problems. If the people wanted their crops to grow well, they sacrificed to fertility goddesses. They also had sex with one another or with religious prostitutes, because they thought it would increase their harvests. Actually, they just wanted to have sex largesse; so, they said sex was for worship. But their false gods did not care.

This behaviour is not for you, Christian. You are united to Christ, *you are indwelt with God the Holy Spirit*, and you worship the only true and Living God, and He does care about proper sexual behaviour. The God of the Bible created sex and the way sex is to be kept. *Sex is only for one man with one woman who are united with each other in life-long marriage.* All other sexual activity is sin. This fact, is especially, difficult for young people. They do not want their sexual interests to be restricted. They want freedom to do as they like. Jesus blessed marriage (*John 2*) and restored those who sinned sexually (*John 8*). If you have sinned sexually, confess it to Christ, repent, and He will restore you. We who are mature in the faith, especially the ministers, we must be good examples to the young people in the church and teach the blessings of sex as God designed it, and also teach the curses of uncontrolled sex, as the world encourages it.

Meditate on verse 16. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Merciful Father, I pray that You behold the sexual immoralities in this nation with Your mercy and lead many to repentance. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

SUNDAY, 9TH OCTOBER 2022. YAHWEH WILL TRAP AND DESTROY HIS PEOPLE LIKE HUNTED ANIMALS; TEXT: HOSEA 5:1-4

The Lord is still speaking to all the citizens of the northern 10 tribes, called the Kingdom of Israel. Hosea mentions the priests, the common people generally, as well as the King, his family, and the government authorities. Everyone is guilty before God the Judge. Perhaps there was a lot of hunting in the regions of Mizpah and Tabor, because their judgment is described as animals caught in a trap and then destroyed. What does “slaughter” mean? Was their sin murder, human sacrifice, abortion, or some other kind of unjust killing that went unpunished? Whatever it was, God was going to bring it back upon them as well. *False worship leads to all kinds of sins.* Yesterday, we read about sexual sins. Today, we read about sin due to killing. Both sins are related to the worship of false gods.

If you have a particular sin problem that you do not want to stop, it is a pointer to what you are really worshipping. We all sin, that is not the issue, but are you continuing in your sin unrepentantly and without grief? Your behaviour points to your false god, and that god will bring your destruction. You cannot serve both; the true Living God and a false god – whether it is money, sex, or whatever. Some people have even sacrificed children to increase business or career. God will have the last word in judgment. All your sins can be forgiven by God, if you confess and trust that Jesus paid your penalty. But if you do not trust the Saviour, then you will have God’s wrath fall on you forever. Please, turn away from your sin, and cling to Jesus for deliverance from God’s wrath and from the sin that has gripped you. *It will not be easy, but it will be good.*

Meditate on verse 1. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our loving Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive us for we have done evil before You. In Your judgment have mercy on us. Amen.

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MONDAY, 10TH OCTOBER 2022. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL TEACH THEIR CHILDREN FALSE WORSHIP; TEXT: HOSEA 5:5-9

In this passage, Hosea rebukes the people of Israel for their insincere worship of God. They are actually treating Yahweh as if He were just like one of the other gods they serve. He rejects their sacrifices because He knows their hearts. God says through Jeremiah, “*You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart*” (Jer. 29:13). Israel did not do that. Their worship was just outward action. And to make it worse, they passed on this false worship to

their children (5:7), “Like father, like son”. One of the important elements of God’s covenant is that the children are included, and they should be taught the message of God’s covenant grace (e.g., *Ex.13:14; Josh.4:19-24*).

God has always converted His people through the preaching/teaching of His message of grace. Perhaps the largest percentage of that is from parent to child. One of the great passages of Scripture is *Deut.6:1-9*. Verse 5 commands His people (us) to love God with all our being; verse 6 teaches that God’s Word must be on our hearts; and verses 7-9 are about daily teaching of God’s Word to our children and building our homes on His Word. This is the way God gives people new birth. Jesus received children to Himself (*Matt.19:14*), and Peter re-affirmed that *children are part of God’s covenant* (*Acts 2:39*). Dear Christian, if you are a parent, or if you have an influential relationship with children, you have the joyful command of bringing the message of God’s grace to them. You are not able to convert them, but you are expected to teach them the message correctly, faithfully, and prayerfully.

Meditate on verse 7. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive us for being faithless at most times and for not influencing our children to know and love You. We now choose to trust in You. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 11TH OCTOBER 2022. TEXT: HOSEA 5:10-15.

Hosea speaks to the tribe of Ephraim, which represents the whole Kingdom of Israel, the 10 northern tribes. Yahweh had been afflicting Israel with distresses of many kinds because they had abandoned Yahweh and worshipped false gods of the other nations and of their own making. When Israel tried to get deliverance from the curses God sent, they did not repent and go to Yahweh, the One who was sending the problems. Instead, Israel turned to foreign nations, who are not able to reverse the judgments of Yahweh. Because Israel refused to seek the LORD, He destroyed them as a lion destroys its prey. If Israel had turned to Yahweh and repented, He would have removed the curses, healed them, and restored them.

There are many reasons why distress comes into our lives, but we must always consider that our sin is one of the reasons. Our Heavenly Father cannot and will not bless us if we continue in sin, instead of turning away from it. We all sin, but continuing in a particular sin brings God’s hand of discipline against us.

Jesus did not pay our death penalty so that we can continue living in the ways of death. *Jesus has set us free from God's eternal condemnation and from the bondage to sin.* Please do not continue in sin. Yes, it is often difficult to stop a certain sin; but confess to God, ask for His grace to help (*Heb.4:16*), and get another believer to work with you. God will not abandon you. Persevere.

Meditate on verse 15. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive us and take away our distresses from us. We choose to seek Your face. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 12TH OCTOBER 2022. AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION BETWEEN ISRAELITES ABOUT REPENTANCE; TEXT: HOSEA 6:1-3

This passage, is actually part of the previous chapter. So, please start with 5:15, in which text God is speaking. Then, in 6:1-3, we read an imaginary conversation between the people of Israel. Yahweh, through Hosea, is suggesting these words of repentance, as if the words came from a heart that grieved for offending God. If Israel would only respond to God's discipline as they should, this is the conversation they would be having with each other. First, they would acknowledge their guilt of going away from Yahweh, which is why they would say, let us return to Yahweh, encouraging each other to repentance. Then, they can be assured that God will receive them and heal them from the wounds He afflicted them with, just like morning always comes after night.

God will do this because He is faithful to His covenant. *He will forgive His people when they sin, if they repent.* The Temple sacrifices were in place to show that God would graciously provide a substitute to bear the penalty for their sins. Sadly, Israel did not do what these verses suggest; but you can. When you sin, and God sends distress into your life because of your sin, then go back to God, confess and repent, and trust that God has forgiven and restored you, just as He promised. Jesus already paid the penalty for your sin; so, you know that you will not face eternal condemnation. But if you persist in refusal repent, that might be a sign that you do not belong to the Lord. Please, all of us must turn away from our sin and turn to God. He will forgive and restore, just as He promised, and just as Christ provided by His resurrection from the dead.

Meditate on verse 1. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, bind and heal us. Amen.

THURSDAY, 13TH OCTOBER 2022. THE REAL NATURE OF ISRAEL'S REPENTANCE IS JUST A VAPOR; TEXT: HOSEA 6:4-7

After the blessed words that Yahweh gives to Israel to say in their repentance, Yahweh then tells us the reality of Israel's love for Him. Their love is like a morning cloud, or a vapor that appears suddenly and then vanishes as quickly as it came. There might be some love and gratitude from the people; but, as it is seen in the book of Judges, Israel serves Yahweh for a time, then falls away. Their love cannot be sustained, as God's love is for them. The people continue to do sacrifices; but there is no genuine love for God and no intimate knowledge of Him, only outward, heartless, meaningless deeds. The outward deeds are good; but only if they flow from a heart of love within (*Ps.51:16,18*).

Jesus offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice, given from a pure heart of love. Therefore, we can now be forgiven, converted, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and given new natures. We are now able to love and obey God from new hearts. *It is still very easy for genuine believers to do outward religious things that do not flow from a heart of love for God.* Again, deeds like worship on the Lord's Day, prayer, reading Scripture, etc. are good; but they must flow from a heart that is ever growing in love for God. Pray for God's grace that your Christian life will not be a vapour that vanishes, but that it will be a deep well filled to overflowing.

Meditate on verse 4. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may our love for you be genuine. Amen.

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FRIDAY, 14TH OCTOBER 2022. GOD'S COVENANT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS TRANSGRESSED; TEXT: HOSEA 6:7-7:1

Verse 7 is not about Adam, the first human God created. There is a town in Israel named Adam. In the second half of *verse 7* it is written "there" referring to a place, and "they" referring to more than one person, the people of Adam. They were a wicked people who continued to break God's covenant, which was meant to provide life for His people. There was such wickedness as can only be described as the shedding of blood, murder, the exact opposite of life. Even the priests gather in gangs like bandits and commit murder and robbery. The entire nation (called Ephraim, the location of the capital city, Samaria,) has gone into prostitution, meaning

they have trusted in a foreign nation for protection (Assyria) rather than in Yahweh.

A great many churches and denominations have gone astray like Israel. Church leaders extort money from their congregations through corrupt practices, like charging fees for special prayer needs, seducing young women, trusting the national government for protection, etc. Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, does not use His people for His own benefit. Priest Jesus gives us life and protects us from those who would prevent us from serving God. *The Lord alone is Provider and Protector of all His people in all matters of life.* This does not mean you cannot trust people or cannot be trustworthy yourself. But for the things of righteousness, salvation, the Church, etc., trust only in the Lord.

Meditate on verse 8. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive us for our communities are full of evil. Cleanse us with the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 15TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL IS LIKE BREAD IN THE OVEN IMPROPERLY COOKED. TEXT: HOSEA 7:2-9

This passage uses an interesting simile about ovens and the baking of bread. The oven is heated so much that that the bread is not cooked properly. *The priests are again the focus of Hosea's concern. The priests and their evil deeds actually made the King and the leaders happy.* The spiritual guidance of priests was to bring spiritual health to the king and the citizens; but the priests' wickedness has caused the king and the princes/leaders to approve of wickedness and spiritual adultery (serving idols rather than Yahweh). Of course, spiritual adultery allows for physical adultery. The priests, who are supposed to keep the people close to Yahweh, have been red hot for sin and have been pushing the people further away.

Sadly, there are wicked pastors and church leaders in many places in our country. How thankful we should be that our Priest and King Jesus cannot be led astray. At some point, according to His perfect plan, the Lord Jesus Christ will call those wicked ones to account. *If you are part of a church with good leadership and a pastor who teaches Scripture well, you should be very grateful.* If you are not in a good church, or perhaps you are not in any church, pray that the Lord will lead you to one where God's Word is properly understood and properly taught, and where leaders care for the spiritual well-being of their people. It will be such a blessing to have your soul fed well.

Meditate on verse 2. What is God telling you in this verse?

Our Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive us and do not remember our iniquities. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 16TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL REFUSES TO GO TO YAHWEH FOR HELP; TEXT: HOSEA 7:10-16

Can you think of someone you do not like? If you needed help with something and that person were the only person who could help, would you ask him/her for help. It might be difficult, but you probably would ask. However, in all the difficulties that distressed Israel, they refused to go to Yahweh for help. *The reason is because they were not converted, not born again, not regenerated.* They still had the old sin nature inherited from Adam. Hosea describes them as silly foolish doves that flit about. They have no common sense for making proper judgments, and they forsake their only source of help – Yahweh. In their folly they even devise evil against the only true and living God.

We who are united to Christ often act the very same way. Even though we are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor.5:17), we often look to others, or trust our own wisdom, to deliver us from distress. Even worse than that, we think there is something we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God for salvation. You might think you are obeying the commandments, or maybe you are a member of the church, or you give tithes, etc., that you will be saved. *The only hope for anyone to be accepted by God is what Jesus did – His life, death, and resurrection for you.* You must trust that Jesus' work was accomplished for you. If you do not, then you will never enter eternal life. Israel was destroyed for that same reason. Do not be a foolish bird. Trust only Jesus alone for your deliverance.

Meditate on verse 10. How are you going to respond to it?

Father in heaven, the Lord of heaven and earth, help us to return to You. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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MONDAY, 17TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL CLAIMS TO KNOW GOD, BUT THEY DO NOT REALLY; TEXT: HOSEA 8:1-4

When the Bible uses the word know, or knowledge, it usually means more than just information someone has in their brain. The Bible uses “know” in terms

of intimacy, especially when it comes to Yahweh’s covenant relationship with Israel. Destruction has been promised by God against His people because they have not “known” Him, they have abandoned Him. Israel cries out, “O God, how can You destroy us, we know you, we are your people, we are in covenant with You!”. But in reality, Israel treats Yahweh like one of their false gods, which are made of stone or wood or metal. God is no fool. *He sees their hearts, and He sees they have no place for Him.*

God will always take care of His people; but that does not mean He will allow them to treat Him as if He were just another kind of witch doctor or shaman. Would you let you child treat you as if you were just like any other neighbour? Of course not. You have an intimate relationship with your child, and you naturally expect intimacy in return. This is true with your Heavenly Father. You are united to Jesus only by God’s grace, given to you freely; you did nothing for it. *However, you are expected to live as someone united to Christ, as someone who knows God intimately.* If you do not, then perhaps you do not really belong to Christ, even if you say you do. If that is true, the Lord will treat you like any other heathen, as He did with Israel.

Meditate on verse 4. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our loving Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may You help us to choose right leaders, use the wealth you have given us to glorify You. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 18TH OCTOBER 2022. GOD WILL NOT TOLERATE MAN-MADE WORSHIP; TEXT: HOSEA 8:5-6

The northern 10 tribes, the Kingdom of Israel, was in such a sorry condition spiritually. In the two verses we read for today God grieves over Israel’s false worship. *First*, God does not allow His people to worship and serve any other gods, only Yahweh alone. Although Yahweh has been very patient with Israel’s idolatry, He does not approve of it, and He will pour out His burning anger upon them. *Second*, God is also grieved that His people are so foolish as to think that something a craftsman has made is a god that can help them and save them. There are even two calf idols that King Jeroboam set up. He said they were the gods that delivered Israel out of their slavery in Egypt (*1Kin.12:28*). Such sad foolishness! Yahweh will destroy it.

