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“The Book of the Acts of the Apostles”

by

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About the Author



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Married to Maria Celeste Ba-a Lagapa for the past twenty years, God has blessed them with three children: Theya, Thessa and Jose Trinipil II.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

ACTS 1:1-4

LUKE 1:1-4

“...they delivered them unto us,
which from the beginning were eyewitnesses,
and ministers of the word...”

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

This book of the Acts of the Apostles is an inspired historical account of the beginnings of the local church. The Greek title literally means “Acts of Apostles.” This book is the historical bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles in the New Testament. It provides the historical framework without which much of the New Testament would not be understandable. It exhibits the divine warrant of the church and the mission to the Gentile nations.

The key verse of the book of Acts is Acts 1:8: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* The fearful Apostles of Christ, who denied and fled at the crucifixion, were transformed in this account into courageous witnesses of Christ. They were judged as unlearned and ignorant men but they reshaped the world by their boldness in witnessing for their God and Saviour. They stood firm before the fierce opposition of their brethren, the Jews, who persecuted them for their faith in Christ.

The book of Acts is also known as the Acts of the Holy Spirit, the main character of this book. The Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost is mentioned sixty-six times. The book begins with the Holy Spirit coming upon the Apostles. This not only led to their high moral standards but they were also made great preachers and evangelists as they fulfilled the Great Commission. The visible Christlikeness in the life of the Apostles and their willingness to die for the cause of Christ were outward signs of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Are you indwelt by the same Spirit of God? Have you received the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus? Are you assured of eternal life? Do you witness to others the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? Dear Reader, if you are not sure of your salvation, you need to repent of your sins and believe in the risen Christ as your Lord and Saviour (Rom 10:9).

THOUGHT: Am I truly saved?

PRAYER: (Either thank God for your salvation or ask God to help you to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.)

THURSDAY, JULY 2
ACTS 1:1-8
MATTHEW 28:18-20

*“...baptizing them in the name
of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost...”*

CHURCH AND MISSIONS

The Rev Timothy Tow calls the book of Acts “The pattern for church growth.” From the few hundreds who witnessed the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believers grew to thousands in just a few days, and even to millions today. What was the secret? What was the formula? As we continue to meditate on the Acts of the Apostles, prayerfully we can answer these pertinent questions for every believer who desires to bring more souls into God’s Kingdom.

The early church history: The book of Acts exhibits the divine beginnings of the visible church. The church was started by Apostles who were not great and knowledgeable people but poor and unlearned. They were weak and inexperienced and did not have the intellectual prowess to formulate any methodologies to build up mega-churches. They had no training whatsoever from well-known theological schools which we have today. However, their success cannot be denied, and it shows clearly the extraordinary results they had far above any modern church today.

The missionary history: The book of Acts also exhibits the divine warrant for missions and accounts for our gentile presence in the church. The Apostles started missions with practically no material resources. They travelled throughout the world preaching the gospel and persevering unto the uttermost part of the inhabited world. They walked and sailed through great dangers and fears. They faced famines and poverty while being pursued and hunted because of their faith. Yet, they continued and remained steadfast in spite of the obstacles they had to overcome. They faced persecution, yet they remained faithful.

Are you actively co-labouring in a local church today? Do you have a part to play in missions and evangelism? Or are you just a pew-warmer who comes under the shadow of the church for fewer than two hours a week? If you are truly in the Lord Jesus Christ through faith in Him, you are a member of His body (Eph 4:4-6).

THOUGHT: Am I a functional member of the body of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, help me be involved as an active labourer in the body of Christ for the edification of the saints, for the work of the ministry and of gospel sharing.

FRIDAY, JULY 3

ACTS 1:1

2 TIMOTHY 4:10-11

“...Demas hath forsaken me,

...only Luke is with me...”

THE RECORDER AND RECEIVER

No finding of modern New Testament study is more sure and assuring than that the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are not two books, written at different times, but two volumes of a single work, conceived and executed as a unit. Luke, the author of the third Gospel, wrote a continuation of that narrative, i.e. the book of Acts.

The recorder: Luke was the writer of the Acts of the Apostles. He was a gentile and the only one among the writers of the Bible. The church father Irenaeus in quoting passages from Acts repeatedly used the following formula: “Luke the disciple and follower of Paul says thus...” He added, “Luke also, the companion of Paul recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him.” Luke was not only a writer but a physician by profession (Col 4:14). He was also a recognised great historian, the writer of the greatest life story of all time which is an excellent account of the key events of the life of Christ. He recorded the most important era in church history, undoubtedly proving the authenticity of the beginning of Christianity. He is considered by many as a Christian apologist who zealously defended and established the absolute truth of the gospel.

The receiver: Theophilus could either be a person or an appellative name for those who had a “love of God.” Barnes suggested that “significant names were very common, and there is no good reason to doubt that this was some individual known to Luke.” The Greek title for “*most excellent*” in Luke 1:3 occurs only in three other places in the New Testament and is given to men in office such as to Felix and Festus, Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25. It expresses not the quality of the men, but to the office which suggests that he was an individual person, who was supposed to be a follower of Christ and who desired to know the certainty of the things he had been taught.

Do you believe the book of Acts is recorded for us? Do you acknowledge that the whole Bible is not the word of man but the very Word of God? May you receive this book as a personal letter to you. Read it regularly and conscientiously.

THOUGHT: Do I receive the Bible as God’s truth?

PRAYER: Father, may I receive Thy Word which we read and hear not as the word of man but as it is in the truth, the Word of God.

SATURDAY, JULY 4

ACTS 1:1-2

LUKE 19:10

*“For the Son of man is come
to seek and to save
that which was lost.”*

THE TREATISES

The church father Eusebius said that Luke has left us two inspired volumes in the New Testament: the Gospel and the Acts. Luke was the Apostle Paul's companion in the missionary journeys recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are two volumes of the same work. They were designed to fulfill the same general purpose of confirming personal faith and to provide an understandable historical record of God's revelation to men in the work of Christ. This account gives the reader further confidence in the truthfulness of the promises of Christ in the gospel. This grants them assurance of the reliability of the faith they have in the Jesus of Nazareth.

The former treatise: Luke described the life of Jesus in his gospel. This treatise presents the perfect humanity of Christ, whom Luke presented as the Son of man, the God-man whose genealogy he traced back to Adam. The phrase *“the Son of man”* is used frequently in Luke. The key verse is in Luke 19:10. It is in many ways a gospel to a humanity that needs compassion and sympathy: the brokenhearted, the poor, the sick, the persecuted, and the bereaved.

The second treatise: This account is considered as the second installment to the gospel that Luke wrote. Why the need to append another record? This second treatise describes the story of the beginning of the church of Jesus Christ. It is an account of God's fulfillment of His salvific plan in Christ Jesus to the whole world: *“...both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). It is right that the good news is followed by good acts. As genuine faith produces good works so the account of Christ's life must be followed by the account of the Christian's life.

Is your life today a continuation of your born-again experience in Christ? Is there continuity in the work of God in your life? You need to examine yourself (2 Cor 13:5).

THOUGHT: Am I a living Christian?

PRAYER: Father, help me examine myself, whether I am in the faith.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 5
ACTS 1:3-4
1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16

*"For who hath known
the mind of the Lord,
that he may instruct him?"*

A THOROUGH PREPARATION

The work of the Lord on earth was done through the Holy Ghost. The divine Spirit is always working in Him. Luke earlier recorded that *"Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about"* (Luke 4:14). This refers to the operation of the Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. Jesus revealed the command through the Holy Spirit. It is also in the same context that Luke recorded in his gospel of the words of Jesus: *"For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say"* (Luke 12:12).

Given the commandment: The charge Jesus made was particularly to the Apostles He called. The word *"apostle"* literally means "sent ones" whom Jesus chose beforehand to fulfill His great commission. They were to be His missionaries, a select group of servants sent unto the ends of the world. This was not an easy task, they needed the Holy Spirit to fulfill the work they were commissioned to do. The command also included to wait for the promise of the Father. This referred to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which was to equip them for the work of preaching and teaching.

Showed an example: Jesus showed many infallible proofs of His resurrection for forty days. This was to convince the Apostles that He was really alive and to instruct them about the work they had to do. He ignited their missionary zeal and united them in holy purpose to be prepared for His control over their lives. The Lord Jesus Christ showed the Holy Spirit's working in His life. He taught and did miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit. So must the Apostles of Christ. The Holy Spirit would help them endure the hard places they had to go and evangelise to even difficult people.

Do you seek the Spirit's guidance and leading in your life? Do you pray for His illumination as you perform the work of the Lord? Do you rely on the Spirit's wisdom to discern the Word of God? Without the Spirit of God no one can discern the words of God.

THOUGHT: Am I able to discern the Word of God?

PRAYER: Father, grant me spiritual discernment that I may be able to judge all things wisely and to obey Thy commands fully.

MONDAY, JULY 6

ACTS 1:5

JOHN 14:16-18

“...for he dwelleth with you,
and shall be in you.”

PROMISED BAPTISM

Many Christians today seek for a “second” baptism, a post-conversion experience to confirm that they are truly born-again believers. They say, “I was baptised by the Holy Spirit and after a series of tutoring I was able to speak in tongues!” However, the book of Acts makes no mention of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit of God does not baptise but Christ.

Baptism with water: John the Baptist’s main mission was to announce the coming of the Messiah. In John 1:29, he pointed to Jesus as the “*Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” His was the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit: The promise was for the disciples to be baptised with the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:5) which is described as the Holy Spirit coming upon the believer. It was further clarified in Acts 2:4 as a filling with the Holy Spirit.

The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were already indwelt with the Spirit since they were already believers. Although Acts 1:5 appears to have the idea of a second baptism or a second blessing, the baptism mentioned among the disciples of Christ was about the filling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4 tells us that they were “*filled*” with the Holy Spirit. “This baptismal filling of the Spirit was not for salvation, but for service” (Khoo). The purpose of Jesus Christ’s promise to send the Holy Spirit was to instruct them in the doctrines they were to proclaim to the people and that they might be strengthened to withstand the conflicts which they would face. It is not a second baptism nor the gibberish and ecstatic utterances of the so-called “tongue-speaking” of today’s Charismatics. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit who would enable Christians to witness both near and far.

Have you truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you filled with the Spirit of God? Are you able to speak forth the gospel of Jesus Christ to others?

THOUGHT: Am I baptised with the Holy Ghost?

PRAYER: Father, please fill me with Thy Holy Spirit and let Him abide with me forever.

TUESDAY, JULY 7

ACTS 1:6-7

LUKE 1:32

“...and the Lord God shall give unto him
the throne of his father David.”

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The LORD promised David: “*And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever*” (2 Sam 7:12-13, 16).

The inquiry: The disciples asked when the restoration of Israel’s Kingdom would be. The Lord did not chide them for they were right to expect the Kingdom of Israel. Rev Timothy Tow said that the great commission is an unfinished commission. Yet, it will be consummated when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom. When He returns again to this earth, He will sit on the throne of His father David in the city of Jerusalem and will rule on this earth for a thousand years!

The answer: It was clear that they needed to know not when, but what to do while awaiting for this Kingdom. “*I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah*” (Ps 89:3-4, 27-29, 34-37). The first coming of Christ was already a sure proof of the restoration.

Will you be part of this Kingdom on earth? Will you reign with Christ when He comes again to sit on the throne of His father David?

THOUGHT: Do I acknowledge Jesus Christ as my King?

PRAYER: O God my Father, preserve me unto the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King, whom Thou hast appointed to sit on the throne of His father David in the millennial kingdom.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

ACTS 1:8

MARK 16:15-16

“...Go ye into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature...”

THE COMMISSION

The disciples received the Great Commission and they fulfilled what was commissioned to them. The Apostles were charged to preach in God's power and in God's Name. As they were appointed as the Lord's ambassadors, they must learn to renounce their reliance on their own strength and put all their trust in the power of God. What they needed for their missionary work was the power that comes from on high.