But there is little difference between the foolishness of Israel and the foolishness of many “Christians” today. I have asked many so-called Christians if they think

they will go to heaven when they die. They say they know they will go to heaven because they obey the commandments, they attend worship every Sunday, they are kind to people, they give tithes (once in a while), etc. In other words, they think they are saved because of what they do. That is foolishness. That is idolatry of self-effort. *There is nothing anyone can do to make themselves acceptable to God.* The only thing that can save is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Please, confess to God that you are a sinner who deserves condemnation, and then trust only in what Jesus did; trust that He did all of it for you, and stop trusting yourself or someone/something else.

Meditate on verse 6. How are You going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may You break the evil that is in our land. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 19TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL'S TRUST IN FOREIGN KINGS AND IDOLS LEADS TO ISRAEL'S DESTRUCTION; TEXT: HOSEA 8:7-14

In the previous passage that we considered yesterday, we read of the foolishness of Israel's idolatry. In today's passage, we see some consequences of their foolishness. They plant the wind (*spiritual nothingness*, v.7) and they harvest a whirlwind (a destructive spiritual storm), and literally a foreign power takes whatever they grow. Israel sinfully built many altars for the sinful worship of false gods (v.11), which allows them to increase their sinning. *Sin produces sin.* Even if God were to give them thousands more laws, Israel would simply ignore them. The end result of all Israel's idolatry and trusting in foreign armies is Yahweh's punishment against them (v.13). God will bring destruction on Israel by using the very nations Israel trusted for protection.

We often chide Israel because they were entrusted with God's covenant, His laws, the sacrificial system, etc.; yet they lived like all the other pagan nations. But every single human being is the same. Even we who belong to Christ often trust ourselves or others to make us right with God. There is nothing wrong with getting help from others for a project; but not about salvation. When it comes to being justified by God, being accepted by Him, neither we nor others can help us – no pope, no bishop, no priest, no amount of doing good. *We are naturally sinners, spiritually dead, and only God can save us from that.* Jesus Christ, who is eternal God the Son,

became a man and accomplished salvation for us. Trusting self or others results in God's condemnation. Only trusting Jesus Christ – alone – will give peace with God.

Meditate on verse 7. How are you going to respond to this verse?

Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, help me not to plant evil, but Your Word and love. Amen.

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**THURSDAY, 20TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL CREDITS THE FALSE GODS FOR GOOD HARVESTS;
TEXT: HOSEA 9:1-4**

The LORD, through Hosea, rebukes the people for celebrating the harvest. Yahweh tells them to stop their rejoicing. The people of Israel are praising the false gods of the pagans for giving them a good harvest. Of course, God is the One who gives a good harvest; idols of stone cannot do that. But the Israelites are dim-witted, spiritually blind, hard, and dead. They think that all their worshipping at the shrines of the idols (spiritual prostitution) brought them the successful harvests, a prostitute's wages for their idol worship.

If you pay a witchdoctor to do an incantation for a good job, or if you pay money at a certain church so that you can pray to Mary, and if you then get a good job, do you then rejoice? Probably many have done that. Such persons think God is too slow or He will not give them what they want; so, they go to the witchdoctor, or to Mary, or to a Muslim mullah, etc. Such a person will certainly rejoice at getting the new job; but it was not gotten by trusting the only living and true God. Your praise will be rejected. The person might say Jesus gave the job; but the Lord will not share His glory with witchdoctors and idols, and your praise will be rejected. If you desire something, then ask your Heavenly Father only. If He gives it or not, give Him the praise, because only God's Will will be done, and it is always for your good.

Meditate on verse 3. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our loving Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive and allow us eat the fruit of our land. Amen.

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FRIDAY, 21ST OCTOBER 2022. THE PROPHET OF GOD IS HATED BY ISRAEL; TEXT: HOSEA 9:5-9

The prophet received the Word directly from God, and then spoke that Word to the people. The prophet was like a watchman (v.8) standing on a city wall looking far into the distance for an approaching enemy. When the enemy was seen, the watchman would warn the people. In this case, the prophet Hosea “saw” (heard from God) that Yahweh’s judgment against Israel’s idolatry was approaching. Hosea’s warning should have been heeded, but sinful Israel hated God and His prophet, called him a fool, and the people tried to destroy him (v.8). However, it was the nation that was foolish. If a watchman had warned of a military invasion, Israel would certainly have prepared. *But an army is nothing compared to God, yet Israel refused to listen.*

It is usually difficult for anyone to be told that what he/she is doing is wrong, especially something that is morally or spiritually wrong. But the Lord Jesus Christ commands His people to do that very thing for one another (*Matt.18:15*), as does Apostle Paul (*Gal.6:1*), to be watchmen for one another. *It is very easy for us to ignore our own sin*, so it is very necessary and wise to listen carefully to others when they speak to us about our sin. If a person does not listen to admonition and continues to turn away, it is possible that the person is not really a believer. That person just becomes more and more hardened against the truth. If you are a believer, listen and heed correction. It is not only for your spiritual well-being, but it is also for the protection of the church and for the honour of Jesus Christ.

Meditate on verse 9. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our loving Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, forgive us and remember mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 22ND OCTOBER 2022. GOD WILL DESTROY ISRAEL AND ALSO THEIR DESCENDANTS; TEXT: HOSEA 9:10-17

One of the great elements of God’s covenant (a gracious relationship of union, based on oath, sealed by death) is that the *blessings include the descendants (Ps.127:3-5)*, and the *promises are for them as well*. This is one reason why children are given the sign of the covenant (formerly circumcision, now baptism), because children are members of the covenant. So, when Yahweh promises that Ephraim’s (Israel’s) condemnation will also fall on the descendant’s, it is a

double curse (vv.11,14). The curse is a thorough cleansing. The final misery in this condemnation is that Yahweh Himself will depart from them. He delivered them, but they rejected Him, so He will now remove His blessings and abandon them.

Let us not think that condemnation will happen to those who belong to Jesus Christ. Jesus secured our salvation, so that all who belong to Him cannot be lost. However, if you have been in the church for a very long time, perhaps since you were a small child, *you might be so used to hearing about the Lord that you do not really know Him at all*. Please consider that you are in the church only because God put you there, and He is calling you to worship and serve Him alone, and to trust Him for your salvation.

Meditate on verse 17. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive us and do not reject us. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 23RD OCTOBER 2022. THE DOWNWARD CYCLE OF ISRAEL'S WICKEDNESS BRINGS DESTRUCTION UPON THEM; TEXT: HOSEA 10:1-10

The first verse of this passage instructs us about an important principle, which is sometimes called a slippery slope or a downward spiral. Once a person (or in this case the nation of Israel) starts moving away from Yahweh, like stepping onto the top of the slippery slope of sin, the only direction is down, getting worse, still counting, and cascading into the abyss. Israel tried the false gods of the nations; when they prospered, they gave credit to those gods (not acknowledging that prosperity was from Yahweh). The more they prospered, the more they thought the idols were the source, so they worshipped idols more. Eventually God was supplanted, was replaced by the false gods. The patience of Yahweh ended, and He removed His blessings and sent destruction.

Jesus Christ brought an end to that natural descent into hell. Christ's perfect righteous obedience to God brings us into eternal life. His death paid the punishment that would have cast us into hell forever. You might be tempted to pray to Mary or to a special "saint" (all believers are saints). And if God answers your prayer (God is the only one who can answer), you will most likely give credit to Mary. The next time you have a prayer concern, you will go to Mary more earnestly, and the downward trending cycle continues. Life is often difficult. Please, only go to the Lord Jesus for your help. You might not get the answer you seek; but that is because it

is for your good. Trust God for all things, worship Him alone, regardless of your circumstances.

Meditate on verse 2. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may our hearts be right with You always. Amen.

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MONDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2022. YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW; TEXT: HOSEA 10:11-15

Hosea is bringing a new argument against the nation of Israel – *what you plant is what you harvest*. When a farmer plants maize seed, he will harvest maize, he will not harvest pumpkin, or anything else. When a person lives an unrighteous life (a life without Yahweh), he will gain wickedness in himself and to others. He will not gain God’s covenantal love, which is a love that can never be revoked. He will only gain unrighteousness and condemnation. Israel lived increasingly without Yahweh, trusting in idols and in their own strength, which could do nothing against the judgment and wrath of God.

The principle of sowing and reaping is always at work in our spiritual lives today. *For those who sincerely trust Christ Jesus for their salvation, they have the assurance that at the time of death they will enter eternal life with God*. However, in this life, when a true Christian does things that are unrighteous, then an unrighteous consequence will result. Fear not, God will never withhold His steadfast love from His genuine children; but there will be discipline, which can be painful. God’s grace might intervene to some degree or not; but there will be consequences. However, if we do what is right before God, then blessing will come from God, though not as we expect. *Righteous living does not buy salvation*. Jesus already secured that for us. Our proper response to Christ is to live grateful, loving, righteous lives.

Meditate on verse 12. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may we sow righteousness and destroy evil worship in our land. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2022. THE MORE GOD CALLS OUT TO ISRAEL, THE MORE THEY RUN AWAY; TEXT: HOSEA 11:1-7

You have probably seen a small child who is still undisciplined. The parent tells the child to come, and the child runs away. The parent continues to call, and

the child continues to run. Then the parent grabs the child and spansks him on his buttocks. The child cries; but the disobedient behaviour is corrected! But that is not what happened with Israel. Israel never responded properly to Yahweh when He cared for them, nor when He called to them to return to Him, nor did they respond to His disciplinary actions. Of course, there were always some individuals who loved the Lord. But, sadly, for the nation generally, they were scattered in exile and they never returned to their homeland.

The perfect Israel, Jesus Christ, never strayed from God's commands. Jesus came to do the will of His Father on behalf of His people, and He fulfilled God's will perfectly. *However, we who belong to Christ stray every day.* Every time we sin, we are wandering from God. That is part of the Christian life – dealing with our remaining corruption. *But, when God the Holy Spirit speaks to your conscience, when He calls you to turn from your sin to God, to confess your sin to God, and to live in righteousness, do you respond properly?* Perhaps you are presently comfortable in a particular sin? Please, do not remain in that condition. It could lead to eternal exile from God. No sin, however pleasant, is worth losing your eternal soul.

Mediate on verse 7. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us not to turn away from You. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 26TH OCTOBER 2022. ANOTHER LOOK AT GOD'S GRACIOUS RESTORATION OF HIS PEOPLE; TEXT: HOSEA 11:8-12

We have seen in several places that Israel is about to come under the condemnation of God's righteous judgment. That will happen. But in the passage for today, we read that God is grieved about the condition of His people and promises to return them to the land. However, it is not physical return that is to be expected. The northern 10 tribes never returned. But Yahweh will return His people to Himself, and when He says He will return them from the west, He is looking to the time when He will bring His people who are gentiles. Those who are part of God's eternal plan are from Israel and from the gentiles (*Gen.17:5*), who are scattered around the world. God will bring them in.

We who are believers from the gentiles are part of that promise of gathering. God has always been grieved about the condition of humanity, especially about His people, and angered by their sin. Before any of us was born-again, we were

wandering, scattered, exiled. But Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to gather His people from around the world (*Isa.49:6*). That is why mission is so important. *Believers take the message of Christ to those who do not know Him*. When the message is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit uses the message and converts the listeners, if that is His will. If you are a saved person, it is because the Holy Spirit sent someone to speak to you the good message of Jesus Christ. Please, be bold and unashamed to bring Christ to those who have not yet heard.

Meditate on verse 9. What is God telling You in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for the promise that You will not judge us in anger. Amen.

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THURSDAY, 27TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL'S HISTORY SHOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO SERVE YAHWEH; TEXT: HOSEA 12:1-8

The nation of Israel gets their name from their ancient father, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel by Yahweh (*Gen.32:28*). During birth, Jacob grabbed Esau's heel (Esau being the elder twin) indicating Jacob's desire for the blessing of the firstborn (*Gen.25:26*). On two other occasions Jacob schemed to take the covenant blessing from Esau (*Gen.25:30-31; 27:1-41*). Then Jacob even wrestled with Yahweh and would not let go until He blessed him (*Gen.32:26*). Jacob zealously wanted God's covenant blessings. But the Israel, of Hosea's day, had no interest in their glorious history of grace nor interest in the God who created them, delivered them, and joined them to Himself by covenant.

The history of the Perfect Jacob, the Fulfiller of the office of Jacob, who is Jesus Christ, should be on our minds and hearts every single day. Jesus' passion for, and fulfillment of, *God's covenant should remind us every day of our calling to love and serve the Lord*. God the eternal Son Himself entered our existence and accomplished everything necessary for our salvation and for eternal peace with God. Let us pursue the Lord diligently, and let us cling to Him and not let go. Our zeal should be as strong as was Jacob's, the father of the nation of Israel, and even stronger, because Jacob looked forward to the promise, but we look back to the promise fulfilled. Let us love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Meditate on verse 6. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us to return to You and develop love and justice. Amen.

FRIDAY, 28TH OCTOBER 2022. REMINDERS TO ISRAEL THAT GOD GAVE THEM PROPHETS;
TEXT: HOSEA 12:9-14

Hosea returns to the theme of God's care for His people from the beginning. They are reminded that Yahweh spoke to them many times through the prophets, words of salvation and guidance, but they were spurned by the people. Israel's response was to continue building altars to false gods, as many altars as rock exposed by the farmer during plowing season (v.11). Then Yahweh sent the prophet Moses to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt, and it was through Moses that God kept them safe on the journey to the land of promise. Instead of worship, Israel (Ephraim) continued to sin, thus provoking Yahweh to condemn them. The fact is, Israel loved the false prophets, false gods, and the pleasant sins associated with that. What a folly!

But we must be very careful, because we are by nature no different from Israel. If you are attending a true biblical church, then you are regularly hearing from a man who is properly teaching God's Word. *Are you listening to this "prophet" God has given to you?* or are you following your own ways? These could be pleasant to you, but are not righteous. Jesus said: *why do you call me Lord but do not obey (Luk.6:46)?* Israel belonged to God, but turned away from Him. Do you belong to God yet turn away? I am not your judge, but you need to examine yourself to see if you honestly belong to Christ or not. Dear reader, if you are being hypocritical, God will repay your sin with condemnation. *Please trust in Jesus and serve Him only.*

Meditate on verse 9. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for being our God. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 29TH OCTOBER 2022. ISRAEL FORGOT THE GREAT CARE THEY RECEIVED FROM
YAHWEH; TEXT: HOSEA 13:1-11

Hosea reminds Israel that Yahweh is the God who brought them out of slavery in Egypt (v.4). Yahweh is also the God who, for 40 years, brought the people through the wilderness (v.5), where no crops, animals, or 2 million people could survive. But God sustained them with the miraculous provision of water, bread, and meat. However, rather than be grateful for the miracle and for Yahweh's constant care, Israel frequently accused God and grumbled against Him. Then, when they were brought into the land and were satisfied with the good things God promised, they quickly forgot Him.

Like Israel, we Christians are easily forgetful of God's blessings. This is one reason why pastors often encourage their people to keep a diary about the things God does for them. When we look back, we are strengthened in our souls. Let us always remember and never forget what Jesus did for us to bring us out of slavery to sin into eternal life. It was His life, death, and resurrection that made salvation a certainty. Because it is so easy to forget; so many churches observe Holy Communion every Sunday. Each Lord's Day we are reminded of how we receive life because of Christ's death. If you have somehow forgotten the great work of Jesus for you, or if you are living with little regard for your salvation, ask the Lord to forgive you and give you His renewing grace to ignite the flame of love for and gratitude to Christ.

Meditate on verse 4. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, You are the true Living God. There is no other God besides You. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 30TH OCTOBER 2022. THE FOOLISHNESS OF REFUSING GOD AND A HINT OF REDEMPTION; TEXT: HOSEA 13:12-16

Hosea explains that Yahweh was moving Ephraim (Israel) in the direction of new birth, of being born-again, taking them away from their path to condemnation and bringing them to the way of righteousness. But Israel was too foolish; "an unwise baby" who was unwilling to be born, unwilling to start afresh with God. The result of such a condition is death. *God is just, and He will not allow sin to be unpunished.* But God is also merciful, and God provides His people with a glimmer of hope – the promise of redemption. Many will be lost, but a few will be saved. Punishment because of sin is coming, but at some point, Yahweh will bring His people back to Himself.

If you belong to Yahweh, but you are continuing in a certain sin that you do not want to stop, please do not be like the foolish baby who refuses to be born. If the Holy Spirit is speaking to your conscience, do not become deaf to His call. When Jesus called the rich young man to give away his things and follow Him, the man refused to follow because he loved his wealth (*Matt.19:20-22*). Whatever your sin is, turn away from it. *Please listen to the call of God.* You will be blessed eternally when you follow Christ than refuse Him and spend eternity in misery. Even if you are not continuing in a sin at this time, it could happen at any time. The only thing keeping you safe thus far is God's grace. Stay close to the Lord.

Meditate on verse 15. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help me not flourish out of evil, holiness and righteousness. Amen.

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MONDAY, 31ST OCTOBER 2022. YAHWEH GIVES ISRAEL THE WORDS TO SAY FOR REPENTANCE, AND HE WILL RECEIVE THEM; TEXT: HOSEA 14:1-9

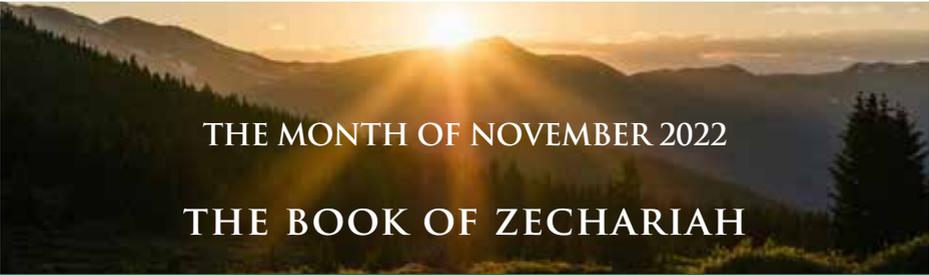
This final chapter of Hosea's prophecy is full of hope, mercy, and grace from God. The chapter begins with Yahweh their God calling His people, again, to return to Him. God reminds them, and they must agree, that it is their own sin that has caused their problems. God promises that He will heal them and bring prosperity to them. The description of prosperity in *verses 5-7* is not about getting rich with money. Yahweh will bless His people with spiritual prosperity; *bless them by making them to be at peace with Him.*

This is still a call of God upon our lives today. Each and every day we must go to the Lord with confession and repentance, and renewed trust, love, and obedience. *Even in the midst of the worst distress, being at peace with God makes all the difference.* Perhaps you, the believer, are not familiar with this peace of mind and heart with God. The solution to that is to set your mind and heart on Christ; on who He is; what He has done and is doing for you; and that He will never leave nor forsake you. It is possible to trust Jesus for your salvation; but not have peace of conscience. For that you must turn your full focus of affection and trust upon Him. If your mind/heart is not on Christ, then you cannot know peace of heart. Pray for God's grace in this and He will surely grant it. God is honoured when you are at peace with Him.

Meditate on verses 5-7. What is God telling you in these verses?

Our heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may Your Holy Spirit dwell in us abundantly, and experience righteousness and holiness. Amen.

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THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 2022

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Prophet Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, about 520 years before Jesus Christ. He was born in Bethlehem. The people of Judah had been exiled to Babylon for 70 years. The exile ended about 536 B.C. The Judahites began rebuilding the Temple, but the work stopped because the people lost interest. Haggai encouraged the people to continue building because God would bless their efforts. Zechariah's ministry was a call to the people for spiritual rebuilding. God says through Zechariah, "Return to me, says Yahweh of hosts, and I will return to you" (1:3). The Temple is important, but if the people are not alive spiritually, then the Temple, the priests, and the sacrifices will be useless.

The Book of Zechariah contains eight visions and also includes a special kind of literature called "apocalyptic", which uses highly symbolic language to describe visions of supernatural, inexplicable, heavenly things. Hopefully these DAYBREAK meditations will provide some these spiritually mystical things. It is all God's Word; so, we need to believe it. If there is some difficulty in understanding the text, we should trust that God will give us the meaning someday. Zechariah also prophesied many things directly about the Messiah, Jesus Christ. So, as a general approach we shall also study this book in light of general redemptive principles of God and what we learn about the Redeemer, especially in matters of managing afflictions.

TUESDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 2022. THE WAYS OF THE FOREFATHERS WERE WRONG-HEADED, BUT REPENTANCE BRINGS BLESSING; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

The people of Israel were in exile for 70 years. When Yahweh brought them back, they began rebuilding the temple. This was the right initiative; but, then, they stopped before the work was finished. The new generation were already behaving just like their forefathers, who lost interest in Yahweh and were exiled. Then, when Yahweh called to those in exile, they did repent. Yahweh

warns the new generation not to go the way of the fathers, who brought exile, but do what those in exile did – repented. *Return to me now, the Lord says, and I will return to you.* Actually, God never left, but He is saying that He is ready to forgive their sins if they will confess them, repent (turn back to Him), and *live before Him in righteousness*, according to His Word.

There are many reasons why a person will drift away from the Lord; distress, pleasure; but never a valid reason. All reasons are sin. When God the Holy Spirit speaks to your conscience about how you are drifting away, please listen to Him and stop. He is saving you from condemnation. One word of caution, however: what you do, does not earn salvation; your deeds cannot contribute to what Christ has already accomplished for you. Your deeds, your obedience to God is fruit. It is proof of a perfect salvation which Jesus has already credited to your account. If you are united to Christ, then your life will display that, even though you have daily failures. You are the temple of God the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. You have new God-given abilities and desires. By God’s grace, live by them!

Meditate on verse 3. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, in the name of Jesus Christ, let this nation return to You. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER 2022. GOD’S BLESSING WILL ALWAYS BE WITH HIS PEOPLE; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 1:7-17 (VISION #1)

This first vision that Zechariah has in the night shows myrtle trees, which are small “evergreen” trees. Evergreens are a type of tree that always has some green leaves growing, even in winter. It is a good example of God’s people. They are small in number, but are ever alive by God’s grace. Angelic riders on horses are patrolling the earth, and they report that the nations around Israel are at peace, even though God’s people are still struggling. Yahweh promises His people that He is coming to them with mercy and will rebuild His house (the Temple). This means God is restoring His covenant relationship with them, bringing them comfort and prosperity.

In our present age and situation, believers are facing many distresses, similar to the ones faced by Israel. Those around us who do not belong to God’s grace seem to be doing well. Of course, everyone has problems; but some of others are generally at ease. Many people in the churches are trusting in Jesus for

salvation and submitting to His Lordship, but they are struggling with many pressures. Perhaps that describes you. Do not fear, do not be discouraged by what you see in this life; you are not abandoned. *God is working His plan in your life; goodness and blessing are part of that plan.* What He said to the believers in Israel He says to you, He will bring to you mercy, prosperity, and comfort. You might not sense much of these in this life; but Jesus promised to prepare for you that place in eternal life (*John 14:2*). *Wait on Jesus.*

Meditate on verse 17. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, let holiness and righteousness of Christ fill our land. Father prosper us. Amen.

.....
THURSDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER 2022. THE PROPHET'S VISION OF HORNS AND CRAFTSMEN;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 1:18-21 (VISION #2)

Zechariah's next vision is first about horns. Horns in Scripture, often symbolized strength as in Psalm 18:2 in which David refers to Yahweh as his rock, shield, horn, etc. In our passage for today, the four horns refer to powerful foreign nations that defeated and exiled Judah. The craftsmen are not named, but God sent them to destroy those enemy nations. God's people, on their own, are not able to defeat anyone. All the victories they ever had were because Yahweh worked through them. That was the point. Those who belong to God can do nothing to save or support themselves. It is all of God, because God will not share His glory with anyone (*Isa.48:11*).

Throughout history, believers have always been distressed and appeared weak to outsiders. That is God's plan. In our weakness, and through our weakness, God shows Himself to be our horn, our rock, and our shield. The world does not see that, and they do not understand it, but we do. Our Saviour Jesus came to earth in weakness; He lived a weak life, as the world sees that; and He suffered a humiliating torturous death in weakness, all alone. But all that weakness was the horn of salvation for those who believe and belong to Him. *Jesus is now crafting His Church. He is defeating the enemies, bringing us back from spiritual exile, and uniting us to Himself.* Praise be to our Horn.

Meditate on verse 21. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our loving Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for defeating our enemies. Amen.

FRIDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER 2022. IN A FUTURE TIME JERUSALEM WILL BE AN ENORMOUS CITY; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 2:1-13 (VISION #3)

In ancient times a city had walls for protection from enemy attacks, but the villages were completely open. When enemies attacked, villagers ran to the cities. In Zechariah's vision that we read today he sees a city with no walls, just like a village. The future city of Jerusalem, God's holy city, has no walls for two reasons: (i) the population is growing at a tremendous rate (v.4), so building a wall is not possible; and (ii) *Yahweh Himself will be their wall of protection, a wall of fire* (v.5)! Therefore, there will be no distress of any kind. The Jerusalem described would be glorious, but it was just a picture of the glory it will have in a future time. Yahweh will dwell there, and people from all over the world will go there to be joined to the Lord and become one of His people. It will be a glorious city.

This same city is also described in *Revelation 21*, the New Jerusalem. Though the city is pictured as having walls and gates and foundation stones, it is just figurative language to describe the city as the continuation of Israel and being built upon Scripture. God will dwell there and be the light. The gates will always be open to receive nations and kings who come to serve the Lord (*Rev.21:24,26*). Jesus said this about His crucifixion; when I am lifted up, I will draw to myself people from every nation (*John.12:32, my paraphrase*). If you belong to God's grace in Christ, then you are a citizen of that glorious city, where you will dwell in blessedness forevermore.

Meditate on verse 4. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for being our protection. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 5TH NOVEMBER 2022. JOSHUA IS CLEANSED TO SERVE GOD; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 3:1-5. (VISION #4)

Zechariah's fourth vision is a scene in Yahweh's "court room". Joshua the high priest (not Moses' general), is standing before Yahweh being accused by Satan. The devil says that Joshua's garments were filthy, symbolic of Joshua's moral filth. Therefore, Satan said, Joshua was unworthy to serve in the Lord's Temple. In fact, Satan was correct. Joshua was filthy and unworthy. So, God put on new clothing on the high priest, symbolic of Joshua being cleansed spiritually. By God's grace alone, Joshua was now fit to serve.

Was God unjust to cleanse Joshua? No, He was merciful. Should Joshua's moral filth have not been punished? Yes, it should, and God did not abandon justice. Joshua's sin punishment was placed on another Personality. In the time before Jesus, the system of animal sacrifices was the thing that removed sin, symbolically. Animal deaths cannot take away sin, but they pointed forward in time when Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God, the worthy High Priest) would pay the real human penalty for God's people. You are naturally filthy, unfit to enter eternal life with God. *But God justly punished your sin on Jesus, and He mercifully forgave, cleansed, and clothed you with Christ.*

Meditate on verse 5. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for choosing me to be in Your vineyard by Your own grace. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER 2022. YAHWEH CHARGES JOSHUA WITH THE TASK OF SERVING RIGHTEOUSLY; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 3:6-10

As we considered yesterday, Joshua the high priest was cleansed by God's grace and then given the task of serving in the Temple with his fellow priests. They are expected to serve according to God's ways, which means according to God's law, in particular, the writings of Moses about the duties of the priests. In 3:8, there is a reference to the Branch, which is the Messiah (*Jer.23:5*). The work priests is anticipating the work of Branch. He will be the Perfect and True High Priest who will make perfect atonement for His people. The high priest of Israel had stones on his shoulders and chest, stones which represented the people. The single stone with eyes (*v.9*) is likely a reference to the Omniscient Messiah, who will bear His people upon His heart.

Jesus Christ, who is the divine Messiah expected since the time of Adam, bears His people in His heart. When He was on the cross, He bore our sins (*1 Pet.2:24*). And when He was raised back to life, we were united with Him (*Rom.6:4*). Even now we are seated with Him in the heavenly places (*Eph.2:6*). So now, all believers are called to act as priests in the sense that we all have direct access to God, we can intercede in prayer for others (*1Th.5:17; 1 Sam.7:5*) and we can bring the sacrifice of praise (*Heb.13:15*). We have a great calling to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us now serve with gratitude, obedience, love, and zeal.

Meditate on verse 7. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help me to walk in Your ways always. Amen.

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MONDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 2022. A GOLDEN LAMPSTAND SUPPLIED BY TWO OLIVE TREES;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 4:1-6 (VISION #5)

This vision has a few different interpretations, but all agree that it is the work of God the Holy Spirit among His people. As was stated earlier, the people of Israel were growing slack in their zeal for rebuilding the Temple, and thus their worship of Yahweh. There was a lampstand in the Temple that the priests were to keep fueled with olive oil so that the light would never quench. That represented the light of God's presence and His Word among the people, always for the well-being of the people. The people were letting the light grow dim, literally and symbolically. This vision describes two olive trees filling the lamp (v.14), perhaps representing God's Word and Spirit, thus symbolizing that God Himself would ensure that His worship and service continued, and that His people would be blessed.