You shall receive power: The goodness of God is highlighted when He empowered His Apostles (as Jesus called this first batch of disciples). They were promised that it is He who will make them fishers of men. *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained”* (John 15:26-27, 20:21-23).

Ye shall be my witnesses: The word “witness” in Greek has the idea of martyrdom, as one who tells what he believes, even though it may result in his being killed for it. *“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”* (Luke 24:46-49).

Am I empowered by God to be a witness for Him? Am I willing to risk my life for the gospel's sake? Do I know that this is my commission as a blood-bought child of God?

THOUGHT: Am I fully surrendered to the power of God?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, help me to be faithful to Thy Great Commission and to go wherever Thou wantest me to go in order to preach the gospel to every creature.

THURSDAY, JULY 9

ACTS 1:9-11

2 PETER 3:8-9

*“The Lord is not slack
concerning his promise,
as some men count slackness...”*

COMING SOON

The great distance between God and man necessitates the divine to descend to the realm of man. The Lord Jesus Christ bridged the immeasurable gap between the Creator and His creature. As He gave Himself to save His people from their sins, He ascended back to the Father to prepare a place for you and me.

His Ascension: The angels witnessed His ascension. Jesus ascended before the very eyes of the disciples, that they be not deceived. They stood there beholding His ascension until He was gone out of their sight.

His Return: The heavenly messengers in Acts 1:11 assured the disciples that their Lord will surely return in glory *“in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”* There are many cult leaders today who claim to be “the second coming Christ”! This shows a total ignorance of the Scriptures and is therefore of the Devil. So many are deceived. I pray you are not one of those who gullibly swallow the lies of these false Christs! Did not Christ Himself say, *“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before”* (Matt 24:23-25). More than two thousand years have passed and many are still doubting the promise of His second coming. Even during Peter’s time there were skeptics already who said, *“Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet 3:4, 9).

Are you prepared for Jesus’ soon return? When He comes, He will come as a thief in the night. Nobody knows when, it could be today!

THOUGHT: Am I anticipating to see my Saviour face to face?

PRAYER: Loving Father in heaven, help me not be slack in my service for Thee and grant me longsuffering for those who are perishing and needing repentance.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

ACTS 1:12-14

1 JOHN 4:11-13

*“Beloved, if God so loved us,
we ought also to love one another.”*

WITH ONE ACCORD

While the Apostles were waiting, they were looking out for one another, caring for one another. They were not pursuing their own ambitions. They had a foretaste of the Kingdom of God while waiting for His coming. They loved one another as a manifestation of their love for God. *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit”* (1 John 4:11-13).

They returned together: They went back to Jerusalem as instructed. A Sabbath day’s journey is about one kilometer in distance. They were in one accord in their actions as they were obedient and submissive to the direction of God.

They abode together: They stayed in a place called the upper room, a place where they could temporarily lodge. Luke identified the eleven Apostles who were there, still intact except for Judas Iscariot. They were united, trusting in the promise of Jesus.

These all continued *“with one accord”* which means they persisted with their activities in agreement, unanimously with one purpose of mind. These included prayer and supplication. Their trust and confidence in God did not fade nor wane even when Jesus was no longer physically present with them. They had learned from the Lord Himself the importance of prayer. *“And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation”* (Luke 22:40, 46). There was also supplication, a form of prayer requesting or pleading with urgency based on presumed need.

Can you live with one accord together with your brethren in the church? Are you able to fellowship with them as you co-labour in the work of the Lord?

THOUGHT: Am I able to bear with the failures of my brethren?

PRAYER: Our Father, Lord in heaven, help me to understand Thy great love for me and please give me a heart able to love others as Thou hast loved me in many wonderful ways.

SATURDAY, JULY 11

ACTS 1:15-20

MATTHEW 19:28

“...ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones,
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

SCRIPTURES FULFILLED

The first Scriptural reference about Judas was his appointment to discipleship (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). As a disciple, he was one of those who had the role of being Christ's special messenger. As an Apostle, he was specially selected, out of the multitude of Jesus' disciples, to be one of His constant companions and heralds to proclaim to men the kingdom of God. As discipleship had to precede apostleship, it is believed that there were qualities in Judas that were on par with the other Apostles.

Have been fulfilled: Judas, one of the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, had yet to become an apostate. How he departed from his Master is enigmatic. He had experienced the grace of God in the most intimate way. In spite of the absence of deep grace in his own heart, he was used as an agent in the promotion of the work of grace in the hearts of others. Indeed, he was so near, yet so very far! It is noteworthy that the cause and source of so great a blindness was his love for money. His eyes were fixed on jewels, not Jesus. He valued more of the temporal needs of man rather than eternal concerns. As the Apostles said, “*Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place*” (Acts 1:25), which is hell and eternal destruction.

Continue to be fulfilled: The scriptures must be fulfilled for it cannot be broken. It is established and forever settled. As it has been foretold that there are twelve Apostles whom the Lord appoints, therefore one must be added to them to replace Judas. Psalm 69:25 says, “*Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.*” The treachery of Judas Iscariot was under God's decree. It does not, however, excuse Judas for the evil he has done, he was accountable for his own actions.

Do you believe in the fulfilment of all the prophecies and promises in the Scriptures? Do you know that some have been fulfilled in the past and all others will be fulfilled in the future?

THOUGHT: Do I believe every word of the Bible?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to believe every jot and tittle of Thy Word that I might continue to follow Thee, and endure unto the end.

THE APOSTLE'S QUALIFICATION

What is an apostle? The Greek word *apostolos* signifies “a messenger,” or the “one sent.” It is also used in a much higher and more emphatic sense, implying a divine commission in the one sent, first of the Lord Himself and then of the twelve disciples whom He chose to be with Him during the time of His ministry on earth.

Have companied with: Peter took the charge from Scripture that one should take the place of Judas. The qualification is hereby prescribed: He was to be one who had companied with the disciples all the time that the Lord Jesus was with them. This means that he must have been a member of the “band of disciples.” He must have seen, heard and experienced being with Jesus. Thus, an important criterion was the direct and immediate commissioning to the office by Christ Himself. And God had His purposes when “...*he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Eph 4:11-13).

Have companied when: The time was given in Acts 1:22: “*Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us...*” And he must also “*be a witness with us of his resurrection.*” This man would function as a witness to the fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Based on these mentioned qualifications, no one today can qualify to be an Apostle. But why should one be so ambitious as to desire the title “Apostle” when we have equally important work to do? We have important roles in our economy as Christians, we are all in the royal priesthood and have been indwelt by the Spirit of God to do His will.

Are you fulfilling the Lord's appointed role for you in your church? Are you giving your best to this service that you are called into? Have you consecrated yourself to the holy service of God?

THOUGHT: Am I qualified to serve the Lord?

PRAYER: O Master, grant me the strength to fulfil my tasks.

MONDAY, JULY 13

ACTS 1:23-26

PROVERBS 16:33

“...the whole disposing thereof
is of the LORD.”

GOD’S OMNISCIENCE

The casting of lots was a practice in the Old Testament to determine God’s will in difficult matters. As Solomon wrote, “*The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD*” (Prov 16:33), and “*The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty*” (Prov 18:18). So the land of Canaan was divided by lot unto the children of Israel (Num 26:55; Josh 18:5, 10).

They appointed: There were two qualified disciples who were presented to replace Judas: “*Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias*” (Acts 1:23). Since they had to choose only one, they prayed and sought God’s judgment over the two.

They prayed: One important thing we must acknowledge is that they did not cast lots frivolously, but prayed earnestly for the will of God. They entrusted to the Lord the process of identifying according to His special providence. Since the discerning of spirits comes from the Lord, they prayed that God would show His direction and purposes in identifying the chosen servant.

They gave forth: They cast their lots, that it might be known through the hearts of men whom God chose. They cast in order to determine the judgment of God over the two men. Rev Timothy Tow gave a contemporary example of “an episode in the Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Campaign in Manchuria at which Andrew Gih and John Sung the two leaders were invited to several places to speak, in order to resolve who was to go to which, they resorted to lot casting. God is in lot casting for good.” After much prayer, lot casting may be resorted to in making a crucial decision between two equals.

Are you trusting in God’s providential hand in deciding crucial matters in your life? Do you sincerely pray and seek God’s judgment over them? Are you willing to obey whatever God’s will is for you?

THOUGHT: Do I know that my Lord is omniscient?

PRAYER: Our all-wise God, please give me the heart to fully trust in Thee who knows all things before the foundations of this world and even until eternity.

TUESDAY, JULY 14
ACTS 2:1
DEUTERONOMY 16:9-12

“...keep the feast of weeks
unto the LORD thy God with
a tribute of a freewill offering...”

PENTECOST

Pentecost is the Jewish Feast of Harvest (or the Feast of the Ingathering) held on the fiftieth day after the Passover. This is one of the three festivals that all Jewish males must attend in Jerusalem. The Greek word *pentekoste* means fiftieth and refers to the number of days after the Passover festival (Deut 16:9-12). The Passover festival (on the second Sabbath of the year) is to commemorate Israel's exodus from Egypt. On the Passover, the Lord's death, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, is typified. During the Pentecost, “the wheat was then also nearly everywhere harvested (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Numbers 28:26), and the general character of the festival was that of a harvest-home celebration” (ISBE). The people come before the LORD to express their thanksgiving.

The day: This is a joyous occasion for the Jews. It was instituted to remind the people of God's absolute dominion over His people. They have to offer the firstfruits of their harvest to God. They express their thanksgiving to God for the provisions received throughout the year and renew their commitment to Him. The people gather for this thanksgiving event of Pentecost at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem to thank God for the harvest.

The mind: The phrase “*with one accord*” is used to describe their coming together in one place. The superfluity of the phrase is an expression of their one-mindedness in Christ. The expression “*all with one accord in one place,*” especially in the original language, is a most striking one and points to perfect unity and unanimity of heart, thought, and purpose (Walker). This is what is most lacking in Christian churches today. There is so much disunity in the hearts of professed believers because the world has influenced them to think only of their own good and not for the glory of God.

Do you keep the holy day of God with a holy heart and mind? Are you spending the Lord's Day for Him alone and not for the world nor the pleasures of it? Do you rejoice in His holy days?

THOUGHT: Am I keeping my Lord's Day holy?

PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, please show me how I should commemorate the holy days for Thy glory.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

ACTS 2:2-4

JOHN 3:7-8

*“...thou hearest the sound thereof,
but canst not tell whence it cometh...”*

SIGNS FROM HEAVEN

It was on Pentecost, when a great multitude was in Jerusalem, that this miracle (described in Acts 2:2-4) happened. God had a purpose for gathering the Jews from different nations speaking different languages. It was through this miracle that the gospel of Christ was spread abroad. His decree is always perfect and right. This is most reassuring for believers who know and understand the sovereignty of God.

The sound: The sound was from heaven, not from the people. The sound was like a rushing mighty wind. The “*wind*” in the Scripture is one of the emblems of the Holy Spirit. There was no physical wind that came from heaven but only the sound which filled the Upper Room. It was a mysterious phenomenon for there was no motion in the air, and yet the sound was as though a hurricane was raging.

The cloven tongues: This was followed by the cloven and fiery tongues which appeared and sat upon them. The shape of the tongues was as the figure and shape of a dove which came down upon Christ (John 1:32). “It had a signification agreeable to the office and nature of Christ, so God did now make choice of a sign which might be agreeable to the thing signified, namely, that it might show such effect and working of the Holy Ghost in the apostles as followed afterward” (Calvin). It is not said that the tongues were of fire, but only that they resembled tongues of fire. There was no physical fire in this verse. It sat upon them means that the power of the Holy Spirit had come to abide in each one of them, and they started to speak in languages. The words were given to them by the Spirit. This was the idea of filling, where the Spirit did not just influence them to speak but each disciple was under the control of the Spirit. The languages (or tongues) spoken were described as understood by those who heard them, Jews and strangers.

Are you filled with the Spirit that you are empowered to speak His Word?

THOUGHT: Am I approved of God to receive His power?

PRAYER: Our Almighty God, fill me with Thy Holy Spirit that I may boldly witness for Thee.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

ACTS 2:5-11

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33

*“For God is not the author of confusion,
but of peace...”*

THEY HEARD WORDS

Based on Acts 2:9-11, there were in Jerusalem, people from at least sixteen countries, as represented by their languages. With the two symbols manifesting the presence of the Holy Spirit, the powerful work of God is highlighted. The immeasurable power of God could grant ordinary people a supernatural ability to proclaim the gospel.

They heard: Although Greek was the official language most of the people spoke in their local dialects. The people were amazed and bewildered when they heard the disciples speaking in the other people’s dialects. We have to remember that the Apostles (as revealed in the gospels) never went out of their country to learn foreign languages. They were not capable of speaking the languages and dialects of the various countries represented in Jerusalem that day. This was God’s way of dispelling the curse of Babel where He confounded the language of the people and they became unable to understand one another’s speech.

Their dialect: The news of the disciples speaking in other tongues “*was noised abroad*” (Acts 2:6). The words “*language*” (Acts 2:6) and “*tongue*” (Acts 2:8) have the same Greek word which means “*dialect*.” The voices of the disciples were audible and attracted the attention of many people around. As they were heard from a distance they were probably either loud or the news of the miracle was quickly passed on to others in the city. In any case, the news spread like wildfire. The gift of tongue is the ability of the evangelist to utter words in a foreign language for people to freely comprehend the truth of God’s Word. This speaking of tongues was given so that the hearers may know the saving grace of God.

Do you believe that tongue-speaking refers to the speaking of ecstatic and gibberish words which no one understands? Don’t you think it is contrary to the Scriptures?

THOUGHT: Do I know the biblical meaning of tongue-speaking?

PRAYER: O Father in heaven, Thy works are given clearly and openly before men, keep me away from the deceptions of the enemy.

FRIDAY, JULY 17

ACTS 2:11-12

LUKE 1:48-52

*“For he that is mighty
hath done to me great things...”*

WORKS IN WORDS

There are two things which caused the hearers to wonder. First, the Apostles were known to be ignorant and uneducated people who had not gone through Rabbinical schools in order to utter the wonderful works of God with deep and glorious understanding. The second is that they learned to speak the new dialects suddenly and they understood them clearly!

The message: What were “*the wonderful works of God*” (Acts 2:11)? These were the mighty works seen in the passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. It must have included also the “mighty works” of God in redeeming a people and sending the Holy Ghost to indwell the believers. Indeed, they were not just uttering the mighty things that God had done, but they were demonstrating the wonderful works of God in their very lives.

The responses: They “*were all amazed*” (Acts 2:12). To hear their own languages from the mouths of obviously uneducated people was a matter of astonishment to them. The reactions of the people proved to us that they understood what was spoken. It is contrary to what the Charismatics believe today. Their tongue-speaking is not what the Bible describes in this passage. Their tongue-speaking is not understood even by the speaker. This was not the case in the past for Luke described that they were speaking “*the wonderful works of God*” (Acts 2:11). The immediate consequence was opposition, but it kept them wondering. Many questioned and were in doubt. After their amazement, a continued pondering pricked their minds and hearts. They asked for its meaning. For some that was a good indication, for they were looking for answers to what they have seen and heard.

Do you look at the academic qualifications of people who teach you the Word of God? Are you proclaiming the wonderful works of God with your words and actions?

THOUGHT: Am I humble enough to receive God’s Word?

PRAYER: Holy Triune God, I thank Thee for the wonderful works that Thou hast wrought in the midst of this sinful and wicked world which continues to defy and rebel against Thee.

SATURDAY, JULY 18

ACTS 2:13

2 TIMOTHY 3:12

“...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

MOCKERY

Even from the beginning, the enemies had been mocking the works of God. They mocked the prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the Lord in the New. They were not able to hear and believe for their hearts were hardened and their eyes blinded. This will continue, as Peter taught us that there will be scoffers in the last days.

There were mockers: Instead of humbling themselves to accept the great works of God, which they could not fathom, they were instead mocking. They represented a group of people who opposed every good work of God. They despised people and were hostile to those who represented Christ. Read the Lord Jesus' warning to His disciples in Matthew 10:22.

They were false accusers: They discounted the miracle as a manifestation of the sinful vice of drinking. Literally, the new wine was pointed out as the cause of their strange abilities. They were not able to recognise it as God's supernatural work. When they mocked, they looked for justification that they were right and they associated it with what they could imagine. They were not willing and could not see the hand of God in the miracles for they were blind and destitute of God's grace.

Be assured, as a true believer, of your eternal destiny, even though people may mock at you. This kind of attitude propels us to continue working for the Lord. You must accept their mockery or else you will feel discouraged and depressed. Many believers today are immobilized in their evangelistic fervour because of the fear of humiliation. Every Christian must understand that the mockers are most pitiful for they will soon suffer the consequence of their sins. We should not be hindered to do that which is for their good!

Are you prepared to be mocked because of your faith? Are you ready for any persecution (for the sake of Christ) that may come?

THOUGHT: Am I willing to live a godly life for Jesus?

PRAYER: Father of glory, give me the grace to continually sound forth the gospel of Christ in the midst of a mocking world.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 19

ACTS 2:14-15

LUKE 22:31-32

*"But I have prayed for thee,
that thy faith fail not..."*

STAND UP FOR JESUS

Peter, who denied his Lord the night before the crucifixion, was now brave and bold to preach the Word! He who was a coward was now courageous to speak for his Lord. Peter lifted up his voice so that he could be heard by the multitude. This is the result of a man filled with the Spirit of God. Peter was fully controlled by the Spirit and he was no more mindful of his limitations but he fully trusted in God's power. He was not fearful to speak before thousands of people who had gone to the Rabbinical schools. In such a homiletic "swimming pool," Peter had to rely on the Holy Spirit alone for his message.

Stand up: Peter stood up with the eleven. The posture shows courage and boldness in the defense of what God had done for them. The rest of the Apostles were there to concur with what Peter would say. They were all filled with the Spirit and, with conviction, showed with their faces that they were one with their speaker. They stood with him and whatever Peter said, those were the same words that could have come from them if they were to speak also.

Speak up: Peter wanted to correct the false accusations. He refuted the false opinion that the disciples were drunk. This rebuff is upon a probable argument because men do not get drunk so early in the morning. He wanted to tell them the truth so he lifted up his voice in order to be heard. A voice of conviction is not a low, cold and hesitant voice. Peter made his words heard for the people to understand. It is useless to show courage and bravery without the words reaching the hearts of the hearers. Peter gave a good homiletical instruction: let your words be loud and clear to the hearers! Peter then addressed the people, the Judeans and the residents of Jerusalem. He invited them to give attention to his words as those were important for them not only to know the reason for the miracle but above all to know Jesus Christ in their lives.

Do you stand up for the Lord when His words and works are mocked by the world? Do you speak up on His behalf?

THOUGHT: Am I bold enough to stand up and speak up for Jesus?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, equip me with wisdom and courage to tell others of the truth, even in the midst of mockers and persecutors.

MONDAY, JULY 20
ACTS 2:16-21
JOEL 2:28-29

*"...I will pour out my spirit
upon all flesh; and your sons
and your daughters shall prophesy..."*

THE PROPHECY

The Holy Spirit gives utterance to those who submit to His will and purposes. During the Pentecost, there was the inauguration of God's powerful conversion of souls who were still in darkness. "From Peter to this day, the church has experienced seasons of such blessings, from time to time, in every nation, so that souls are reaped as in a great harvest" (Rev Tow). Although, it took hundreds of years to be fulfilled, the Lord's timing is never late or too early, it is always perfect, according to His sovereign will.

The prophecy: This was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in Joel 2:28-29: *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."* Joel called it the great day, after that the Son of God began to be revealed in the flesh, that He may lead us into the fulfillment of God's kingdom.

The purpose: This was a call for people to come and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. He declared that the great day had begun and judgment will surely come. Peter affirmed this in his epistle saying, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Pet 3:9-10). *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Rom 10:13) was the Apostle Paul's powerful acclamation of Jesus Christ as the only way to the Kingdom of God. This is invoking the name of Christ whose name alone has the power to save.

Are you reading the Old Testament as well as the New Testament? Do you see how the prophecies in the OT are fulfilled in the NT?

THOUGHT: Do I believe in the prophecies of the Old Testament?

PRAYER: Victorious Father in heaven, Thou hast ordained the miracles wrought by Thy servants, help me to believe them.

TUESDAY, JULY 21

ACTS 2:22-24

LUKE 18:31-34

*“And they shall scourge him,
and put him to death:
and the third day he shall rise again.”*

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Peter's address is now a wider calling to the people of Israel, both native and foreign Jews. He introduced the man approved of God. He was anointed, given and fulfilled all the demands of the Father. He is now received of God being delivered by God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Approved: Peter called for the people to remember a man approved of God. His works of wonders and words of comfort were not hidden from the people. He explained that Jesus' great suffering and cruel death on the cross were all according to the decree of the Father. What transpired were all foreknown of God and nothing happened by chance or by man's charge. Jesus' resurrection from the dead was the greater proof of His divine purpose of condescending to earth. It was prophesied in the Old Testament and was fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Delivered: The Lord Jesus was handed over to the lawless which included the Jewish Council and the Romans, as determined by the foreknowledge of the Father. Judas betrayed Him, but it was God's perfect plan for the Lord Jesus to go under the mocking and murderous hands of the Romans. It was foreordained that He must go to the cross for you and for me. It was all because of God's redemptive plan for man that Christ had to go through all this.

Raised: Jesus was raised up. This refers to His resurrection. Death had no power over Him. The Lord Jesus had to die, for it was necessary for His resurrection. The death and the grave were a prelude to His victory over death. The assurance of our salvation is not only based on the perfect life and sacrificial death of our Lord and Saviour, but the absolute fact of His resurrection.

Are you convinced of the truthfulness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Will you tell this great news to others?

THOUGHT: Am I able to comprehend the sacrifice of Jesus for me?

PRAYER: Almighty Father, I thank Thee for making me a part of Thy chosen people, whom Thou hast foreknown.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22
ACTS 2:25-28
PSALM 16:8-11

*“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One
to see corruption.”*

DAVID’S MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Christ came into this world as the God-man. Yet, the Scripture describes Him in human terms in order that we (who know little of the divine realm) can understand. When David spoke of the Messiah in words such as are used for ordinary man, he did not demote the Lord to a lower level but showed His condescension that we who are unable to grasp higher things will at least partake of some nuggets of the wisdom of God. It is man’s foolish and sinful mind that tries to assign the Lord Jesus as a lesser God or even god. This is blasphemy!

Reassured: Acts 2:25-28 records that Peter made reference to Psalm 16:8-11 where David spoke of his constant fellowship with and trust in the Lord. God is always at David’s right hand, implying that he looked to God as his guard and guide, and thus he needed not be troubled. (Note: In the battlefield, a soldier covers the man on his left with his shield, thus guarding him. In the court of justice, the advocate stands on his client’s right side in pleading his client’s cause.)

Rejoiced: David spoke of a glad heart (Ps 16:9), reflecting his hope in God: his flesh was assured of the promised resurrection as the Father decreed it. It was a full assurance of the glorious resurrection to come. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:2).

Raised: It is therefore an incorrect understanding that Jesus went to hell, for Luke knew how the Lord described that nobody from there could move to heaven. The word *“hades”* was used by Luke to translate the Hebrew word *“Sheol”* which also means grave. The context tells us that Peter was talking about the corruption of the body of Christ which had no power over Him because He rose from the grave the third day.

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as 100% God and 100% man?

THOUGHT: Am I assured of the hope of the resurrection?

PRAYER: Our Father, the Giver of life, I thank Thee for giving us Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead. And I who believe in Him will also rise again at the last day.