This passage certainly applies to the work of mission, the work of bringing the true and living God to the world. Of course, bringing His message of grace in Christ is a task that only God can accomplish (*John 15:5*). Nonetheless, we are called to participate in that work (*Matt. 28:19*). Jesus said about Himself, "I am the light of the world" (*John 8:12*), and *He also said that we, His disciples, are the light of the world (Matt.5:14)*. Putting those two verses together we should see that because we are united to Christ and are fed by God's Word and are strengthened by the indwelling Holy Spirit, the churches will be matured and enabled to bring the Gospel, the Good Message of Christ, to the nations, for the honour of God.

Meditate on verse 6. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, let the Holy Spirit guide us always. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2022. DO NOT DESPISE SMALL BEGINNINGS; GOD IS AT WORK;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 4:7-14

At this point in Zechariah's time the Temple is being rebuilt slowly, and it is not as large as the one built by Solomon five centuries earlier. In *Ezra 3:12* we read that the old men (of Zechariah's day) who remembered Solomon's Temple

wept loudly when they saw the small size of the foundation of the new Temple. But God promises that it will be a blessed place, and the people will cry out to God to give His grace (v.7). Yahweh encourages the people who are sad because of the smallness of the project. One day it will be a great achievement.

Jesus also referred to the small beginnings of the Kingdom of God. He said the Kingdom of God is like the mustard seed. It is very small but it grows into a large bush (*Matt.13:31*). Though there are places in the world where Kingdom work is large and growing quickly, there are other places where growth is very small, even hidden from sight. Let us leave it to God to grow His Kingdom as He desires (*Matt.16:18*). Ours is to be faithful in whatever He gives us to do. Perhaps your church (which is the people, not a building) is small and distressed. Numbers are not important to the Lord. Spiritual growth is what matters. Persevere. *You are part of God's universal Church, His body, His bride, which grows by tens of thousands every day.*

Meditate on verse 10. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive me for the many times I have despised small things. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER 2022. ZECHARIAH SEES A FLYING SCROLL THAT BRINGS SEVERE WARNINGS; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 5:1-4 (VISION #6)

God gives severe warnings to those who steal and swear falsely. The scroll is flying so that the Judahites know that God is everywhere; everyone is under His watchful eye; no one can escape His judgments. All sin will be punished; all sins break the Ten Commandments. But Yahweh mentions the thieves (*Com.#8*) because they do not trust God to care for them. And so, they hurt others by taking away what the Lord gives. And Yahweh warns the ones who swear falsely (*Com.#9*) because they do-and-speak one way for those who watch them, but in their hearts God sees their duplicity.

These same warnings are for God's people today because human beings, even church people, have not changed. Though the warnings of the passage are very strong and sound hopeless, we should not think there is no opportunity for forgiveness. That opportunity is always there. That is the point of the Gospel. *Perfect, complete forgiveness is available.* If a thief or a liar or any other sinner repents and turns to Christ (*just like the thief on the cross, Luk.23:42-43*), then forgiveness is given, and Jesus' death is applied to the sin penalty. If you have

not yet trusted Jesus to be your Saviour, please do so now. Believing that His perfect life, death, and resurrection are for you is your only hope of peace with God and eternal life.

Meditate on verse 4. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive the thieves and liars in our land. Amen.

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THURSDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER 2022. GOD REMOVES WICKEDNESS FROM THE LAND; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 5:5-11 (VISION #7)

Zechariah sees wickedness (breaking God's laws, anti-God tendencies) symbolized by a woman (not because women are especially wicked), and she is placed in a basket, which has a lead cover, heavy and unmovable. *The vision shows that God is the one who will remove wickedness.* We need to see from this that God's people are not able to remove wickedness, which is true. All humans are neither able, nor interested in removing ungodliness from their lives. If wickedness is going to be removed, God must do it. And in this vision, we see that He will. Historically, we know that wickedness is not yet removed; so, we look to the future. God will assign wickedness to Shinar, the location of the Tower of Babel (*Gen.11:2*), which represents condemnation, hell.

However, though wickedness is still very much present in the world, and there is still residual corruption in the lives of God's people, wickedness has been defeated. God loves you and has chosen you to be with Him forever. For Him to do that, your sin must be removed, and only He can do that. So, Jesus lived a perfect life for you, and He alone paid the penalty for your sin. Christ's work on earth destroyed the works of the devil (*1 John 3:8*), and your sin has been removed (*Ps.103:12*); and one day elements of unrighteousness will be removed forever (*2 Pet.3:13*). Though each of us must daily face the distresses of remaining sin, *in Christ we are victorious, and we will enter eternal life and be with God forever.*

Meditate on verses 10-11. What is God teaching you in these verses?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us remove evil from our land. Amen.

FRIDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER 2022. FOUR CHARIOTS TAKE GOD'S JUDGMENTS AGAINST HIS ENEMIES; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 6:1-8 (VISION #8)

Again we read of God's judgments against His enemies and in favor of His people. This is not a small matter. The primary focus of Scripture is the glory of God and what He does for His people. As already observed, God's people were often under many kinds of distresses, usually due to the consequences of their sins and to the surrounding enemies. Chariots were weapons of war, and so it seems right to conclude that God is sending out His judgments upon the earth especially against His enemies. The two bronze mountains, like the two olive trees (4:3) perhaps represent God's Word and Spirit, which send out the judgments (4:6).

We all are personally responsible for the sins we commit, and we are often our own enemies. But there are also the enemies of the world and the devil. All these enemies will one day be completely destroyed. On a future day, God will send out His angels to gather all the wicked and cast them out (*Matt.13:49; 25:32*), and those who belong to God's grace will be brought into His Eternal Kingdom. While there is always residual corruption within each of God's people, we are saved; we are being improved by the Holy Spirit (*sanctification*), and we will be brought in some day. Until then, pray for God's grace, let us persevere and submit to the difficulties of sanctification. We live in a fallen world, but let us each day, live rightly before the Lord and be patient for the day of full deliverance. It is coming. God promised it.

Meditate on verse 1. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit and Your Word that guide us all the time. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER 2022. THE MESSIAH WILL BE BOTH KING AND PRIEST; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 6:9-15

Before Christ, the offices of priest and king in Israel were separate. The priesthood was given to Aaron and his descendants (*Exod.29:9*), and the kingship belonged to those who were descended from David (*2 Sam.7:8-16*). These two offices were separated from each other by lineage. But as we learn from today's passage, the Branch ("*the Messiah*", cf., *Isa.11:1*) will be both the Priest and the King. Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor (*Hag.1:1*) were the ones who would be the leaders in rebuilding the Temple.

But they were just a picture of the Messiah who would build the eternal Temple. Those who are far off (v.15), those who are not from Israel (gentiles), they shall also be builders with the Branch.

All Scripture points to the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Messiah, the Branch, and He is both High Priest and King. King Jesus is the Son of King David according to human descent, and though He is not descended from Aaron, Jesus is High Priest according to the special order of Melchizedek, who was both a king and priest (*Gen.14:18; Heb.7*). Jesus the Branch is building His Temple and we are the building blocks of that Temple (*Zechariah.6:12; Eph.2:19-22*). Each of us should be involved in the double task of: (i) living appropriately as blocks of the Temple, and (ii) *co-laboring with the Builder, bringing others to Him through evangelism and discipleship, so that they may be fitted into the Temple, the dwelling place for God.*

Meditate on verse 15. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for being our God; especially for us who were far off, without You. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER 2022. THE MOTIVATION FOR FASTING; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 7:1-7

When the people of Judah were in exile, there were a few special fasts each year. The purpose should have been to mourn the sin that had caused the exile, to repent, and to pray to Yahweh that He would bring them back to their homeland. Now that the people have returned, they want to know if they should continue fasting? Yahweh answers by exposing their motives. God saw their hearts, and His question to them implies that they fasted insincerely. God knew their fasts were because they hated the distresses of exile and not because they repented of their sin which had grieved God. *Their fasts had become habits and/or rituals observed year after year with no real spiritual substance* and no concern for Yahweh.

Humans cannot change this condition of the heart because we are naturally, spiritually, dead toward God and interested only in self. *In order for us to be right with God, He must change our hearts.* First our sin must be addressed. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life of love and obedience to God for us. On the cross, Jesus took our sin and our punishment upon Himself. He was exiled for us so that we could receive new hearts and be brought into an eternal home with God. Regarding fasting, it's a good spiritual discipline, if you fast because

you are sorry for sinning against God, for grieving Him, and you desire Him to make you more and more like Christ. The motives of the heart are essential. Pray for God's grace to keep your heart right.

Meditate on verse 5. What is God asking you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, let everything we do be to Your glory. Amen.

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MONDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER 2022. GOD'S PEOPLE REFUSED TO OBEY THE SECOND GREAT COMMAND; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 7:8-14

The greatest command, according to Jesus, is Love; namely, to love God and love others (*Deut.6:5 and Lev.19:18*). However, the people of Israel and Judah refused to obey, they "turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears". They intentionally refused to love others. As God cared for their distress in Egypt and came to their aid, they too should have shown mercy to their brethren who were distressed and suffering from things like injustice, poverty, etc. What happened was that the needy were easily oppressed for profit. This surely is another reason why their fasts were rejected by God (*7:1-7*).

As we apply God's concern for love and justice to our lives, let us keep in mind a few important elements. *First*, God has such great pity for our distresses of sin and condemnation that He, God the eternal Son, Jesus Christ, took on human flesh to accomplish our salvation for us. In one of His teachings to the religious authorities, He rebuked them for observing the details of tithing laws without keeping the more important details of the law, like justice and mercy (*Matt.23:23*). In a similar principle, Jesus taught that we must forgive those who sin against us if we want to receive forgiveness from God (*Matt.6:15*). *Let us love, be merciful and just because we have received that abundantly from God.* Let us not do those things because we are trying to get it from God. Love and gratitude are always the right motive.

Meditate on verse 9. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help me show kindness and mercy to other people. Amen.

TUESDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER 2022. YAHWEH WILL RESTORE JERUSALEM AND DWELL AMONG THEM; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 8:1-17

Remembering that Prophet Zechariah is, in part, encouraging the people of Judah to be diligent in rebuilding the Temple, he now gives a message from Yahweh that will strengthen their hands to work. God promises to bring back the glory of the city, to dwell among them, and the city will be called the faithful city, where once they were faithless. Safety and prosperity will be the norm, and there will be no distress. The ground and the sky will provide abundance to them. People will live long into old age, and children will play openly. Both of these groups, and everyone in between, will have nothing to fear. Yahweh will be with them providing all they need. However, the nation of Judah has not yet experienced this peace.

The people were encouraged to finish the Temple, and they did. But God's Word through Zechariah is actually looking forward to the restoration of eternal Israel, referring to those who belong to God's saving grace, and not simply to a limited, earthly, political, geographical nation or race. In that future time, when God sets all things right, there will be nothing to cause distress or sorrow of any kind. Jesus' work on earth put an end to the problems brought to humanity by Adam. So, we who belong to Christ have already entered into that future day of blessing, where there will be no aging, where we will live eternally with God. We do not see it now, but God promised it, Christ accomplished it; *His resurrection proves it, and we will dwell there forever.*

Meditate on verses 4-5. What is God teaching you in these verses?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, let our land be filled with old and young people. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER 2022. THE NATIONS WILL GO TO JERUSALEM SEEKING YAHWEH'S FAVOR; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 8:18-23

Zechariah is still looking forward to the time when the people will finish rebuilding the Temple. In this passage, we read that the fasts of sorrow will end, fasts when the Judaeans prayed to Yahweh for His blessings to be poured out upon them. In the place of fasting, God promises times of joyful celebration. Because of the promised blessings, the people should love truth and peace. When God's great blessing comes, foreigners will come to Jerusalem seeking God. Nations which once despised the people of Israel will grasp them and beg to be taken to Jerusalem so they can receive the blessing of Yahweh.

Today, is the time when the nations come to those who belong to God's grace. When Jesus was engaged in His earthly ministry and gentiles came to the disciples asking to be taken to see Jesus (*John 12:21*), the Lord recognized that request as an indication that the time of blessing had arrived. Gentiles were asking the men of Judah to bring them to the Lord. Though we no longer go to the physical city of Jerusalem, we who belong to Christ are the new Jerusalem (*Rev.21*). Jesus Christ alone is the truth about God (*John 14:6*) and Jesus alone is the way of peace with God (*Rom.5:1*). *Apart from Christ, truth and peace cannot be gotten, and earthly truth and peace is superficial and comes to nothing.* As Zechariah has exhorted, let us love truth and peace. Let us love the Lord Jesus Christ and bring the Good Message of God's grace in Christ to those who have not yet heard it.

Meditate on verse 22. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Our loving Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may many people and strong nations seek Your guidance and truth. Amen.

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THURSDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER 2022. GOD IS THE LORD AND JUDGE OVER ALL NATIONS;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 9:1-8

Prophet Zechariah now looks to the future and sees God bringing destructive judgment upon some of the nations surrounding Israel. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is especially the Creator of the nation of Israel, whom He created to bring His grace to the world. And even though foreign nations rejected Yahweh and served false gods, they were still obligated to serve only Yahweh, who is the only True and Living God. The idolatry of the nations is still sin. Even as Yahweh condemns the nations, He will encamp around His people for their protection.

Jesus Christ is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (*John 1:3; Heb.1:3*); and there will come a day when He will sit on the throne and judge all nations and individuals (*Matt.25:32*). No one will be able to claim ignorance, because in the conscience of everyone is the knowledge of God (*Rom.1:20*). *Atheism* (denies the existence of God) and agnosticism (not sure if God exists) and ignorance (did not know that God exists) are not legitimate excuses. It is also a sin to be faithful to the gods of the culture in which a person is born and raised. However, God has made us know the truth, and Jesus Christ is the truth. *He alone is the way of salvation, the way to God and eternal life. There are many people in your life who are racing toward condemnation. Please, have pity on*

them and tell them about the deliverance that is found only in Jesus Christ.

Meditate on verse 8. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, encamp around us that no evil will come near us. Amen.