THURSDAY, JULY 23

ACTS 2:29-36

2 SAMUEL 7:12-13

“...and I will stablish the throne
of his kingdom for ever.”

THE SON OF DAVID

David is described as a man after God's own heart. Peter referred to him in this passage (Acts 2:29-36) as a patriarch, considered as one of the great fathers of the Jews. The Messiah is prophesied to come as the “*Son of David*.” Prophecies in the Old Testament are unfolded in the New Testament to prove that indeed the Bible is no ordinary book but of Divine origin being inspired by God. We must believe the prophecies of the New Testament for we are presented with many infallible proofs of prophecies established by not only being of David but also by the many prophets in the past.

David knew: David knew that God would fulfil His promise of a son in his lineage who would be raised up to sit in his throne forever. That son is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

David saw: David trusted that the seed of his lineage would overcome death. “*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*” (Ps 16:10). This reference of the resurrection of the Christ was seen by David over a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. Peter then affirmed that he was one of the many witnesses of the resurrection of Christ which David prophesied.

David claimed: Acts 2:30 recorded that Peter quoted a verse from another Messianic Psalm: “*The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*” (Ps 110:1). This is with reference to Jesus Christ who is anointed to sit on the throne of David. Peter concluded that God made Jesus of Nazareth (who was crucified, buried and resurrected) as both Lord, equal to the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and the Messiah, whom the Father anointed to come and reign on this earth and in His Kingdom forevermore.

Do you see Jesus as the King who will reign on earth for a thousand years?
Do you worship Him equally as Jehovah God of the Old Testament?

THOUGHT: Am I seeing Jesus Christ both in the OT and NT?

PRAYER: Father of mercies and abundant grace, help my unbelief and let me trust in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation.

FRIDAY, JULY 24

ACTS 2:37-40

MATTHEW 4:17

“Repent ye:
for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

REPENTANCE AND BAPTISM

What must I do to be saved? As natural man who knows not the way, the work that he must do to be saved is always the question. Man's corrupt minds have that default system to ask what they must do to be saved.

Pricked: Upon hearing the words of Peter, the hearers' consciences were pierced thoroughly or agitated violently. It must have been the Holy Spirit pricking their hearts. The Jews could not argue against Peter. They knew the truth of the words of their patriarch David. They acknowledged that their only reward was nothing but condemnation, and so they asked Peter, “*What shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37).

Prompted: Peter showed them the way to Christ which is only through repentance and faith. Peter mentioned repentance first as they needed to acknowledge their sins before God. The term “repentance” denotes a change of heart, mind and will. It affects the life, behavior and conduct of the person. By a changed heart and mind that knew no hope except condemnation because of sin, the person puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the hearers believed, they needed to be baptised as a sign and seal of the inward grace working in their lives. The pricking of the heart is God's inward call unto those whom He has chosen. For as many as the Lord will call will believe! The remission of their sins is not a mechanical conferment of forgiveness through the ceremony of baptism. Water baptism is a sign and seal, to the faithful recipient, of the forgiveness of his sins in Christ by faith alone!

Promised: It was to the Jews that the promise of salvation was first given. Though the blessing was first granted to Israel, Abraham's seed would be a blessing to the whole earth. Thank God, the Lord also called the Gentiles, for as many as He had chosen He would call and justify!

Have you believed in Jesus? Have you repented of your sins? Is there the fruit of repentance manifested by the change of heart, mind and will?

THOUGHT: Am I a new creation in Christ?

PRAYER: Father, may I repent and believe in Jesus.

SATURDAY, JULY 25
ACTS 2:41-42
2 TIMOTHY 3:12-17

*“But continue thou in the things
which thou hast learned
and hast been assured of...”*

STEADFAST

Although my experience in the ministry is short, yet I have already witnessed so many who professed Jesus Christ and were baptised but later left the faith, and are gone like a vapour. You may have also seen this kind of so-called Christians who faithfully attended the Catechism, Basic Bible Knowledge Class, Baptismal Class, etc. After baptism, a minority may last for a few years, but the majority lasts only a few months, if not weeks. Acts 2:41-42 clarifies the many false claims that baptism is required for one to be saved. Baptism is a confirmation that a person has believed. It is not an added requirement for him to secure life eternal.

Received: Three thousand souls believed; and they *“gladly received his word”* (Acts 2:41). These were the men whose hearts were pricked by the Spirit and they found themselves worthy of God’s judgment. So they inquired of Peter as to what they must do to be saved. Peter replied that they must repent and be baptised. Those who believed the words of Peter, whom the Spirit of God inwardly called, came to be baptised.

Baptised: The response of those who were baptised showed their genuine conversion: they continued *“stedfastly”* with the Apostles. They truly believed and they submitted themselves for baptism. Baptism does not save. They were baptised as a sign and seal of the inward grace of salvation in their lives.

Continued: However, the real test is not in giving themselves for water baptism. Luke recorded that they (who received and were baptised) continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the commemoration of the Lord’s Supper and in actively joining their prayer meetings. The endurance of a person living a Christ-like life is the sign of true conversion.

Do you know that baptism cannot save you? Do you also know that baptism is necessary to fulfill all righteousness?

THOUGHT: Am I trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the persevering grace to continue to be stedfast in my pilgrim journey on earth, to abide always in Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Saviour.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 26
ACTS 2:43-47
1 JOHN 3:16-18

*“...let us not love in word,
neither in tongue;
but in deed and in truth.”*

“COMMONISM”

There was fear but there was also the gracious hand of God to authenticate the message of the Apostles by many wonders and signs. The miracles were God's stamp on their ministry. As they continued to praise and glorify God in their midst, He was pleased to add to the church daily such as should be saved.

Fear of the Lord: Through the teaching and preaching of God's Word the church remained fearful of the Lord. This fear was reverential as well as a trembling before God who is the Judge of all. As they saw many of the miraculous works of the Apostles, the more they were convinced that the Apostles were truly of God. This gave them a fearful reverence towards their leaders which caused them to receive their words as God's words.

Love of the Lord: They gathered what they all had and made it common to all, truly manifesting the working of God in their midst. Freshly experiencing the liberty in Christ they sold their belongings and shared them with those in need. What a “commonism” (Jeffrey Khoo)! Indeed, the love of God is shown when Christians love one another. They sold their goods and distributed to everyone who had need. Their love for the Lord was not just seen in the way they treated one another but also in how they praised God in the midst of their assembly.

Increase from the Lord: Our Lord is the best paymaster, not only in material things but also in spiritual provisions especially in bringing more souls into the church. This is an example of how God blessed His church, not as a pattern but in how He responds to people who fear God and love one another. When the Lord added to the church it was not just an increase in the number of members but an increase in the number of believers.

Are we sharing the provisions that God has given us with our needy brethren? Do you do it in love or for a show?

THOUGHT: Am I able to recognise that all I have is all from God?

PRAYER: Father, our great Shepherd, let me see Thy loving hand providing for my needs always. And let me also see myself as an instrument of Thy loving hand to provide for others.

MONDAY, JULY 27

ACTS 3:1

LUKE 11:1

“...one of his disciples said unto him,
Lord, teach us to pray...”

PRAYER

The prayer meeting is a good place to measure the maturity of church members. It is generally observed that mature believers who understand the importance of corporate prayer will always desire to attend the church prayer meeting. May it be the desire of every Christian to join his church prayer meetings for it is by this means that prayers are lifted up to the Father as a body of Christ.

Men of prayer: The Apostles went up into the temple to pray. They were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. From Acts 2:46, it is clear that all the disciples were accustomed daily to resort to the temple for devotion. It had been deeply inculcated in their hearts to pray. They had imbibed this prayerful spirit from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. During their three years of training under Him, they were transformed into men of prayer. They could not but pray for what was necessary in their ministry.

Place of prayer: The place of prayer was the temple. It was the proper place to gather and pray, for Jesus Himself described the temple as “*the house of prayer*” (Luke 19:46). While prayer meetings were held in individual homes (as in Acts 12:12), the corporate prayer meeting is rightly conducted in the church sanctuary. The temple is the “*Father’s house,*” as Jesus said in John 2:16. So it is the place where prayer and supplications are made known to the Father.

Time of prayer: The description of “*the hour of prayer*” (Acts 3:1) indicates they had a set time for prayer. Here, Peter and John were prompt to go to the temple. An “*hour of prayer*” suggested it was a time solely devoted to prayer. The Jews observed three stated hours of prayer, probably based on Psalm 55:17 and Daniel 6:10. These were “*the third hour*” (Acts 2:15, i.e. 9 am), “*the sixth hour*” (Acts 10:9, i.e. 12 pm), and “*the ninth hour*” (Acts 3:1, i.e. 3 pm). They did not do other activities because that was the set prayer meeting time and they must be there.

Are you regularly attending your church prayer meeting? Do you have a regular schedule for personal and family prayers?

THOUGHT: Am I able to live a day without praying to God?

PRAYER: Father, teach me to pray regularly and continually.

TUESDAY, JULY 28
ACTS 3:2-8
MATTHEW 10:5-10

*“Provide neither gold,
nor silver, nor brass in your purses.”*

APOSTOLIC MIRACLE

Another virtue that the disciples learned from the Lord Jesus was His compassion towards the sick. He healed many. Wherever our Lord went, He always had followers: both those who needed healing and those who just wanted to see healing. The loving heart of the Master now appeared in the heart of His disciples.

The impossible condition: Luke described the man as one who had been lame since conception, i.e. he was born lame. This condition is impossible to restore even in today’s best medical or surgical approaches. The lame man’s only means of sustenance was the alms from the people. His healing required power far beyond man’s imagination. It needed a supernatural force to cause the man to walk as he had never experienced walking. The fact that this man was born lame, and so had limbs which were atrophied, enhanced the force of the miracle.

The impossible expectation: Peter and John did not have any medical training and, by human standards, these Apostles had no power whatsoever to restore the lame man. The lame man also did not expect healing from them. He never would have imagined he could be given a normal body. His expectation was just a certain amount of alms, for he had been begging the past forty years! Peter and John plainly told him, *“Silver and gold have I none”* (Acts 3:6). This was the clean and unblameable life of the Apostles. They had not profited from the flock.

The impossible restoration: Peter told the man that they did not have money, but that he could give him what they had, i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ. Then Peter pronounced, *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk”* (Acts 3:6). Luke described specifically how the feet and ankle bones (i.e. the soles of the feet) were strengthened. The healing was instant. The man, without any walking experience, leapt up, stood, walked, and praised God (Acts 3:8)!

Do you believe in the power of God to heal? Do you pray when someone is sick? Do you believe that only God can heal you?

THOUGHT: Do I doubt the healing power of God?

PRAYER: Father, keep me and my family from harm and danger.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

ACTS 3:9-10

LUKE 17:11-19

*“Arise, go thy way:
thy faith hath made thee whole.”*

PRAISING GOD

Many miracle crusades today are done in the name of Jesus Christ. Sadly, they are using His name in vain for theirs are not similar to the biblical accounts. Today’s miracles are fake healings! We should be careful of the modern-day faith healers who are only after our money. These deceivers will receive the greater recompense for they made the people to believe a lie. Let us be content with the promises of God in the Bible. Yes, we should take care of our bodies, but it must be for His glory and honour alone, not for our own sakes!

Seen by all people: The people saw the man (who was born lame) not only walking but also praising the Lord. The result of the miracle brought glory to God. He was not secretive about what happened in his life. He was so full of joy. This was a physical healing of a man who was lame from conception. How about the joy of a man who is a sinner from the womb and is forgiven and cleansed by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? So many today in the church can be classified as secret Christians.

Known by all people: When the miracle was noted, the people recognised the man. He was identified as the one who begged at the Beautiful gate. This showed his continued presence in that place for so long that he had such a title. This was important as the people could then see what a miracle it was.

Wondered at by all people: The people knew the miracle and they were filled with wonder and awe. This incident caught the attention of many. There was no doubt in the minds of those who knew that an authentic miracle had taken place. This is not the same as today’s so-called healing miracles where there is no confirmation. It was obvious the man was born lame, and here he was walking and leaping.