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FRIDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2022. ZECHARIAH LOOKS FORWARD TO KING JESUS COMING TO HIS PEOPLE IN PEACE; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 9:9-13

Zechariah looks into the future and sees the King of Judah coming in peace. If you compare *verses 9 and 10*, the weapons of war, like chariots and powerful horses, will be removed, and the mighty King of Judah will come in a humble and lowly fashion, riding on a colt, which is the child of a donkey, which certainly has no power for battle. Yahweh does not need weapons of steel and muscle. Because of Yahweh's faithfulness to His covenant, He calls His people to return, and He will grant them full restoration. However, the people have been returned, so Zechariah in this passage is looking into a future beyond his own day, beyond the rebuilding of the Temple.

You will recognize today's reading as part of the Easter week story, the "Triumphal Entry" (Matt.21:5). Jesus Christ came into the world, to the nation of Judah, in a very lowly and humble condition. As simple as that was, He remains the Creator and Sustainer of, and King over, everything. Even in humility and simplicity, King Jesus is all powerful and continues to conquer His/our enemies by the Word of His power. By His grace He surrounds us with His Spirit, who protects us from enemies within and without. Of course, we are obligated to submit to His Lordship and obey His commands. But nonetheless *our salvation and protection are His work*. Do not fear your own weakness, failures, and sins. Stay close to Christ, who has saved you by His grace and united you to Himself by covenant. *You cannot be lost or destroyed.*

Meditate on verse 9. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, for in Him I gain holiness and righteousness. Amen.

SATURDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER 2022. GOD WILL MARCH FORTH AND PROTECT HIS PEOPLE;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 9:14-17

Yahweh originally met with His congregation at mount Sinai, in the southern desert region. From there He is pictured as going to His people to deliver them from all the distresses of the enemies. The lightening, trumpet sound, and winds are reminders of the time when Moses and Israel were gathered around the mountain to receive God's covenant commands. Because the Lord is with them they will be able to defeat the enemies and destroy their weapons. The Israelites will then celebrate with great joy, as if they were drunk. The mention of the blood and the altar is probably offerings of gratitude to God.

In the book of Revelation, we read of Jesus also riding out like a warrior who destroys the enemies (*Rev.19:15*). We do not see it in this life, because challenges and distresses continue to abound. But we have the sure promise of God that, one day, all we know of this world, will come to an end, and all things will be set right. Can you imagine a world where there are no more tears (*Rev.21:4*), no more heart aches, no more pain in our bodies, and no more death? The celebration we will have in the first feast will be more wonderful than we can imagine. Please, *trust that Jesus accomplished everything you need to enter eternal life with God; so, that you can also share the joy of true, perfect, peace forever.*

Meditate on verse 16. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, save us from evil. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 20TH NOVEMBER 2022. YAHWEH GIVES RAIN AND CROPS; TEXT: ZECHARIAH
10:1-12

One of the problems God's people had was their trust in idols. That is not new information. God was always the One who gave them what they needed; but they always gave credit to Baal or to Asherah or to other gods. But here Israel is reminded that God is the One who gives all things. Zechariah is encouraging his people to turn away from idols and false prophets who speak only what the people pay them to say. The people are so spiritually confused, they wander like sheep, which are creatures that wander by nature. And when sheep face danger, they are utterly helpless. The leadership was not caring for the people, and Yahweh was angry with them.

Many Christians are trusting the help of witchdoctors. If you are, please stop, confess your sin to God, ask for His forgiveness (which He promises to give), and then tell a trusted Christian friend about that. But even if you are not going to witchdoctors, you (and we all) always rely on our own strength, experiences, wisdom, and others to get us through stressful situations. There is nothing necessarily wrong with those things, as long as you acknowledge that it is God who gives those abilities. And through those abilities He gives you the care you need. Often He works without those usual means. If you are in leadership, you are responsible for the spiritual care of those who are in your congregation, and the Lord will hold you accountable. Please, *let us all trust the Lord Jesus Christ for all things.*

Meditate on verse 1. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for the gift of rains and good vegetation in our land. Amen.

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MONDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2022. YAHWEH ADDRESSES THE BAD SHEPHERDS OF HIS PEOPLE; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 11:1-6

Everyone is responsible for their own actions, but the leadership also has a responsibility to lead the people properly. This section foresees the destruction of Judah and the surrounding area, symbolized by the destruction of the forested regions. As in the section we read yesterday, Yahweh is particularly angry with those who are not leading the people well. The sheep/people are being used for the profit of the bad spiritual and political leaders. The people are not fed spiritually, and as a result they face condemnation for their sins. They are guilty because they are sinners by nature, and their ignorance due to poor shepherding hardens them in their sin. They have no knowledge of salvation, and they will be condemned.

Hopefully you are a member of a church. If you are, you must be very careful about your pastors and elders. Are they failing to teach directly from the Bible? Are they requiring you to pay them for prayers? Are they the ones collecting and managing the tithes and offerings? If these kinds of things are happening, you need to look for another church. Improper shepherding/pastoring can cause great spiritual and physical distresses and harm in your life. *The Lord Jesus Christ is the great Good Shepherd, and He puts good people in His leadership positions.* Look for those good churches and leaders, and you and your family will greatly benefit.

Meditate on verse 4. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help me to be a good shepherd. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER 2022. PROPHET ZECHARIAH BECOMES THE SHEPHERD OVER JUDAH; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 11:7-17

After the “shepherds” of Judah were rebuked by Yahweh, through His prophet, Zechariah himself became the shepherd, the one who cares for the spiritual well-being of the people. Zechariah carried with him two shepherding staves, one named “Favour”, which referred to Yahweh’s grace to the people, and the other staff was named “Union” referring to the work of keeping the people together rather than scattered. After one month three previous shepherds were destroyed (who they were is not known). But also shepherd Zechariah became impatient with the people (probably because he saw no improvement) and the people came to despise him. So, Zechariah quit! But Yahweh, symbolized by Zechariah, broke the staves. His covenant relationship will be ended. This is an event many years in Zechariah’s future.

If a good man like Zechariah could become frustrated with his people, so can anyone. That is another reason why God the Son is the only one who can shepherd His people. He is able to convert them, which no other person can do. He also took on human flesh and accomplished what no one else can do: live a perfect righteous life; pay the death penalty unto its completion; and then break the power of death by resurrection. If you are a pastor, you will face distressful times with your congregation. Realize that this is mainly because you are called to shepherd sinful people, and you yourself are a sinner. Ask God’s blessing for you to be patient and to persevere. And if you are a church member, do what the apostle says in *Heb.13:17; submit to your leaders because they must give account to the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, for how they shepherded your souls.*

Meditate on verse 7. How are you going to respond to it?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, give us Your grace and unity in our families. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER 2022. THE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE STRENGTH THROUGH GOD; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 12:1-9

The city of Jerusalem is pictured as being a cup of strong alcohol to drink and also as a very heavy rock. When the enemy nations drink that beverage or lift that rock (meaning, when they try to destroy Jerusalem), the enemies themselves will be destroyed. Yahweh will protect His people by striking the war horses with panic and the warriors with blindness. Thus, Israel will be victorious. Zechariah says Israel will be like a destructive fire that can heat a pot of food or burn crops. When God gives the victory, even the weakest person will be as strong as King David was.

This passage is not about politics nor about the military. It is true that God is concerned about every aspect of life for Israel/Judah and of all humanity. It is also true that God's people did gain victories. Unfortunately, Jerusalem and the Temple were eventually destroyed. But that did not mean God's promise was false. Israel was also a picture of the eternal Kingdom of God, and the Temple is primarily a picture of those who belong to God's grace, among whom God dwells. The lessons we take from that are to be applied primarily to the spiritual realm. Those enemies (Satan, demons, any humans who do not belong to Christ's salvation) who oppose God's plan to have a people and to build a Kingdom will face eternal condemnation, and *we believers will dwell in God's presence forever.*

Meditate on verse 3. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may Your children be too heavy for their enemies to bear. Amen.

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THURSDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2022. GOD WILL CAUSE HIS PEOPLE TO MOURN THEIR SIN;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 12:10 - 14

Zechariah is still speaking a message about the future, a message given to him by God. Yahweh's promise is that *He will give the people a special grace.* The particular need for the grace mentioned here was to enable the people to cry out to God for mercy. Without God's grace, a person cannot ask Him for mercy. This passage is also looking to the future crucifixion of Jesus Christ. When people understand that Messiah, God the eternal Son, was crucified to pay their sin penalty, they will cry out to God to have mercy on their souls.

Like the sacrificial animals in the time of Israel, Jesus Christ was put to death instead of the sinner. In those ancient days a person brought an animal, like a sheep, and the distressful sins of the person were transferred to the animal. The animal was then killed instead of the person. That is what Jesus, the Lamb of God, did for us. God took the sins of His people and transferred them to Jesus. Jesus our substitute then bore our punishment instead of us being condemned eternally. *Christ's resurrection proves that the penalty has been finished.* If you genuinely desire to be forgiven by God, that is a sign that He has already given you His grace to believe. So, trust that Jesus died to pay your sin penalty and you will have it; because God promised it.

Meditate on verse 10. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for the grace You gave me so that I respond to Your calling. Amen.

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FRIDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER 2022. THE PEOPLE OF GOD WILL BE CLEANSED FROM SIN; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 13:1-6

Today we read of the cleansing that God gives to His people. There is in Scripture the image of God's grace covering our sins so that they will no longer be considered by God (*Ps.32:1*). There is also the image of God casting our sin into the sea (*Mic.7:19*), thus removing sin far from us. Therefore, Scripture assures us that God remembers our sins no more (*Jer.31:34*), which means He will no longer hold them against us. But there is also the promise in our passage of today, that *God will cleanse us from sin.* When stains are washed out of clothes, they are gone. When God pours out (*12:10*) the fountain (*13:1*) of cleansing, He perfectly cleanses us and sin is gone – Gone! Oh, how we long for that day.

Christ's cleansing fountain poured out on us is symbolized by the minister pouring water on us at baptism. We see from the symbol of water baptism that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. Sadly, we all still struggle with the distresses of residual corruption in our lives. But the promise of baptism is that we are cleansed and accepted by God. And even though the full experience of baptism is in the future, we can live righteously now, by the power of God the Holy Spirit, who dwells within each of us. One day we will experience the perfect cleansing we have been promised. We will be cleansed to love and serve God with all our being. Since you are cleansed by the blood of Christ, how should you live now? Pray for God's grace to live in Christ and to honour Him with your life.

Meditate on verse 2. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, cut and remove evil from our land. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER 2022. ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF HER MESSIAH; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 13:7-9

In the previous passage, Prophet Zechariah saw the future day of cleansing by Messiah Jesus. Today's passage steps back from that time, just a little, to when Messiah is struck by God, which is the event that brought the cleansing. As a result, the people of Israel are scattered. God will remove most of the people who will exist with the distresses and consequences of their sins forever. However, He will save a few, a remnant. This is a spiritual remnant saved for eternal life, about whom God will say "*They are my people*".

Why did God strike His Anointed Shepherd, the very One who was to protect the sheep? Because Shepherd Jesus was protecting us from God's justice and judgment against our sin. Shepherd Jesus took our sin penalty of death (eternal separation from God) so that we could be eternally with God. We should have been struck, but Jesus took it for us. *The Shepherd died for His sheep. He died so that we could live.* There is no greater love than that (*John15:13*). We the sheep must respond appropriately. Our natural tendency is to wander away from the Shepherd. However, by God's grace, let us stay close to the Shepherd in loving and grateful obedience to Him; following Him wherever He leads and thereby bring Him glory.

Meditate on verse 9. What is God teaching in this verse?

Our loving Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, as we call on Your name answer us and be our God. Amen.

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SUNDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER 2022. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 14:1-8

Zechariah continues to look into the future, even beyond our present day. God tells him about a day when Yahweh will bring destruction upon the city of Jerusalem. Perhaps it is the future of present-day Jerusalem, but that is difficult to determine. It is likely to be figurative language. But there is a time coming, a day when God will certainly bring a final judgment against all humanity. That day is pictured here as beginning with His own city and then all the other nations will follow. The splitting of the mountain, which allows for the escape

of the citizens of Jerusalem, shows that in the midst of this horrifying judgment God's people will be kept safe.

When the day of judgment comes, the very last day, we who belong to God's grace in Christ will escape the destruction of it. Just as the image in today's passage is of God standing on the mountain causing an escape route at His feet (14:4-5), so we who are in Christ will find our salvation in Christ. Jesus' work upon the cross is now finished; but we must still run to Christ's cross, where He bore our sin and punishment, so that we can escape the curse that is coming upon us. We are certain that we are now safe because Jesus Christ is raised from the dead back to life. That assures us that our penalty is finished, *God's justice is satisfied, the distresses from sin's consequences are gone, and we are safe forevermore*. Thanks be to God's grace in Christ.

Meditate on verse 8. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may the living water flow from within Your children. Amen.

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MONDAY, 28TH NOVEMBER 2022. YAHWEH WILL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 14:9-11

All those who belong to God's grace are eager for that day. However, we should not think that God is not King now. Indeed, God is King over all the earth, over all creation, and nothing happens except what The Sovereign has planned, done, and will do. However, in this life we always see rebellion. The land of Israel/Judah was a land full of hills and valleys. Zechariah tells us that the land will be made level and the city of Jerusalem will be raised up over all others. This indicates that Jerusalem will be the supreme city, exalted on the earth. The city of Jerusalem will become greatly populated and will ever after be secure.

The prophet speaks about the physical Jerusalem on earth, but it is symbolic language pointing to the eternal city of God, the heavenly Mount Zion (*Heb.12:22*). That city, which will always be safe and secure, will be inhabited with people from every tribe and language group and nation (*Rev.7:9*). *Those who trust Jesus Christ for salvation, those who are united to Him by grace, will be citizens of that eternal city*. As we read in *Revelation 21*, this new Jerusalem symbolically comes down to the earth from heaven because it was made by God. The eternal new earth will be a great city where peace will reign and every citizen will worship King Jesus from pure hearts.

Meditate on verse 9. What is God teaching in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may Your righteousness and holiness prevail in our land. Amen.

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TUESDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER 2022. THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM WILL BE DEVASTATED;
TEXT: ZECHARIAH 14:12-15

Some scholars have thought this passage is a description of a nuclear war; so, they think it is about our present time. But this passage is using graphic language to describe the destruction of the enemies, just as the previous passage used symbolic language to describe the establishment of God's eternal Kingdom on earth. Yahweh will send plagues against the enemies, just as He sent them against Egypt; but these plagues will be more extensive, distressful, and horrifying. The complete rotting of the flesh, not just localized leprosy, shows that the defeat will be so much more complete. *No one can stand against God and His work.* All attempts will fail. Even the enemies' animals will be struck, as it was in Egypt, and Israel will gain the spoils.

In this life, we often see the enemies of Christ, the atheists, the idolaters, doing well (Ps.73). But the day is coming when God will hold everyone to account, and it will be a thorough reckoning. No one will escape the fiery gaze of His judgment. *Only those who belong to Jesus Christ will be free from the horrors of that day.* That is because Jesus already paid the penalty for their sins. Jesus took the plague of judgment and satisfied God's justice. As Zechariah saw the spoils of war going to Judah, we believers will inherit the Kingdom. Your distresses in this life cannot compare with your eternal inheritance. Do not give up.

Meditate on verse 12. What is God teaching you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, save us from plagues. Amen.

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WEDNESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER 2022. REMNANT FROM THE NATIONS WILL COME TO JERUSALEM; TEXT: ZECHARIAH 14:16-21

This chapter 14 of Zechariah's prophecy has been about judgment and reconciliation. In our passage for today, the concluding section, we read of the gathering together of those from other nations, gathering them into the new, eternal Jerusalem. As they travel, they will celebrate the Feast of Booths, which is the holiday when Israel remembers their ancestors being delivered out of

Egypt and wandering through the wilderness, living in tents, as they travelled to the Promised Land. Zechariah is showing the future when believers from other nations will leave their home countries and their enslavement to idolatry and come to the Temple in Jerusalem, the only place where there is salvation and reconciliation with the only true God, and where everything will be *“Holy to the LORD” (Exod.28)*.

We who belong to God’s grace, though we are not Jewish by physical descent, we are those travelers seen by Zechariah travelling to the New Jerusalem, which is the gathering of all who belong to God’s grace, from all over the world, from all of human history. *The spiritual reality is that we have left our citizenship to sin and some form of idolatry and have come to the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb.12:22)*. And in that eternal Kingdom everything will be holy, dedicated to Yahweh’s service and worship. There will be no such thing as something common, secular, or non-religious; even pots and pans. Everything will be holy, set apart for God, especially you. If you belong to Jesus Christ, then you already belong to that day and that city. *Live like that now, and thus, glorify God with every part of your life.*

Meditate on verse 21. What is God telling you in this verse?

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, may every possession I have be holy to serve You. Amen.





THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2022

TRUST JESUS CHRIST ALWAYS, EVEN IN DISTRESS

“Trust” in the Bible is translated to literally mean “a bold, confident, sure security or action based on that security.” Trusting is believing in the promises of God in all circumstances, even in those in which human and transitory where the evidence seems to be to the contrary. We trust in the Lord because He and He alone is truly trustworthy. Furthermore, because of God’s nature, we are to trust Him with all our hearts, committing every aspect of our lives to Him in complete confidence. Finally, we are not to trust in ourselves because our understanding is temporal, finite, and tainted by our sin natures.

The word distress is defined as emotional, social, spiritual, or physical pain or suffering that may cause a person to feel sad, afraid, depressed, anxious, or lonely. People in distress may also feel that they are not able to manage or cope with changes caused by normal life activities or by a disease. In order to manage or cope with distress, a distressed person needs to have trust in someone. In our distress therefore, we need to trust in Jesus who shares our burdens (Matt 11:28-30).

THURSDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2022. GIVE JESUS CHRIST A CHANCE; TEXT JOHN 1:40-46

There are two sides to following Jesus – you believe in Him, and He believes in you. Jesus invited Simon Peter, Andrew and Phillip to follow Him, they did without any hesitation (*John 1:35-44*); but Nathanael doubted (*John 1:46*). Even after three years of witnessing Jesus’ miracles, His disciples still had doubts. Knowing they were anxious about what would happen when He left them and went back to heaven. Jesus Christ promised to give them another Comforter, who would abide with them for ever (*John 14:16*). The Greek word for comforter is *parakletos*, meaning ‘one who comes alongside to help you’.

The truth is, there will never be a day when you do not need God’s help or when

it is not available to you. Maybe you still have doubts. If so, take heart! Jesus loves doubters. Did He not hand pick Thomas? Maybe you think you have too many weaknesses; so did Peter. *Come just as you are; and let His presence rub off on you.*

Meditate on verse 46. Can anything good come out of Jesus?

Almighty Father, take away any doubts from my heart and teach me to trust Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

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FRIDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2022. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY; TEXT: MATTHEW 11:27-30

Imagine you are a child studying astronomy. You read about the first mission to the moon and you begin to ask your teacher all sorts of space travel questions. 'What is it like on the moon?' The teacher replies, 'Well, I would guess' or 'I think' or 'perhaps'. She has never been there. But next day Astronaut Neil Armstrong enters your classroom. 'Now ask your questions,' the teacher says, and Armstrong answers each with certainty. He knows the moon; he has walked on it. No speculation or hesitation; he speaks with conviction. Jesus knows the dimensions of heaven. He knows the words of the songs sung by the angelic choir. He has unrivalled knowledge of God; and He wants to share His knowledge with you (*Matt. 11:27*). So did Jesus teach them as one having authority (*Matt 7:29*).

But notice what Jesus says next: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden...and learn from me...and you will find rest for your souls' (*Matt 11:28-29*). Underline the words 'Learn from me'. Learn from me how to handle your money, your marriage, and your mood swings. Learn from me how to live the right way on earth, and how to go to heaven when you die. And don't we need to learn? The age of information has become the age of confusion: too much know-how, and hardly any know-why. We need answers. Answers only Jesus has. 'But can I trust Him?' *There is only one way to find out!*

Meditate on verse 29. What does Jesus want you to learn from Him?

Father, teach me to cast all my burdens upon Jesus, for He cares. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

SATURDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2022. WORRY LESS AND TRUST GOD MORE; TEXT: MARK 4:1-20

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said the seed fell into four kinds of soil. The seeds that fell among the thorn bushes are people who hear the message; but start worrying about the needs of this life. They are fooled by the desire to get rich and to have all kinds of other things. So the message gets choked out, and they never produce anything.

Observe what keeps God's Word from working effectively in your life: (i) Worrying that God will not take care of you; (ii) Thinking if you had more money, a bigger house, a better car, or a more attractive appearance, you would be happier. Here is the question: do you remember when you thought your career, the house you live in, and the financial portfolio you acquire would make all your worries disappear? But it does not work that way, does it? The more 'things' you acquire, the more you have to lose, protect, maintain, and be concerned about. Worrying about material things can 'choke' the life out of you! Peace and happiness come from trusting God for what you need and who knows what is right for you. If He does not consider it worthy, He will give you something better. An amazing thing happens when you meditate on God's promises. Your worries shrink, your mind and attitude are reprogrammed, and you enjoy life more. So, today, *put prayer and Bible reading at the top of your to-do list.*

Meditate on verse 20. On which soil of the ground are you; road, thorn bushes or good one?

Heavenly Father, teach me how to have Your Word in me in order to bear much fruit that lasts. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

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SUNDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2022. GOD IS TEACHING YOU PATIENCE; TEXT: PSALM 37:3-7

Patience is born of trust (vv.3-4). God has a plan for your life. It includes things you cannot have today that you will be able to enjoy tomorrow. When rain comes, the grass grows on its own. So, stop struggling to accomplish something now that will be easy when the time is right. When you refuse to give a baby something that is not good for him, he stamps his foot and cries, 'I want it now!' So, do you give in to him? No, because he is not ready for it yet. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently (v.7).

Not only is God teaching you how to wait but how to have a good attitude while you are doing so. God permits certain things to happen in life to teach

us important principles like (i) maintaining our faith when times get tough, (ii) showing grace under pressure by controlling our responses, and (iii) developing new skills and better ways of thinking. The truth is, God is developing qualities in you right now that your future cannot be developed any other way. When He is finished, you will have the maturity to handle what He has in mind for you. So, do not let the enemy rattle you or the circumstances put you into overdrive. Therefore, *be patient and trust the Lord.*

Meditate on verse 7. What do you learn about patiently waiting upon the Lord?

Father, teach me how to be patient in order to build my trust in You. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen



MONDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2022. LET GOD'S PEACE BE YOUR YARDSTICK; TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

You can have peace today regardless of your circumstances. Think about it: God has no worries or problems because He controls everything. And *as you learn to trust Him, His peace, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ.*

If you lived in a town constantly harassed by enemy raids, one option for the military would be to send troops to actually live beside you. They would not just provide protection during an attack; they would dissuade the enemy from launching future attacks. The Holy Spirit has set up a garrison, a stronghold, a defence army, an occupying force within us. And God's garrison of peace will indwell your heart and mind, protecting you, and healing the wounds of worry and fear that threaten to invade your life. It is the kind of peace that transcends human understanding because *it is God-powered and Spirit-connected.* Are there areas in your life where you lack peace? Surrender them to God.

Meditate on verse 7 and see how God's peace can guard our hearts and minds.

Almighty God, the Peacemaker; grant me peace in order to sail above my current life storms. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen



TUESDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2022. BE STRONG IN THE LORD; TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-18

The Bible tells us that God is strong, and He wants you strong. So, take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the devil throws your way. This is no afternoon football match that we will walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the devil and all his angels. Be prepared. *You are up against far more than you can handle on your own.* Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued; so that when it is all over, you will still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You will need them throughout your life. *God's Word* is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this on-going warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

The way to make a comeback is to get back up and move forward. Winning consists of getting up one more time than you were knocked down. *Success is not measured by the heights one attains, but by the obstacles one overcomes in its attainment.* The God you serve is bigger than the obstacles you face. The strength He provides is greater than the forces arrayed against you. So, *be strong in the Lord!*

Meditate on verse 10. In which areas are your weaknesses? Surrender to God who makes you strong.

Lord, You already know my weakness; I cannot stand strong without You. Help me Father, to be strong. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

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WEDNESDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2022. GOD WILL HELP YOU TO SUCCEED; TEXT: LUKE 5:4-11

Imagine you are an expert fisherman like Simon Peter, having toiled the whole night without catching any fish. Tired and frustrated, then someone who has not been fishing tells you in the morning daybreak to go back into deep water, and let down your nets for a catch! Simon Peter and his team were willing to give a try, though they knew that it was hardest to catch fish during daytime. When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So, they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come

and help, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. All of them were astonished at the catch, and were afraid! Then Jesus said to Simon, *“Do not be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”* So, they...left everything and followed him’ (11, NIV).

Here are seven life-changing truths you need to learn: (i) Jesus will come to where you work and help you; (ii) When what you are doing is not working, He will show you a better alternative; (iii) *Even though it may not make sense at the moment, do what He tells you;* (iv) The success He has in mind for you is greater than anything you can envision for yourself; (v) Your existing systems may not be able to handle what He has in mind, so be willing to change how you do things; (vi) When you experience His goodness, you will fall at His feet and acknowledge Him as your Lord; (vii) When you realise what He has in mind for you, you will leave everything and follow Him.

Meditate on verse 9 and remember the occasions God had surprised you.

Lord, teach me to trust You during my hardest and frustrating moments. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

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THURSDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2022. GOD WILL PROVIDE 'ALL THINGS' YOU NEED; TEXT: ROMANS 8:31-39

Suppose a man comes upon a child being beaten by thugs and he dashes into the mob, rescues the boy, and carries him to a hospital. The youngster is nursed to health. The man pays for the child’s treatment. He learns that the child is an orphan and adopts him as his own and gives the boy his name. Then one night, months later, the father hears the son sobbing into his pillow. He goes to him and asks about the tears. “I’m worried, Daddy...about tomorrow. Where will I get food to eat? How am I going to buy clothes to stay warm? And where will I sleep?” The father is rightfully troubled. “Have I not shown you? Do you not understand? I risked my life to save you. I gave my money to treat you. You bear my name. I have called you my son. Would I do all that and then not meet your needs?”

Be honest, now. *Did God save you so you would worry?* Would He teach you to walk just to watch you fall? Would He be nailed to the cross for your sins and then disregard your prayers? Come on! Is Scripture teasing us when it says, “God has put His angels in charge of you to watch over you wherever you go?”

(see Psalm 91:11) You know better, don't you? So, stop worrying, and stand securely on His promise that He will graciously give us all things.

Meditate on verse 32 and "Count your blessings, name them one by one. And it will surprise you what the Lord has done"!

Almighty Father, forgive me for worrying about things yet to come and forgetting so many blessings You have bestowed unto me! In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2022. JESUS CHRIST KNOWS YOUR POTENTIAL; TEXT: JOHN 10:9-15

Have the experiences you have been through made you a different person from the one God intended you to be? Have the people, pursuits, and pleasures you chose resulted in a feeling of hopelessness about your future? When you lose your sense of worth, it is hard to believe God can love you. But He does. He knows that hidden inside you is a Person who can do great things for Him. That is why He is stirring your heart and letting you know He is moving in your life. So, respond to Him in faith. Dare to believe that He can grant you 'abundant life' (v.10). *Shift your confidence from your own weakness to His power.* Trust in Him rather than in yourself. Whether your wounds were self-inflicted or caused by others, Jesus will heal you and raise you up again.

You say, 'But you do not know the things I have done, and the people I have hurt.' Jesus does. And He wants to straighten out the crooked places in your heart and make you whole. But you must allow Him access to every area of your life. *When He comes into your heart, you will never be the same broken person again.* Notice the potential benefits of committing your life to Christ: forgiveness, healing, freedom from destructive habits, mercy, and satisfaction.

Meditate on verse 14. Do you know Jesus as the Lord of your life? If Jesus knows your potential, what can you keep away from Him?

Lord Jesus, I surrender all my life unto You, since You know me perfectly well. In Your name Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

SATURDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2022. UNCONDITIONAL JOY; TEXT: 1 JOHN 1:3-4

When joy is absent from your life, power is also missing. Our happiness should not be based on what is happening around us; it should be dependent on our relationship with Jesus. John says, 'We can be completely filled with joy' (1 John 1:4).

John did not say this when all was well, but when everything had turned to shambles: (i) All his fellow apostles had been murdered; (ii) Rome had destroyed the Jerusalem temple, so not one stone was left upon another; (iii) Many Jews and Christians became refugees. Average life expectancy was about forty years and 25 per cent of the people in Rome were slaves; (iv) John himself lived as a condemned criminal on the Isle of Patmos. He had no earthly comforts; no assurance of living another day. When the cup of misery was full, God commissioned him to show the world the absolute power and triumph of Christianity over everything. John's writings, in reference to our daily walk, put a capstone on all that heaven intended to reveal in the Word: *if we have apostolic fellowship, our joy will be full*. You do not need pleasant circumstances for this to happen.