Are you deceived by the healing miracles or deliverance ministries that are only for money? Are you assured of a glorified body as promised to all those who have truly believed in Jesus Christ?

THOUGHT: Do I praise God for the life He has given me?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, Thou knowest my physical limitations. May Thou heal me when I have bodily problems.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

ACTS 3:11-12

JOHN 3:30

*“He must increase,
but I must decrease.”*

GREATLY WONDERING

This passage is most important for both leaders and members of the church. Church leaders can easily be puffed up, and pride can set in. At the same time, church members may have the desire to praise their church leaders above others. This sin of idolatry must be immediately checked to avoid a disastrous chastisement from God because of man-worship.

The Apostles sought: The reaction of the people was to look for the ministers. This was the natural course for they thought Peter and John were responsible for the healing of the lame man. The original language is very graphic, picturing the man (in his gratitude and joy) holding fast and clinging to Peter and John. This was not sheer joy but a heart full of gratitude. Peter and John may have been just channels of God's blessing upon the man, but it is good to recognise whom God uses to help us.

The Apostles admired: The people “*were filled with wonder and amazement*” (Acts 3:10), denoting a great disturbance or distraction of mind arising from wonder or terror. The people of God would naturally seek the ministers who faithfully did God's work. But a warning must be sounded to ministers: they must be quick to point to Christ as the One who has the power.

The Apostles refused: Peter was quick to reprove the people's perception that he and John had healed the man. He told them it was not their power or holiness that led to the lame man's recovery. The people could have suspected they were men of extraordinary powers.

However, later verses show that they refused to rob God of His glory. Man has the tendency to focus on the servants rather than God who gives the power to do the miracle. Ministers and members, take heed lest we fall into the Devil's snare.

Do you see God's hand in everything? Do you admit that medicines and medical procedures are nothing without God's providential hand?

THOUGHT: Do I thank the Lord for the healing of my sicknesses?

PRAYER: Gracious heavenly Father, Thou art the great Healer. May I always recognise Thy loving care over my frail body; and in healing, may I remember to praise and honour Thee.

FRIDAY, JULY 31

ACTS 3:13

JOHN 17:1-2

“...glorify thy Son,
that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

JESUS, THE SON

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came down from His glory above in obedience to the Father's will. It was His own will also to submit to the Father and to live perfectly on this sinful and wicked world, to die the most cruel death and purchase us from eternal damnation. The price He paid was enormous which could only be satisfied by the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God.

Glorified of God: Luke identified the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who is responsible for the healing of the lame man. To glorify Jesus is to give due recognition of who He is. God glorified Jesus for indeed He is worthy. Peter introduced Christ in a way that was easy for the Jews to understand. He mentioned the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob whom he referred to as the One who glorified Jesus Christ. This means the God of the Jews' fathers honoured Jesus, but the Jews delivered Him up to be crucified on the cross.

Delivered up of men: Peter put the blame on the Jews for what happened to Jesus. They delivered the Lord to the Jewish leaders who in turn handed the Lord to the Romans. It is not an easy experience to be betrayed. The Lord Jesus went through such, and we may too.

Denied of justice by men: Peter blamed the Jews for delivering Jesus into the hands of the Romans. The Gospel history shows clearly that Pilate would have set Christ at liberty, but for his fear of the people. This fact is used by Peter to convince his hearers of the enormity of their sin.

Do you realize how much pain and agony our Lord Jesus suffered from birth to His death? Are you thankful He was willing to do it for all of us condemned and guilty sinners?

THOUGHT: Am I thankful always for my salvation?

PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, I praise and thank Thee for sending Thy one and only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world for without Him we all are condemned to the eternal Lake of Fire.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

ACTS 3:14-15

JOHN 1:4-5

*“In him was life;
and the life was the light of men.”*

THE PRINCE OF LIFE

Jesus is called the *“Prince of life”* (Acts 3:15) for truly He is life. The word *“Prince”* also means author, i.e. Jesus is the Author of life. He is the Creator of life and He is also the Giver of life eternal. He is the Prince of life for He has life in Himself. Those who trust in Him, the Prince of life, have the blessed assurance of His bountiful and abundant blessing. Yet, God the Father saw it fit for the Prince of life to die on behalf of us sinners who are actually worthy of eternal condemnation.

They denied Him: The people knowingly denied Him and they actively condemned Him to be crucified. The people were not forced nor deceived, but willingly shouted *“Crucify him, crucify him”* (Luke 23:21). This was their rejection, they who, a short while before this incident, had welcomed Him shouting *“Hosanna”* (John 12:13).

They rejected Him: In exchange, they desired the release of the murderer, Barabbas. Pilate granted them their request to release the thief and killer. The word *“Just”* (Acts 3:14) denotes innocence or one who is free from crime. It is properly used in reference to the law, and refers to one who stands upright in the view of the law, or one who is not chargeable with any crime. In this sense, the Lord Jesus was not only personally innocent, but even before His judges He stood clean and without guilt of any crime.

They killed Him: They killed the Prince of life and they are under the great wrath of God the Father. He is the Creator of all things and yet He died for the creature. But Peter did not end his message with the death of Christ, he emphasized the bodily resurrection of Jesus, an event which he witnessed. Luke recorded this account in Luke 24:12: *“Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”*

Do you realize that you do not have life in yourself? Do you acknowledge that the Lord gave it? And that He can take it away if He so wills?

THOUGHT: Am I living for Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, show me the way to glorify Thee.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 2

ACTS 3:16

MATTHEW 1:21

“...and thou shalt call his name JESUS:
for he shall save his people from their sins.”

JESUS OF NAZARETH

As the name “Jesus” was common in those days in Israel, He is always identified in the Scriptures as Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, died and was buried, and rose again the third day. This description only fits one person. It was not Mary, not even Joseph, who decided on the name “Jesus.” “Jesus” which is Joshua in the Old Testament means “the LORD saves” or Saviour. The name is divinely appointed and was announced by the God-sent angel.

Gives strength: Peter highlighted that it was only through faith in the name of Jesus Christ that the man who was born lame could walk. The word “*strong*” (Acts 3:16) describes physical power granted. It depicts the lame person able to stand on his own and walk. Peter and John did not claim to have contributed to the healing of the lame man. It was purely “*through faith in his name*” (Acts 3:16). The Apostles had done their part through Jesus’ name. No prayer or supplication can reach God’s throne without uttering or pleading in Jesus’ name.

Soundness: “*Perfect soundness*” is just one word in Greek which means “wholeness and entireness in all parts” or “perfect completeness.” The power of Jesus’ name is not limited to easing fever or removing pains. When He heals, the result is perfect soundness. This is a foreshadow of the glorified body which He will give to those who believe in His name. The glorified body will never be injured or diseased, a body perfect for all eternity.

Christians must desire to have the strength of body and soundness of mind. With good health we can serve Him better. We have to take care of our physical bodies not for our own pleasure but for labour to the glory of the Lord. Indulging in the worldly lifestyle of banquet and booze is damaging to our physical body. The desire to live for another year or more must be driven by a longing to further serve the Lord.

Have you personally received Jesus of Nazareth as your Lord and Saviour? Do you know that He is the only source of strength and soundness of life?

THOUGHT: Am I a living sacrifice for the Lord?

PRAYER: Father of glory, let me live to serve Thee wholeheartedly.

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

ACTS 3:17-18

LUKE 24:17-26

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”

SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

The sufferings of Christ are vividly described in Isaiah 53:3-5, *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

Man’s ignorance: Peter saw the depravity of man that led the people to persecute the Lord of glory. They were ignorant of the Scriptures and so the Son of God was delivered to the Romans to be slain, wittingly and willingly. However, this is not to excuse them that they did it out of ignorance. They were still accountable for the evil actions they did against God. Peter did not try to lighten his speech to please the people. He showed them the truth. Their ignorance was due to their blindness because of sin. Their wickedness abounded because they were spiritually dead. It was their error and blind zeal that caused them to do such wickedness. Peter made mention of their sin of denying Christ and the extinguishing of the grace of God upon them.

God’s ordinance: It was announced beforehand through the mouths of the prophets. It was also referred to in the “Protoevangelion,” the gospel first preached by none other than God Himself after the fall of Adam. It is God’s decree for Jesus to become our substitute on the cross that we be granted forgiveness of our sins and deliverance from eternal condemnation in the Lake of Fire. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8).

Can you comprehend the extent of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ just for you to be freed from the wrath of God upon sinners? What is your response to such immeasurable love for you?

THOUGHT: Do I love Jesus as much as I should?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, I thank Thee for sending Jesus to us.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

ACTS 3:19-21

MATTHEW 3:7-10

*“Bring forth therefore
fruits meet for repentance...”*

REPENT AND BE CONVERTED

The Hebrew word (in the Old Testament) translated as “repent” signifies to “lament” or “grieve.” The Greek word *metanoeo* expresses the true New Testament idea of the spiritual change implied in a sinner’s return to God. This Greek term signifies to have another mind, to change the opinion or purpose with regard to sin (ISBE).

Sins blotted out: To repent is to think differently or to have a change of mind in one’s perception of sin. The person acknowledges his being a sinner and comes to Jesus Christ through faith in His name, *“in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Eph 1:7).

Jesus comes again: This is the blissful hope of those who repent and are converted. Those who truly believe are robed in Jesus’ righteousness and are anticipating the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”* (Mark 1:15).

Heaven will receive: The word “receive” denotes a completed action. There is the assurance of His reception in heaven. Those who are His through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus are also assured to be received in heaven. The word “restitution” means “restoration to a former state.” This reception in heaven would be after the restoration of the kingdom to Israel where the Lord Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of David and He will reign for a thousand years on earth. *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years”* (Rev 20:4).

Do you have the assurance to reign with Christ in the millennium? Have you secured a place in the Kingdom of God?

THOUGHT: Am I heaven bound?

PRAYER: Father, I repent of my sins and believe in Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5
ACTS 3:22-24
DEUTERONOMY 18:15

*“The LORD thy God will
raise up unto thee a Prophet
from the midst of thee...”*

THE SUPREME PROPHET

Moses prophesied of “a prophet” (Acts 3:22) who would come. The “prophet” referred to here is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the greatest of all the prophets for He is the Omniscient God.

Moses-like Prophet: Thousands of years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ it was already prophesied that God would anoint a Prophet for His people. *“And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”* (Deut 18:17-19).

Kingly Prophet: He is King who is powerful to judge those who remain unrepentant and unconverted in the last day. *“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:46-48).

Greatest Prophet: He is the greatest of the prophets because He is the Son of God. He is the final and living revelation of God to man. Hebrews 1:1-2a says, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son....”*

Do you take heed to the prophecies of the Scriptures? Do you keep and obey God’s Word?

THOUGHT: Am I hearing and believing the prophecies of the Bible?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the heart to hear and heed Thy Word.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6
ACTS 3:25-26
DEUTERONOMY 7:6-11

*“The LORD did not set
his love upon you, nor choose you,
because ye were more...”*

ISRAEL THE CHOSEN

Israel is a blessed nation. God chose it to be the place where the Messiah would come; and He will save not only the Jews but also the Gentiles. Israel had foreknown the Messiah's coming. Through them the prophecies were given concerning Christ. If there was a people who should have been ready and prepared to welcome Jesus at His first coming, it would be the Jews.

The source of blessing: Jesus Christ is the Seed of Abraham, the One who was promised of old to be the blessing throughout all the earth. In Genesis 12:3, the LORD told Abraham that in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed. It was again affirmed in Genesis 18:17-18, *“And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”* What is this blessing? This blessing is God's provision for man's forgiveness of sins. Christians must be content and avoid coveting worldly blessings because the greatest blessing anyone can receive is the blessing of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sample of cleansing: Unto the Jews God first foreshadowed how a man can be cleansed. Jesus' life, death and resurrection had been foretold in the types the Jews saw. They were blessed for they had a foretaste of the Messiah. All the ceremonial laws were foretelling of Christ. He was sent to fulfil the promise of the Father through the oracles in the Old Testament. *“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb 10:7-10).

Are you part of the blessed people because of Israel's Messiah? Do you pray for Israel and her capital city Jerusalem?

THOUGHT: Will I witness the reign of Jesus sitting on David's throne?

PRAYER: Father, give me the heart to pray for Thy chosen nation.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

ACTS 4:1-2

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

“...and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

JESUS' RESURRECTION

In an age when the preaching of the gospel is considered offensive, many Christians have stopped declaring the good news of salvation. Satan's way of preventing people from believing is to threaten the believers with loss of their earthly provisions that they may cease from sharing their faith. But how should Christians evangelise in the midst of a society that says no to evangelism? In some countries which are cold and harsh to Christianity, the people may not outwardly oppose your faith but they may find fault with you in many other ways. However, by the way you conduct yourself, in talking to them, in your prayerful spirit and the unashamed confidence in God's Word, the Lord will open the way for witness. They themselves will ask about “the faith.”

Preached by believers: They were actively preaching the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. No other people had the courage to spread the good news of the resurrection except those who had seen the Lord Jesus Christ alive and were with Him before He ascended back to heaven. It was while they were speaking that they were interrupted, but they could not be stopped. They kept proclaiming the wonderful news of the resurrection of Christ. They kept on telling the people even if they knew that they would be reprimanded by the elders, especially by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. However, the disciples were courageous to continue evangelising and were not prevented by the anticipated opposition.

Grieved the unbelievers: The opposing camp was composed of the religious leaders of their day. They were the top of their hierarchy. They had all the religious powers to stomp on the budding church of Christ. This was Satan's attempt to destroy the beginnings of the church. They did not want the people to hear this truth.

Do you believe in your heart that God has raised Christ from the dead? Do you also hope to be resurrected when the Lord Jesus returns?

THOUGHT: Am I looking forward to the coming of Christ?

PRAYER: O Father, let me be a witness of Christ's resurrection.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

ACTS 4:3-4

LUKE 9:18-27

“...take up his cross daily,
and follow me.”

CROSS BEFORE THE CROWN

There are many hindrances to evangelism. The most common is when it is opposed by secular authorities. The Bible teaches Christians to obey the civil magistrates. However, this principle does not over-rule the great commission from the Lord.

The opposition: The religious leaders were troubled by the Apostles' teachings. The Apostles were telling the people about the resurrection of Jesus, and many came to believe and followed the Apostles. So the religious leaders wanted to stop them. The words “*laid hands*” could refer to beating the Apostles. The leaders kept the Apostles in custody overnight in order to suppress their evangelism.

The compensation: God is working in the midst of His servants. Oppositions and persecutions are always part and parcel of the Christian life. No Christian should shy away from these obstacles. Like the Apostles, they must continue to hold on and endure the challenges they meet. The Lord will richly bless the diligent labourer. The Apostles were opposed by their enemies, but they expected it and they continued to preach the Word. Romans 10:17: “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” As the power of the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of those who heard the Word, many of them believed. Not just many, but very many! Five thousand people got saved. Imagine the loss if the disciples had stopped preaching because of the threat of the Sadducees and other leaders of the Jews.

When opposition comes, Christians should draw closer to the Lord for His guidance. Steps that would discourage other believers in their evangelistic activity must be avoided. We may not see a great number of conversions today, but that should not be the basis for terminating evangelism. Salvation is of the Lord and He will give the increase of the harvest. The Christians' duty is to continue to labour in sowing.

Are you actively involved in the evangelistic effort of your local church? Do you regularly give tracts or share the gospel with others?

THOUGHT: Am I afraid of persecution?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, give me the courage to face oppositions.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 9
ACTS 4:5-7
PSALM 119:41-48

*"I will speak of thy testimonies
also before kings,
and will not be ashamed."*

A GIVEN PRIVILEGE

The Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 10:17-18, *"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."* The Apostles were called to explain by what power they healed the lame man. The fearful interrogation was transformed into an opportunity to declare the very message which the leaders hated.

Caught to testify: The next day, the rulers, elders and scribes of the Jews gathered together in Jerusalem to discuss the miracle. This was not a small event for them; they found the new group of Christ's believers a threat to the old system. No less than the High Priest and other big shots in the Jewish religion attended the meeting. Annas the high priest and his relatives were there. It was not a trivial meeting, it was meant to stop the disciples from preaching. The mention of these names is useful to determine the probable dates of these circumstances. The most important, however, was their offices and influences that were meant to intimidate the Apostles.

Called to testify: The meeting became a great privilege for the Apostles. They did not need to make an appointment to see the leaders! The higher authorities themselves requested their presence and asked the Apostles to testify about the doctrines they were teaching. It may be fearful and intimidating to be brought before great men in the land but if it is the way by which they can hear the Word, we should take the opportunity to tell them boldly and faithfully about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They learnt to rely on the Lord and not on their own flesh. God blessed their witness. They were not passively waiting but actively took every opportunity given of the Lord.

Are you scared to be known as a Christian to your supervisors, managers, principals or CEOs? Are you worried you will be persecuted or lose your job?

THOUGHT: Am I hiding my Christian witness?

PRAYER: O Father, make me a bright light to shine for Thee.

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

ACTS 4:8-10

MATTHEW 10:32

*“Give unto the LORD the glory
due unto his name...”*

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is able to do that which man alone cannot do. He is not just illumined, he is empowered and enabled by God to do that which may be impossible with men.

Empowered: To be cross-examined before the highest governing body of the Jewish nation could have shaken the faith of the Apostles. They could easily have desired to run away and hide from such a situation. But, instead of hiding from the imminent persecution, Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, boldly proclaimed the power of Jesus who had healed the lame man. He courageously addressed the religious leaders and condemned them of the crime they had committed in crucifying the Son of God.

Enabled: Peter declared openly that the healing was through the name of Jesus Christ. He offered that further cross-examination could be done to know the reason for the healing if they still doubted. They wanted to know how and what really happened. That power was by the name of Jesus of Nazareth. To hear such a name challenged the religious leaders of that day for they were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. The Spirit of God enables us to stand for Him in the midst of the enemies. The Lord Jesus warned, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt 10:32-33).

Do you seek the Holy Spirit’s help in witnessing to others? Do you pray for God’s wisdom when you share His Word?

THOUGHT: Have I been consistent in my witnessing?

PRAYER: Father, open my lips to utter words to testify for Thee.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

ACTS 4:11-12

1 CORINTHIANS 3:11

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”

ONLY JESUS SAVES

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11).

No other stone: This was taken from Psalm 118:22 and Jesus also mentioned this in the gospel: *“Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner..”* (Matt 21:42). As the stone, Jesus is the head of the corner. This identifies Him as a larger stone which is used to join the two walls of the building in order to bear the weight and stress of the whole edifice. Without this stone the building is just a pile of bricks that would crumble down when floods or strong winds come. Jesus is the head of the corner. He is the stone refused by the chief builders, a stone placed by God’s own hand in the chief place, that it may support the whole spiritual house of God. The church has only one foundation, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 3:11).

No other name: There is no other name whereby one can have salvation except in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is our perfect substitute and representative. Jesus declared, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). The universalistic doctrine of salvation is now the message of many evangelical churches. They have forgotten the biblical and historical faith in Jesus as the only Saviour of mankind. It is a danger to undermine the exclusivity of the name of Jesus Christ as the only means to heaven. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:36).

Are you trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation? Do you acknowledge that no one can be saved except through faith in Jesus Christ?

THOUGHT: Am I trusting in the biblical Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the faith to believe in Jesus alone.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

ACTS 4:13

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ
he is a new creature...”*

THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS

What are the marks of those who have been with Jesus? Is it piety? Is it religiosity? Is it theological mastery? These may characterize those who truly have been with Jesus but these are not necessarily the result of a person genuinely having been with Jesus.

Confidence seen: They were bold in their speech, speaking freely without hesitation and with conviction of the truth they had learned from Jesus their Master Teacher. The Apostles persevered to propagate the testimony of the Lord Jesus. Based on their academic qualifications and social standing, as assessed by the Jewish religious leaders, the Apostles were of no value. However, their lives were seen with a very different aura, a different lifestyle that could not be simply brushed away. The religious leaders wondered but recognised and perceived that *“they had been with Jesus”* (Acts 4:13). From this account we can see that living a life testifying for Jesus Christ is not just by doing good works and living as morally upright citizens of the society. What convinced the leaders was the Apostles’ confidence in the truth of their salvation in Christ Jesus.

Conviction perceived: People can be easily connected to a tribe or culture or organization by their looks and way of life. The way they talk and behave also reflects the conviction of a people. The Apostles Peter and John were manifesting such because of the words that they spoke. They were focused on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth and no nonsensical words were heard from them. The leaders marvelled how these unlearned people of the law and the writings became so knowledgeable. They wondered how these common men (who on the external seemed to be ignorant and vastly differed from the appearance of the scholars of the day) had exceeded their understanding of theology concerning the Messiah. The only conclusion they could arrive at was that they had been with Jesus Christ.

Do you have the total confidence and conviction in the person and work of Jesus Christ? Are you in the Lord Jesus Christ?

THOUGHT: Do people see me as one who *“had been with Jesus”*?

PRAYER: O Father, may I live my life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13
ACTS 4:14
ROMANS 3:19-20

“...that every mouth may be stopped,
and all the world may
become guilty before God.”

NO COMMENT

The Lord Jesus forewarned His disciples in Luke 21:12-13, “*But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.*” The priests could say nothing against the miracle for the evidence was so clear before their very eyes.

The undeniable proof: The Jewish leaders could not deny the great miracle. “*And beholding the man*” (Acts 4:14) means that they looked with their own naked eyes the very person who was healed. They could not be accused of hearsay or gossip. The man was well-known to all Jerusalem for he had been begging there for years. They could not hide the proof of the miracle. In an even greater miracle, when Jesus raised Lazarus after he had died four days prior, there were many in those days who came to see Lazarus and they would testify of the miracle. In the case of Peter and John, the Jews’ target was to eliminate the Apostles in order that the news about the miracle spread not.

The undebatable fact: They could not bring up any argument against the fact that the man who was once lame was standing tall before their eyes. They could not publicly explain the miracle to turn it into something natural or reasonable. They did not utter any words to deny the miracle, but warned the Apostles to do no further healing. In other words, since they could not explain away the miracle, they strongly warned them not to do it again. They could not stick any blame nor raise any words of accusation against the Apostles. They dared not say something about the Apostles’ lives, for their conversation manifested the light to others and through them the name of the Father in heaven was glorified.

Is your life so unblemished that unbelievers cannot say anything bad about your life in Christ? Is your witness and testimony as a believer worthy of glory to our Father who is in heaven?

THOUGHT: Am I living a sanctified life?

PRAYER: Father, daily convict me of the sins that I commit against Thee.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

ACTS 4:15-17

ROMANS 10:14-15

“...and how shall they believe
in him of whom they have not heard?”

SPEAK NO MORE?

There is no such thing in the Bible as “a secret Christian” where the believer keeps silent about the grace that he has received in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a must for every Christian to speak for the Lord Jesus Christ.

A notable miracle: A miracle had been wrought, and this miracle was known and acknowledged by many. The people in Jerusalem knew that the man who was lame from his birth and had long begged at the Beautiful gate of the temple was now walking and leaping, praising the Lord. There was no way to hide or deny the miracle, he was a well-known beggar and now a well-known believer. Even if they tried to catch and hide him or murder him, the news of the miracle had already spread. The priests would be in a worse situation if they did such.

An undeniable miracle: Many if not all in Jerusalem knew that the man was healed and there was no means to disprove such a self-evident fact. The change was very obvious, that even a child could tell the miraculous change that had happened in the man's life. Man's salvation is a far greater miracle than what this man experienced. It is from death into life, not just spiritual life but an eternal life. This marvellous miracle should be noted by everyone. Salvation should lead to the manifestation of a changed life that can be noted even more than the lame man's physical healing and the fact that he could now walk and leap.