Meditate on verse 4. What makes you joyful?

Lord Jesus, I sought joy through alcohol, drugs, money, sex and power; but I am still empty. Come and take control of my life, grant me the joy that nothing in the world provides. In Your name Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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SUNDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2022. THINK RIGHT, LIVE RIGHT; TEXT: PROVERBS 4:23-27

Have you heard this saying? "You are not what you think you are, but what you think – you *are*." The Scripture says in *Proverbs 4:23*, "Your life is shaped by your thoughts." Lasting change always begins with new thinking. How do you become a Christian? By repenting of your sin and placing your trust in Christ. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, and it means to change your mind. We are not changed by willpower, but by the transforming power of God's Word when we use it to renew our minds each day. The Bible clearly teaches that the way we think determines the way we feel, and the way we feel determines the way we act. *And the way we act becomes our habit*. So, if you want to change your actions, you have to return to the source and change the way you think. At times, you may act resentful. Why? Because you *feel* resentful. And do you

know why you feel resentful? Because you are thinking resentful thoughts. The same is true of anger, worry, lust, and other destructive thought patterns.

When you base your life on truth – when you live with the right kind of thoughts, not misconceptions or false beliefs, and you base your life on thinking from God’s Word – you will be set free. You will find your old habits, feelings, and actions beginning to fall away. When you focus solely on removing bad thoughts, you create a vacuum into which the bad thoughts can return. But when you replace bad thoughts with good ones – Scriptural ones – *you are empowered by God to live the life of blessing He wants you to enjoy.*

Meditate on Proverbs 4:23. What fills your thoughts?

Heavenly Father, I surrender all to You; refine my thoughts. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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MONDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2022. WHO ARE YOU DEPENDING ON? TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:19-23

How can you tell when you are depending on people rather than God? When you get upset with your boss because you did not get the raise you think you deserve. When you become angry with a loved one because he or she turned you down for a loan. When you do things like that, you are sitting at the wrong door waiting for your blessing! Yes, it hurts when your efforts are not acknowledged. But you must understand this: God will use people as instruments to bless you, but He alone must always be the source of all your blessings!

We generally pursue and nurture relationships that are rewarding – and that is important. Why? Because only when you recognise *God* as the source of all your blessings will you commit to nurturing your relationship with Him. That is why Jesus said, *‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well’ (Matt. 6:33 NIV).*

Meditate on Philippians 4:19. Who are you depending on? Remember this; human beings will let you down.

Lord Jesus, forgive me for depending on others. Take me, break me, mould me, and make me the kind of person You want me to be. In Your name Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

TUESDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2022. HOW TO KEEP FROM FALLING; TEXT: PSALM 15:1-5

For people who hate discipline and only get more stubborn, there will come a day when life tumbles in and they break; but, by then, it will be too late to help them. King Solomon was reputed to be the wisest man ever lived. He wrote these words; but sadly he did not live by them; so, he ‘crashed and burned’. And if it could happen to Solomon, none of us are immune! Character has become a crucial issue today because so many political, business, and religious leaders have fallen so publicly. As a leader, you do not operate in a vacuum. You influence many others, and when you fall, they feel the repercussions. When a big tree falls, it takes the little trees with it. So, how can you guard against falling? *By not favouring gifts over character.* Today we have an unhealthy tendency to celebrate and reward someone’s gift and overlook their character; both must be developed. Character is the sum total of your daily habits.

In Psalm 15, David gives us eight traits to look for in a leader worthy of respect: (i) They have integrity; (ii) They do not take part in gossip; (iii) They do not harm others; (iv) They speak up against wrong; (v) They honour those who walk in the truth; (vi) They keep their promise, even at personal cost; (vii) They are not greedy to profit at the expense of others; (viii) They are strong and stable. David concludes his psalm by saying those who do these things ‘will never be shaken’. That is how you keep from falling!

Meditate on the Psalmist’s eight traits above. Where have you fallen and what do you intend to do?

Lord God, I have fallen in many ways, forgive me Father. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen

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WEDNESDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2022. DO NOT BE A SLAVE TO THE WRONG THINGS; TEXT: ROMANS 6:16-18

Consider some of the youths who are enslaved today through voluntarily flocking to Arab Emirates in order to sell themselves into forced labour. That is not the kind of slavery Paul is talking about when he writes, ‘*You become the slave of whatever you choose to obey.*’

When it comes to sin, the Bible draws a line in the sand and tells us not to cross it. Why? Because when you cross it once, it is easier to cross it again. Whether

your ‘drug of choice’ is alcohol, illegal or over-the-counter drugs, pornography, gambling, or overeating, you start out believing you are the master and end up realising you are the slave. One of the biggest lies we tell ourselves is, ‘I can stop whenever I want to.’ The Prodigal Son was forgiven and restored, but he still lost his inheritance. *Spiritually*, you can lose your confidence before God. *Personally*, you can lose your sense of self-worth. *Publicly*, you can lose respect and influence with others. *And if you are not careful, even ‘good’ things can hurt you.* A strong work ethic can lead to neglecting your family and losing your marriage. Sitting long in front of the TV can stunt your spiritual growth. Even too much caution and thoughtfulness – good qualities – can prevent you from stepping out in faith and fulfilling your God-given potential. When God says *no*, He is not being a killjoy and trying to make your life difficult; He is protecting you! If something has the potential to enslave you, do not do it. And if you are already hooked, *turn to God and He will set you free.*

Meditate on verse 16. What has enslaved you?

Father, rescue me from my slave master and set me free to worship You. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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THURSDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2022. MAKE THE MOST OF IT; TEXT: JEREMIAH 29:4-14

Are you at a place in your life and you would rather not be there? Well, God has a word for you, but it may not be one you want to hear. It is the same word Jeremiah brought to his people when they were slaves in Babylon; far from everything near and dear: ‘You are not going home anytime soon, so change your attitude, dig in and make the best of it. Buy homes, plant gardens, let your children get married... and in addition, pray for the peace and prosperity of the city where you are living because when it prospers, you will prosper’ (*Jeremiah 29:5-7, paraphrased*).

The Israelites were in exile because God had allowed them to be taken captive. So, could it be that you are where you are today because God placed you there to bless those around you? Instead of putting your life on hold waiting for circumstances to change, start sowing into other people’s lives what you want to come back as a harvest in your own. Why? Because when they are blessed, you will be blessed too! I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may be. I have learned that *the greater part of happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances.* If you want to go from surviving to thriving, make the most of where God placed you.

Meditate on verse 11. Can you discover God's plans for you?

Lord, open my mind to see the plans You have for me. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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FRIDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2022. IT IS ALL ABOUT GETTING UP AGAIN! TEXT: JEREMIAH 29:15-18

If you have ever seen a child learning to walk, you know that falling down is an important part of the process. Getting back up again is crucial to developing the child's balance and muscle development. Likewise, a boxer is not disqualified because he gets knocked down; he's disqualified because he does not get back up. Boxers know they will go down; so, they focus on the art of falling safely and getting up quickly. Children and boxers both learn this: *it is all about getting up again*. The Bible tells us that falling is common to both the righteous and unrighteous. *It is getting up again that sets them apart*: 'If good people fall... they will get back up. But when trouble strikes the wicked, that is the end of them' (v.16). The unrighteous stay down – the righteous get up again!

In Scripture, some of God's greatest servants fell into personal failure. Abram lied to Pharaoh about his wife, Sarai (see *Genesis 12:11-17*). Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother's birth-right (see *Genesis 27:17-29*). In anger, Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock (see *Numbers 20:7-12*). Yet instead of being disqualified, they 'were all *commended for their faith*' (*Hebrews 11:39 NIV*). How come? Because they acknowledged their sin and received God's forgiveness. In other words, they fell, but they got up again. And when you fall, you can get up again too. That is the 'faith' part of your journey. Staying down is *failure accepted* – getting back up is *faith activated*!

Meditate on verse 16. What have you learned about falling down?

Almighty Father, I acknowledge my sin, for I backslid. I got up again, forgive me, and hold my hands lest I fall again. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

SATURDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2022. FORGIVE AND MOVE ON; TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

Building a successful relationship calls for focusing on the other person's strengths instead of their weaknesses. Concerning marriage, keep your eyes wide open beforehand and half shut afterwards. It is a mistake to rush into a lifetime relationship without taking time to get to know the other person. Without due diligence on the front end, you are sure to have problems on the back end. *But an important relationship principle lies in learning to forgive and moving on.*

There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, to talk about the rest of us. If you do not like something, change it. If you cannot change it, change your attitude. Do not complain. In other words, when it comes to facing facts you cannot change, pray for grace and learn to live with them. Because God says so! (vv. 12-14).

Meditate on verse 13. Are you ready to put up with your spouse or someone who hurt you?

Lord Jesus, teach me to forgive and move on, for forgiveness is the only way You will vindicate me. In Your name, Jesus Christ, I have prayed. Amen.



SUNDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2022. A SAFE PLACE TO UNLOAD; TEXT: GALATIANS 6:1-5

Have you ever said something you wish you could take back? You have, have you not? We act impulsively and realise, after the fact, how foolish we were! On top of all that, we hurt the ones we love the most. Imagine a broken relationship with a spouse, boy or girlfriend, a child or church member; where can such a person go to unload? By sitting in church alongside church members? Hardly. All this stuff caves in on us and we wonder how anybody could ever love us, especially God. When we start thinking like this, we need to turn our mind to the "one another's" in the New Testament. What we need is a place where there is person-to-person caring and authentic sharing. Where s/he will feel free, without embarrassment to tell her/his secret or state her/his struggle; where someone will listen, help her/him unload, and give her/him fresh strength. The Scripture tells us to love one another, build up one another, live in peace with one another, confess our sins to one another, speak to one another, admonish one another, comfort one another, pray for one another. *"Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2, NKJV).*

Adult fellowships are pockets of people who love Christ and believe in helping one another. They do not point fingers or preach or compare. They are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Once you begin unloading, you will discover how much easier the journey seems. Are you involved in a fellowship group? If not, consider joining or starting one.

Meditate on verse 2. Do you tear or bear with one another?

Father, teach me to bear other people's burdens, rather than tear them apart. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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MONDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2022. YOKED TOGETHER WITH JESUS CHRIST; TEXT: MATTHEW 11:28-30

Jesus spoke to people who had given up on religion. People who were burned out trying and failing to observe a long list of rules and regulations. Here is what He told them: *'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'* (vv. 28-30, NKJV).

The 'yoke' Jesus spoke of was a harness that went around the necks of two oxen so they could pull the plough in the same direction. In each team of oxen, one was the leader and the other would follow. There is an important lesson here – do not miss it. Jesus will take the lead; but you must stay in synchronism with Him to enjoy His blessing on your life. He promises His yoke will not choke you; it will not be wearisome or confining, and you will not chafe under it. In fact, *if you want to be truly free, you must let yourself be yoked to Jesus by submitting your will to His.* But it does not work to accept Christ's yoke for a while and then start pulling the other way when things do not go the way you want. When you do, the load gets heavier and you start to feel worn out. Peace and rest come when you relax in the yoke and let Christ lead. Jesus said, *'You will find rest.'* That means your options are to resist Him or to rest in Him! Which one will you take?

Meditate on verse 29. Whom are you yoked together with?

Lord Jesus, here I come with all my burdens, for I am extremely tired. Accept me as I am and yoke me to You. In Your name, Jesus Christ, I have prayed. Amen.

TUESDAY 20TH DECEMBER 2022. LISTEN TO THE RIGHT VOICE; TEXT: ISAIAH 30:18-25

A respected author, along with her husband and friends, were on a mountaintop discussing which direction to go. One man said, 'That is south!' Another countered, 'No that is east.' Everybody threw in their two-penny' worth, until finally the woman's husband produced a compass and said, 'we can settle this real fast.' Within seconds the *compass* confirmed they were, in fact, facing due west! The only reliable source had the final say, and nobody was about to argue with it. In the course of a day, many voices vie for your attention, and some that sound like experts can be dead wrong. Bottom line: you had better know which voice to listen to, because if you look only at your circumstances, you will become disoriented.

An unexpected phone call, a floundering relationship, a lost job, or a sick child can make north look like south and east look like west. When that happens, it is easy to lose your bearings, jump to conclusions, and end up on the wrong path. The Bible says, "*This is the way; walk in it.*" (v.21). *Jesus is way, the truth and the life (John 14:6); walk through Him.* You do not need to know every detail in advance; that is not how God works. Often, He does not show us the big picture because we would be overwhelmed and think it was impossible. He wants to develop in you an unshakeable trust in His character and goodness; an acceptance that in order to fulfil His plan, you must depend on His strength.

Meditate on verse 21. Which way are you walking?

Lord, take my hand and let me walk with You for the rest of my life. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 21ST DECEMBER 2022. DO NOT LET YOUR FEELINGS CONTROL YOU; TEXT: PROVERBS 4:20-27

When it comes to everyday living, you can walk according to the unchanging principles of God's Word or by your constantly changing feelings. When you live by God's Word, you have stability. When you live by your feelings; it is like riding a roller coaster; one day you are up, the next day you are down. God wants to bring you into emotional maturity, but you have to cooperate with Him. *This calls for a daily act of your will; choosing to do things His way rather than your own.* And once it becomes a habit, you discover that life is more

enjoyable. Now, you do not let everyone who knocks on your door come in and make themselves at home; so, why would you let every emotion that surfaces dictate the direction of your day or decide your responses?

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is wellspring of life.” (v.23, NIV). It is your *thinking* that produces your *feelings*, not vice versa! In other words, if a thought does not line up with God’s Word, do not give it a voice or a vote. This may come as a surprise, but as a Christian, you will not always *feel* God’s presence.

Meditate on verse 23. What floods your thoughts every day?