A viral miracle: In order not to cause a widespread conversion of people the Jews commanded the Apostles not to speak or teach about Christ. To this the Apostles answered, “*we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20). They could not gag the mouths of the Apostles who had personally witnessed the power of Christ in their lives. They could not prevent the Apostles from speaking forth and testifying for their Lord and Saviour.

Can people see the change in your life since you became a believer in Jesus Christ? Does the difference reveal the power of God impacting your life?

THOUGHT: Am I now a totally different person in Christ?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, sanctify me daily to shine for Thee.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

ACTS 4:18-20

1 CORINTHIANS 9:15-18

“...woe is unto me,
if I preach not the gospel!”

WE CANNOT BUT SPEAK

In Luke 2:15-18, we are told of the shepherds' reaction upon receiving the glad tidings from an angel: they could not shut their mouths about the great things they had seen. To listen to and obey those who are against the truth is a propagation of their lies; to prevent the light to shine is to let the darkness remain; and to hinder the preaching of the name of Jesus Christ is to cast souls of men into hell and the Lake of Fire for eternity.

The name of Jesus: The disciples were commanded not to speak nor teach the name of Jesus. Any other doctrine and any other name would the scribes and Pharisees bear, but not the doctrine which is according to godliness, proclaiming salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ crucified. The Apostles' teachings were the truth of God and they spread like wildfire. But they were not allowed to teach the name of Jesus Christ. It is offensive to many, it is exclusive and it strains relationships, it is biased towards a certain religion, it is based on absolutes. To the world there is nothing acceptable in the name of Jesus.

The things seen and heard: They were courageous to declare what they had seen and heard. What were the things they had seen and heard? These included the earthly ministry and post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of the Lord and His miracles were worthy to be told. These were important truths that authenticated His divinity. His obedience both to fulfil all righteousness and to sacrificially be the substitute for men on the cross of Calvary were the works of Christ necessary for man's salvation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not a figment of imagination to them, it was not a man-made story, it was a real and true event in which they saw and heard Him personally.

Are you speechless when asked to give your own testimony of salvation?
Is there excitement and joy in your heart when you share it?

THOUGHT: Do I have good news for others?

PRAYER: Father, may my lips declare wonderful things about Thee.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 16

ACTS 4:21-22

LUKE 19:45-48

“And could not find what they might do...”

NO CASE TO ANSWER

When a defendant is acquitted, it means there is “no case to answer.” This was the case of the Apostles before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin found nothing that the Apostles might be accused of or punished for. They had not transgressed the law of the land or their religion. What they had done was the good and kind act of healing a man who had been lame for over forty years.

No one is guilty: Since there was no case to answer, all the Sanhedrin could do was to threaten the Apostles. They were bridled by the power of God, they could not find any fault with the Apostles. They did not attempt to do harm against them because of the people. Remember there were already more than 8,000 followers (Acts 2:41; 4:4) of Jesus. They did not fear God who was behind the followers but they feared the people. They let loose and acquitted the Apostles, and threatened them not to continue preaching the Lord's name.

For God's glory: The Apostles were released and, instead of becoming proud of being cleared, they acknowledged what happened was because of God. The faithful are victorious not of their own righteousness but through the power of God. The glory of God is the expected fruit of a true miracle. If a believer experiences the power of God and yet does not come to glorify God, his faith is not confirmed by the miracle, it is vain.

No case to answer was portrayed in the lives of the Apostles. Likewise, we professing Christians must be careful with our lives to flee from any form of sin that may cause the watchful eyes of the enemies to find fault with us. It has been said: Christians must not leave any skeleton in the closet. There must be no undisclosed facts in our lives that can damage our testimonies as believers when they are revealed.

Are you living a transparent life to glorify God? Are you careful to keep your testimony clean and pure before the world?

THOUGHT: Am I living a chaste life for my God?

PRAYER: Father, lead me not into temptation for Thy glory and honour.

MONDAY, AUGUST 17

ACTS 4:23-26

PSALM 24

“Our help is in the name of the LORD...”

WORSHIP GOD

The Apostles, after being released, went immediately to the brethren. They were not scared that they might be caught again. They declared what they had experienced without bitterness nor complained about the persecution they had experienced. In other words, they announced how the Lord was with them and led them each step of their way. This was an encouraging report to the brethren who were probably concerned about their state during the incarceration.

They praised God’s glory: When Peter and John went back to their own brethren to report the threatening, their first response was to praise the Lord. They raised their voices “*with one accord*” (Acts 4:24, which means unanimously or in one mind and heart) to declare the glory of God over their lives.

They remembered God’s Word: Praising God is not an outburst of incomprehensible words or gibberish tongue-speaking, but taking the Word of the Lord to praise Him in the right and holy way. They quoted Psalm 2:1-2, which describes the vanity of men who try to suppress God’s work. The so-called great men of this temporal earth work to keep God’s control out of the affairs of men. They imagine vanity and are ignorant of who God (whose power holds everything from eternity to eternity) is.

They acknowledged God’s power: His omnipotence is given emphasis as the kings of the earth ignorantly think they can keep God out of their affairs. As recipients of His protection, God’s children must ever be thankful to the Lord that whatever happens in their lives (even because of man’s evil works), they are forever secured in the hands of their great Shepherd. Christians must emulate the Apostles who lifted their voices to recognise His omnipotence and omniscience. The God of the Bible is never caught by surprise, for everything is under His guiding power and wisdom. In fact, not an atom moves without Him allowing it!

Do you praise the Lord in spite of the challenges and trials in life? Do you remember His faithful promises even in times of adversities?

THOUGHT: Do I really trust God’s omnipotence?

PRAYER: Father, help me to see Thy almighty loving hands keeping me.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

ACTS 4:27-28

PROVERBS 21:30-31

*“There is no wisdom
nor understanding nor counsel
against the LORD.”*

AGAINST THE ANOINTED

The word “*Christ*” means the Anointed One. It is taken from the Hebrew word translated into English as Messiah. This is the title of the Lord Jesus for He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16). The designation refers to the one anointed to sit on the throne of David whose kingdom is everlasting. It also speaks of His Priesthood as our only Mediator to reconcile us to God. He is the perfect sacrifice for our sins through His death on the cross and He obtained for us perfect righteousness. He rose again from the dead as the first fruit of the promised resurrection that gives us the hope of life eternal having conquered death, hell and the eternal Lake of Fire.

The people rejected: The people were against Him whom God anointed to rule. The kings and rulers of the Gentiles and the Jews stood against Him. They rejected Him as their Messiah and killed Him. They were united because of their hatred against the truth and the light. *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not”* (John 1:10-11).

The people fulfilled: They had hateful and rebellious desires to oppose God. Yet they never knew that what they had done was according to the predetermined counsel of God. It does not mean that they are not accountable. They are held liable for what they did against Christ as they did it by their own sinful will and purpose. They were in darkness and all they could think of and do was evil. It was by their own accord that they rallied together against the Lord’s anointed. God does govern and guide all things by His secret counsel, and He does bring to pass those things which He has determined, even by wicked people and their evil devices.

Do you understand that everything is foreordained of God? Do you submit to Him in everything that you plan and do?

THOUGHT: Am I living according to God’s good plan for my life?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, lead me and guide me all the way.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

ACTS 4:29-30

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

*“...that utterance may be given unto me,
that I may open my mouth boldly...”*

PRAYER OF THE APOSTLES

Many of the prayer requests we hear in prayer meetings today are for our own health and success, our struggles and our journeys, our children and our parents. All these are not wrong prayer items. They are legitimate concerns that every Christian must pray for. However, we seldom pray for the concerns mentioned here by the Apostles. Their requests were for the work of the Lord and for the benefit of others.

Boldness to speak: This was a prayer for an all-out fearless preaching of God's Word. First, they mentioned how they were threatened. The natural follow-up request would be for protection and safekeeping from the threats. Yet, the next phrase revealed their hearts. They were not fearful of the threatening but they were more concerned about how this could hamper the preaching of the Word. It is human tendency to pray for the removal of danger. But their prayers sought for God's empowerment on them to speak with all boldness. They were praying that they would not be overcome by fear but would with all confidence speak faithfully, not withholding anything from God's message.

Power to heal: The other prayer concern was for the authentication of their ministry. The power to heal was not for the purpose of showing off to attract the eyes of the people. It was for the purpose of confirming that they were heavenly ambassadors by performing miraculous healing impossible for man. This prayer was again for the glory of God that He be acknowledged as the One who sent these Apostles by the miracles that they might perform to affirm their message from God. Signs and wonders are not meant to save, but are authentication of the divine message that the Apostles preached and wrote during their ministry here on earth. Today, the Word of God is complete, His revelation is enough to show men who He is and what He has done for us. We do not need those signs and wonders anymore.

Do you still seek for the signs and wonders to excite your flesh? Do you accept the final and complete authority we have in the Bible?

THOUGHT: Do I believe the perfect inspiration of God's Word?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy perfectly preserved Bible.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

ACTS 4:31

MATTHEW 18:19-20

*“For where two or three
are gathered together in my name...”*

THE PRAYER MEETING

Prayer is our communion with God. We ask and He speaks. We utter words and He answers us through His Word, the Bible.

Prayer that shakes: After prayer, the place where they were was shaken. There was no note of destruction but the place was moved. The stirring was a sign of God’s presence in their midst. The Holy Spirit’s presence was assured by an experiential shaking to remind them of the power of God abiding with them.

Prayer that fills: They were then filled with the Holy Spirit. Filling has the idea of furnishing and supplying their spiritual needs for the work God had assigned them to accomplish. The visible sign is the believer’s submission to the leading of the Spirit. It is like giving themselves to the direction of the Spirit in order to fulfil the order of God. The next phrase describes the work they were empowered to do, that is to continue the work of evangelism.

Prayer that opens: The Holy Spirit gave them confidence and boldness to speak God’s Word. All of them got the courage and zeal to proclaim the good news to others. They were filled with the Holy Spirit not to utter words which cannot be understood but words which have power to bring a soul unto salvation. Their courage was strikingly marked by their petition. All they asked for was “*boldness*” to speak a word which was not theirs, but God’s. Fear would have prayed for protection, and passion would have asked for retribution against their enemies. Their courage and devotion asked that they might not shrink from their duty, and that the word might be spoken, whatever became of the speakers. The common aim was to preach and teach God’s infallible and inerrant Word.

Do you pray for the Holy Spirit’s leading and guidance? Do you pray to have boldness in preaching the Gospel?

THOUGHT: Am I prayerful?

PRAYER: Father, teach me to pray in Thy way for Thy glory.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21
ACTS 4:32
EPHESIANS 4:1-6

“One God and Father of all,
who is above all, and through all,
and in you all.”

THE BELIEVERS

Believers are saved by grace through faith in one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They are indwelt by one Holy Spirit. They are under the fatherhood of one God the Father in heaven. Thus they are to be one in heart and soul, and care for one another. Yet, this is not always the case of the church on earth. One example in the Bible is the Church of Corinth. Paul addressed them as “...*them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...*” (1 Cor 1:2), but a few verses later 1 Corinthians 1:11 says, “*there are contentions among you.*”

Of one heart and one soul: Their unity was not just a physical togetherness, but as Acts 4:32 says, “*of one heart and of one soul.*” There is a spiritual unity, a bond that binds them as one family in the Lord Jesus Christ. This reflects the ideal character of the body of Christ. The church of God is a body with one beating heart and one living soul. This is a vivid description of believers whose love and affection are made one in the Lord. They love the Word of God and shun the philosophies of this world. They love to walk after the Spirit of God and do not engage in the lust of the flesh.