Heavenly Father, may Your Word guide my thoughts and the way I should live to glorify Your name. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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THURSDAY 22ND DECEMBER 2022. DO NOT EXAGGERATE; TEXT: PROVERBS 8:6-9

King Solomon wrote: *“Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; for my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them. They are all plain to him who understands, And right to those who find knowledge.” (Prov. 8:6-9).* We usually embellish the truth in order to get these two things: the *attention* and the *approval* of the listener. But eventually, it backfires. Over time, people discover your propensity to stretch the truth, and you lose your credibility with them. And once you lose that, it takes a long time to get it back, if ever. Sweeping statements like, **‘everybody does it,’** or **‘you never,’** or **‘you always’** cause people to discount you and eventually slot you as untrustworthy. *It is condonable to say something with enthusiasm, but avoid exaggeration.*

Stick to the facts and resist the urge to be the centre of attention by engaging in this form of lying. Joseph’s brothers resented the favour of God that was on his life. So, they threw him into a pit, dipped his coat in blood, then took it back home and showed it to their ageing father. They did not say a word. They simply let the old man conclude that a wild beast had devoured his son. And what is more, they allowed him to live with that cruel lie for years. So, unless that is the company you want to be identified with, tell the whole truth.

Meditate on verse 7. Have you not exaggerated in order to exonerate yourself or pin down someone?

Heavenly Father, deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips *and* a deceitful tongue. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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FRIDAY 23RD DECEMBER 2022 THE BEST GIFT EVER! TEXT: LUKE 2:1-21

Much as Christmas brings a lot of excitement, for many people Christmas is filled with dread instead of delight. Road accidents increase and transport fares are hiked as many throng bus and taxi parks to travel upcountry. Others lose their valuables in the process of traveling home. On reaching home, some exclaim; "I miss you, Mummy." "I miss you too, my child," your mother says. A few days later, you travel back to your place of work. The mother is back living in solitude.

There is a darker side to Christmas we rarely acknowledge. We create this fantasy that seldom matches reality, even in the best of homes many Christmas memories are full of tension, not tinsel. The holidays are just another excuse for Mommy to get drunk, or Daddy to be with his new family; yet another reminder that the one we love is far away or perhaps never coming back. The suicide rate is extraordinarily high in December, depression as common as "*Joy to the World*" and more people hurt at Christmas than we initially imagine. For those tired of the hollow hope of Christmas, the good news is, God is with us. Jesus came to earth to "bring...good news...for all the people." Regardless of your situation, Christmas is the best gift you will ever get, because: (i) it is the only gift that lasts forever; (ii) it is one you can enjoy for the rest of your life.'

Meditate on verse 10. What good news do you have for your family and friends during this Christmas?

Heavenly Father, thank You very much for loving me a sinner, that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to take my place on the cross. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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SATURDAY 24TH DECEMBER 2022. CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS! (PART 1); TEXT: HOSEA 14:1-9

The word 'celebrate' means to rejoice, delight in, revel, and appreciate. There is so much done *in the name of Christmas* that is neither pleasing nor honouring to Christ. Even so, I find myself doing battle with religious superstitions, which argue against almost every observation of Christmas; against giving, against

decorations, trees, or just plain fun, as though such participation defiled something holy. Such harsh debunking is nothing more than “holy humbug”. A Christmas tree is a specific statement. By means of this tree we are saying: *We believe in celebration*. We serve the God who “gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17 NKJV) and who through history assigned sacred appointments of feasting and rejoicing “great gladness” (1 Chronicles 29:22, KJV).

Although no one can make a “biblical case” for Christmas trees, we gather around ours with joy. We see in its branches a symbol of everlasting life given us because of Jesus’ death on the tree ushered in forgiveness and eternal hope. The lights gleam a testimony of His Light-of-the-world glory. The ornaments reflect the decorative splendour with which His kindnesses adorn our lives. *The star beams hope, with a heavenward ray, reminding us that from there He shall come again to receive us*. As you gather around the tree this Christmas, do not forget to celebrate the One who said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me...will have the light of life” (John 8:12, NIV).

Meditate on verse 8. Do you see that the presence of God is like a Christmas tree?

Heavenly Father, I embrace You in my life, for You are forever with me, meeting all my needs according to Your will. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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Merry Christmas

SUNDAY 25TH DECEMBER 2022. CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS! (PART 2); TEXT: NEHEMIAH 8:9-12

The word *holiday* comes from the Old English word, *haligdæg*, which means ‘holy day’. So, when Nehemiah announced, “*This day is holy*,” he was declaring a celebration; a time to “eat and drink before the Lord” (1 Chron. 29:22, NKJV). *Today, overindulgence and overspending have become synonymous with Christmas, making Christians hesitant to celebrate*. Often it is from those newly associated with our fellowship who have allowed themselves – perhaps for the first time – to enter into the wonder and fullness of Christmas joy and celebration.

Christmas is more than merely “merry”. Christmas is *mighty*. Celebration – unfettered enjoyment, love, laughter, gifts and giving, trees and tinsel, carols

and bells, all of it – has an inherent potential for mightiness. The qualifying factor is *the presence of the Holy Spirit*. When He is present, the accoutrements of Christmas can bless, strengthen, heal, and restore. When He is absent, carols ring hollow. Greetings, wishes and smiles lie on the surface, like glitter glued on a flat card. *Lights and decorations can leave the heart more desolate than ever*. But where *the Holy Spirit is, there is power to change* entrenched habits, transform cold hearts, grudges and expectations lift lives out of the shadow. This Christmas let Him come upon you. Welcome the Holy Spirit to move upon your life, and then make your *own* move into the season’s best opportunities to bask in the wonder of it all. Reach out to those around: encourage, bless, bake, give, visit, invite, share, and lift hearts wherever you can. By the New Year, you will find Christmas to have been marvellously, and even miraculously, mighty.

Meditate on verse 9. Why did Ezra declare the day as Holy?

Lord, teach me the true meaning of Christmas and may I live to honour You. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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MONDAY 26TH DECEMBER 2022. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FEEL DOWN (PART 1); TEXT: JAMES 5:13-20

Elijah got so ‘down’ that he was ready to end it all. And it happened on the heels of his greatest victory. He had just called down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel, when he went from exhilaration to exhaustion. We forget that even when we are successful and love what we do, it can be physically, mentally, and emotionally draining. So, if you are a purpose-driven person with no boundaries, pay attention!

(1) *Exhaustion made Elijah lose perspective*. He had just defeated 850 false prophets (see *1 Kings 18:19*), and now he was running from one woman: Jezebel. Fatigue makes cowards of us all. When fatigue walks in, faith walks out! *It distorts our thinking and makes us overlook God’s power and His promises*. Mental fatigue coupled with physical exhaustion is a deadly combination that invites hopelessness and creates the illusion that we have no options.

(2) *Fear made Elijah isolate himself*. Leaving his servant in Beersheba, he went into the wilderness and told God, ‘I am the only one left...now they are trying to kill me’ (*1 Kin.19:10, NIV*). At that moment, Elijah was in the worst possible company – his own! *When you feel down, that is not the time to isolate yourself*.

That is when you need to reach God through prayer and the people who love you and can help you get back up. So, who do you need to call? Who do you need to reach out to? Do not keep putting it off – do it!

Meditate on verse 17. What did Elijah do when he was worn out?

Lord, teach me how to pray fervently. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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TUESDAY 27TH DECEMBER 2022. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FEEL DOWN (PART 2); TEXT: 1 KINGS 19:11-16

When Elijah was at his lowest point, God told him these three important things: (1) *Spend more time with God. "...Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord..." (1 Kin. 19:11 NKJV).* That was where God spoke to him in 'a still small voice' (v.12 NKJV). The word 'still' teaches us that *instead of always working for God*, we need to spend time with Him. If you do not, you will run and get nowhere.

(2) *Stop trying to do it all yourself.* That is the fast route to depression. *Leadership is not just about getting the job done; it is about developing others and getting it done through them.* Elijah was not alone. God told him, '*...I have reserved seven thousand in Israel...whose knees have not bowed to Baal...'* (1 Kin. 19:18 NKJV). Do not just operate – learn to cooperate! (3). *Realise your assignment is not over.* God showed Elijah there were still kings to anoint, battles to win, and a successor to be prepared (see v.16). Need a reason to get out of bed in the morning? God will give you one! When you are 'down', He does not get mad at you. On the contrary, God will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the dimly burning flame. *He will encourage the fainthearted, those tempted to despair [paraphrased] (see Isaiah 42:3).* That is the loving-kindness of God!

Meditate on verse 11. How often do you spend time alone with God?

Lord, convict me to have valuable time alone with You, in order to discover my assignment. In Your name, Jesus Christ, I have prayed. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 28TH DECEMBER 2022. BE TENACIOUS; TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

One of the most prevalent themes in the Bible is *perseverance*. The dividing line between winning and losing is not talent; it is tenacity. Being tenacious means this:

1) *Giving it everything you have, not more than you have.* Some people inaccurately believe that being tenacious demands more than they have to offer. As a result, they get discouraged and stop pushing themselves. But being tenacious means giving 100 per cent – not more, and certainly not less.

2) *Working with determination instead of waiting on destiny.* Persistent people do not rely on luck, fate, or destiny for their success. They recognise that trying times are not the times to stop trying. 3) *Stopping when the job is finished, not when you are tired.* To succeed, you often have to push beyond what you think you can do. Remember, victory is not determined until the last step in the race has been run. So draw on God's grace, refuse to give up, and keep going until you cross the finish line and win the prize (v.14).

Meditate on verse 12. Who do you belong to, and what are you willing to do?

Lord God, never leave me during the most difficult times in my life; enable me to press on, in Jesus name. Amen.

THURSDAY 29TH DECEMBER 2022. HOW TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS; TEXT: JOHN 14:23-28

❖ *First, listen to the Holy Spirit within you.* He will constantly remind you of God's plan and show you how to carry it out. *"...He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"* (v.26, NKJV). What has God's Word instructed you to do? Have you done it yet? *Obedience is the doorway to blessing.*

❖ *Second, spend time with God in prayer daily: "...in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion..."* (Ps. 27:5, NKJV). A 'pavilion' was a secret chamber in a king's palace, and it was so well fortified that even if an enemy found it, they could not penetrate it. All hell could have been breaking loose and it did not make a difference; in the secret place there was peace. *Are you letting things that do not really matter overwhelm you? Are you upset over things that should be dismissed as trivialities? Get alone with God and let Him restore your perspective.*

Third, never be too proud to seek advice and assistance from trustworthy people. The Bible says *those of us who are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak* (see Rom. 15:1). There are times when we need to lift others, and times when we need to be lifted. Jesus healed a woman who had been bowed down by sickness for eighteen years and ‘could in no way raise herself’ (Luk. 13:11, NKJV). Sometimes, you need help because you cannot help yourself. David understood this, and he turned to the men of Issachar because they “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” (1 Chron.12:32 NKJV). God provides help – reach for it!

Meditate on verse 26. Who is your teacher and advisor?

Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit; to convict me of my sins and help me walk with You during the most difficult times of my life. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.

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FRIDAY 30TH DECEMBER 2022. YOU CAN GET BACK WHAT YOU HAVE LOST! TEXT: 1 SAMUEL 30:1-15

While David and his men were off fighting, the Amalekites destroyed their homes and took their families captive. *First*, David’s army wept. *second*, David sought God, saying, “Shall I pursue this enemy troop? Shall I overtake them?” And He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.” Notice four important points: (1) *Satan will attack your loved ones to get to you.* It may be big stuff like your husband losing his job or your wife discovering a lump in her breast, or little stuff like low-grade family tension and lack of consideration for each other. You need to stay alert and discern Satan’s attacks; so that you can defend yourself against them.

(2). *Love people but lean only on God.* The people David fought side by side with one day turned against him the next day. That is why your strength, strategies, and solutions for living must come from God, not others.

(3). *Talk to yourself in the right way.* “David encouraged himself in the Lord.” (v.6, NKJV). If you want to end up discouraged, talk about your situation. *If you want to be encouraged, talk to the One who can change your situation, the Lord.* The Bible says, ‘A wholesome [uplifting, positive, inspiring] tongue is a tree of life’ (Prov. 15:4 NKJV). So, learn to talk to yourself in the right way.

(4). *You can get back what you have lost.* God told David, ‘Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.’ And *what God did for David and his men that day, He will do for you if you seek Him.*

Meditate on verse 8. God will give back to you whatever you lost this year; just trust in Him.

Heavenly Father, I surrender all to You, because I know that You will enable me to recover all that I lost during the year. In the name of Jesus Christ I have prayed. Amen.



SATURDAY 31ST DECEMBER 2022. BELIEVE IN YOUR VISION; TEXT: JOEL 2:28-32

God spoke through the prophet Joel saying, “...*Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and...maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*” (vv.28-29, NKJV). Regardless of your age or gender, God has a vision for you to fulfil. And *sometimes it will not make sense because you do not feel qualified.* Most great achievements begin as a vision in someone’s heart. And many times, people try to convince the person it cannot be done – or that *he* or *she* cannot do it.

Often this confirms the visionary’s deepest fears about his or her abilities. And that is the crucial point! If you can disregard your critics and rise above your fears, *God will enable you to fulfil the vision He has given you.* But keep in mind that while your vision may come to you in an instant, it can take a lifetime to fulfil. Habakkuk writes, ‘*The vision is...for an appointed time...Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come*’ (Hab. 2:3 NKJV). A God-given dream often defies the facts, so if you have a vision, look for supporters, not critics. And when someone shares his or her vision with *you*, become a cheerleader.

Meditate on verse 2. What is your resolution for the New Year? Write down what you envision for the New Year and beyond.

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as You close this Year 2022, I pray that You enrich and open my mind to see my future and, through Your power, enable me to fulfil all the dreams You graciously give me, according to Your will in my life. In Your name, Jesus Christ, I have prayed. Amen.

Happy New Year 2023!

A. WRITERS:

1. The Book of HOSEA – afflictions to Israel as a result of sin and God’s judgment, by Rev. Theo. Doksa.
2. The Book of ZECHARIAH – afflictions to Israel as a result of sin and God’s judgment, by Rev. Theo. Doksa.
3. Trust Jesus Christ always, even in Distress, by Rev. Canon Johnson Ebong, (Th.D. D.D. 0772490525).

B. EDITING TEAM:

1. Rev. Canon Dr. Rebecca Nyegenye
2. Rev. Captain Florence Tumwesigye
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C. PLEASE WE WANT TO RECEIVE YOUR FEED BACK

1. Rev. Canon Dr. Rebecca Nyegenye (Provost) 0772 464391
2. Rev. Captain Florence Tumwesigye (Head, Discipleship/Nurture and Initiation) 0772593223
3. Mr. Daniel Magumba (Chairperson, Discipleship/Nurture and Initiation) 0755475105
4. Mr. Apollo Mwehamiza 0772 553312

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DAYBREAK

Begin your day with God

Drew Tete

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