All things common: This is not communism where there is an elite group that manipulates the whole system. Here is what Jeffrey Khoo described as “commonism,” a perfect sharing of their possessions. The word “*common*” is used in the sense that there is no separation of one’s ownership from the rest of the brethren. This “commonism” is a result of lives that understand and look forward to an eternal abode where each works together for the good of the brethren and the glory of God. The marvellous proof of that oneness is the so-called “community of goods” which describes what it means to be a community under God.

Do you believe this is possible when believers are all filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you believe that “commonism” is actually possible?

THOUGHT: Am I willing to share my possessions with my brethren?

PRAYER: Father, help me to live with eternity’s values in view.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

ACTS 4:33

JOHN 20:26-29

*“...blessed are they that have not seen,
and yet have believed.”*

THE WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is as important a truth as the perfect life and sacrificial death of our Saviour and Lord. Paul said, *“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Cor 15:16-19). Indeed, we are miserable people if there is no resurrection.

With great power: Luke showed that the zeal of the Apostles to preach the gospel was far from being diminished. Rather, they were endowed with new power. This great power was from the Holy Spirit who enabled them to witness of the resurrection. We can remember how cowardly and timid the Apostles were before the filling with the Spirit of God. But when they were filled, they had great power to announce and proclaim the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

With great grace: This signified the favour of God upon the lives of the Apostles. The Lord provided for their necessities as they desired to obey the charge of God to witness for the resurrection. In the context of the previous verse, the Lord granted them enough provisions for everyone. Those who had little had enough and those who had much were not lacking in their service as they shared their bounties with those in need. God’s sufficient grace always meets the needs of His children. Jesus said, *“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”* (Matt 6:25).

Do you live your life with the resurrection in view? Are you living with the hope of receiving the glorified body just as Jesus Christ had?

THOUGHT: Am I confident that there is a resurrection of the dead?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy promise of life eternal after death.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 23

ACTS 4:34-35

PSALM 23

*"He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures..."*

I SHALL NOT WANT

In dire situations when fellow brethren need help, Christians are called to be the first to share what they have received. Thus, the Apostle John said, *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* (1 John 3:17-18). We need to emulate what the early Christians did for one another.

Give of what they owned: This described their mutual support for one another towards a common goal, which was to witness for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was voluntary selling of their houses and lands in order to assist one another. This was not compulsory or enforced on the believers. It was the Holy Spirit who moved those who had possessions to perform these acts of charity. They sold their properties seeing the needs of their brethren. Their main goal of oneness even in possessions was not to establish a new and isolated community, but to witness for Christ's resurrection.

Given of what they needed: When the brethren who had properties sold their possessions, they were conscientious to lay before the Apostles the amount they received. They did not keep for their own but gave to the treasury of the church through the Apostles. They trusted the Apostles to distribute what they had offered to the Lord in a manner that would be guided by the Spirit of God. This confidence must be in the hearts of the believers. Sure enough, when these were distributed, it was given unto every man according as he had need. There was no favouritism but was according to what the brethren required for their daily provisions. The Spirit of God apportioned to each of them through the Apostles what God's allocation for them was.

Are you convicted by the Spirit of God to help the brethren in third world countries who are hungering? Are you willing to sacrifice your comfort and luxuries in life to provide for their needs?

THOUGHT: Am I a stingy Christian?

PRAYER: Father, help me to acknowledge that all that I have is from Thee.

MONDAY, AUGUST 24

ACTS 4:36-37

MATTHEW 19:27-30

“...shall receive an hundredfold,
and shall inherit everlasting life.”

BARNABAS

Jewish names have meanings. “Barnabas” literally means “the son of Nabas.” The word “Nabas” is taken from the word “Nabee,” a prophet. His name is first on the list of prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). Luke spoke of Barnabas as a “*good man*” (Acts 11:24). When Paul returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, Barnabas took him and introduced him to the Apostles (Acts 9:27).

Son of consolation: Barnabas was a model of giving. The verses immediately before today’s passage talks about the giving and sharing of possessions by the brethren. The Bible presents Barnabas as an example. He was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He was a native of Cyprus, where he possessed land. Levites originally did not possess property. “*The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance*” (Deut 18:1). However, later, there were instances where the Levites possessed lands (Jer 32:7-12). More importantly, however, Barnabas sold it. The context suggests he was motivated to give because of the needs of fellow brethren and not for personal exaltation.

Man of submission: Barnabas sold his land and laid the money at the Apostles’ feet. This submissive attitude is to be emulated. He did not worry about his own needs. He knew that many of his brethren needed help. This must be in every Christian’s perspective: “*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*” (Luke 6:38).

Are you willing and ready to share what you have? Do you want to be like Barnabas?

THOUGHT: Am I a person of consolation?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, let me be a “giver” and not a “getter.”

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

ACTS 5:1-2

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10

*“For the love of money
is the root of all evil...”*

THE COUNTERFEIT

Satan had surreptitiously crept in through Ananias and Sapphira to destroy the holy testimony of the saints. This couple belonged to the church. They seemed to have been well-known to the leaders. Although their consecration was false, they were not found out until the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter how they lied to God. The name Ananias is equivalent to the Hebrew name, “Hananiah” which means “The LORD is gracious.” Sapphira, on the other hand, was a name derived from the Greek name of a precious stone, Sapphire, which in the Hebrew signifies “beautiful.” Although the Scriptures said, *“A good name is better than precious ointment...”* (Eccles 7:1a), this couple did not live up to their names.

Sold a possession: Barnabas had land, sold it, and received good commendations upon giving his substance to the church. The act was worthy of imitation. Ananias and Sapphira followed the good deed. However, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, they lied by appearing to have given all while they secretly kept some back. They gave to be acknowledged and commended. But no one can lie without God knowing. Were they Christians? I believe they were, as it was recorded in Acts 2:47 that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Laid at the Apostles’ feet: As Barnabas laid the money at the Apostles’ feet, the couple too laid theirs. The difference was that Barnabas laid all but Ananias and Sapphira kept back part of the price while claiming to have given all. Both husband and wife decided to do it. Were they not scared? Were they not guilty when they planned it? Were they not trembling when they brought the portion? No, not at all! The two of them were confident that only they knew about it. Many professing Christians today think they can hide something from God. They appear religious on the outside and pious in their actions, but in their morals they are very corrupt.

Do you hide things from the Lord? Are you honest to give what is required of you in the Scriptures?

THOUGHT: Am I a hypocritical Christian?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to live in righteousness and truth.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

ACTS 5:3-4

EXODUS 20:16

*“Thou shalt not bear false witness
against thy neighbour.”*

LYING TO GOD

Is it possible to lie to God? Well, a man may deceive himself into thinking that he can. But for a truly born-again person, he should not think so. No one can lie and hide himself from God. All things are before His eyes and none can escape Him.

Satan filled their hearts: Satan is the archenemy of the God of the Bible. He does all his trickery and deception so that man may be deceived. He did it successfully to Adam and Eve, mankind’s first parents. Satan continues his desperate moves knowing his final defeat and condemnation is near. The Apostle Peter warned, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet 5:8). Peter rebuked the sin. It was not described how the Apostle Peter got the information regarding the sin. It must have been the Holy Spirit who revealed it to him. The Apostle did not treat them harshly, but told them that they had sinned against God. They could have told the truth for God did not demand that all of the sale proceeds were to be given. The lie was not only to Peter and the assembly, it was also against the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity.

Conceived in their hearts: Peter told Ananias that it was not sin for them to keep what was theirs as long as they were honest about it. They had the power to give the tithe and a portion for an offering. What was evil was their covetous longing to be seen that they gave like Barnabas. In fact, they were only pretending to give like Barnabas. This they conceived in their hearts. They did not pray about it nor seek the illumination from the Spirit. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jer 17:9). Jesus also said, *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness”* (Mark 7:21-22).

Is your heart desiring to live honestly for God? Are you aware of God’s omniscience and omnipresence?

THOUGHT: Am I a liar?

PRAYER: Father, convict me of my secret sins and to repent of them.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

ACTS 5:5-6

ROMANS 6:15-23

“For the wages of sin is death...”

GOD’S JUDGMENT

Abraham recognised the LORD God as the Judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25). God will surely judge for He is just and righteous. This is the reason why there is a hell and an eternal Lake of Fire *“prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt 25:41).

Death: When Ananias heard the rebuke of Peter, he fell down and died. It is not known how old Ananias was but he apparently succumbed to a sudden death. The verb is a present participle, and implies that the punishment overtook him suddenly while he was yet listening. Judgment was immediate, right there and then after Peter reproved him. God showed that His intention for the early church was for it to start off pure and holy. This is always God’s desire for His church. Was God so cruel to take this couple’s lives? No, it is the expected end of all men whether young or old, *“for the wages of sin is death”* (Rom 6:23). The Lord did not want Satan to use this couple to destroy the testimony of the early church. God Himself executed the disciplinary action.

Fear: Great fear came upon all them that heard about the sudden death of Ananias. God’s commandment to us is: *“That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged”* (Deut 6:2). The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Prov 1:7; 9:10). As Solomon concluded, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Eccles 12:13-14).

Are you fearful of God’s judgment? Do you know that God is righteous in all His ways?

THOUGHT: Do I fear the Lord?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, let me remember Thy justice.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28
ACTS 5:7-9
ROMANS 3:19-20

“...that every mouth may be stopped,
and all the world may become
guilty before God.”

CONJUGAL SIN

To reject the Holy Spirit is an unforgivable sin. It is a rejection of God's conviction upon the sinner that he may repent and believe in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Agreed together: Together this couple decided on the matter and cunningly planned their scheme, thinking that the Spirit of God would not know it. They were too careless in their decision. They were both blinded from the truth and were engrossed with both favours of prosperity and popularity. In Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, the wisdom of God said, *“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”* Evidently, the couple agreed and were not concerned to lift up the other from the evil that caused them both to fall. It is remarkable that Solomon added, *“a threefold cord is not quickly broken”* (Eccles 4:12). To apply this in the spiritual realm, it suggests the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the relationship between the two. When God is there, it is not immediately broken or destroyed.

Tempted together: Since Sapphira was privy to the decision, she was as sinful as her husband. If she was godly, she would have warned Ananias, but she contributed to the wilfulness and hard heartedness of her husband. Peter gave her a chance to tell the truth. He did not condemn her right away, but she remained true to their evil plan. *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”* (Gen 2:18). She should have helped her husband to do the right thing. Men generally have the tendency to go after prosperity and popularity. Let the wives help their husbands do what is right according to God's Word. Similarly, let the husbands help their wives when they are tempted by the glittering and material things of this world.

Do you help one another, as husband and wife, to live honestly before the Lord? Are you concerned over the life of your brethren?

THOUGHT: Am I a loving husband/wife?

PRAYER: Father, help me to love with the kind of love Thou hath for me.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

ACTS 5:10-11

ROMANS 2:11-12

*“For there is no respect
of persons with God.”*

FAIR JUDGMENT

God does not show favouritism when judging. He does not base His judgment on race or economic state. He does not favour one's skin colour or gender. So the Apostle Paul exhorted in Colossians 3:25, *“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”*

Death upon her: Sapphira was inexcusable. The gravity of her sin was as her husband's. God is impartial. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him”* (Ezek 18:20). This was to confirm God's seal on the church, identifying her as His own. In Joshua 7, the sin of Achan was the cause of the defeat of Israel against a weak enemy, Ai. When the sin was dealt with, the Lord gave Joshua and his men victory after victory in their conquest in the land of Canaan.

Fear upon all the church: The punishment of one was a lesson to all. God imposed the discipline in order for the church to fear Him. In Ananias' case, only those who had heard greatly feared, but this time great fear came upon the whole church and even those who were outside but who had heard what had happened to Sapphira. The church experientially learned how pure and holy God is. Not only within the church but also people from outside may come to know who He is. When a local church imposes discipline, the testimony of God's holiness in the church is magnified. The faithful must perfectly fear God. Through this they were being admonished by God's judgments. Twice Jesus warned those who were presumptuous. *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3, 5).

Are you aware of the judgment of God? Do you acknowledge His righteous judgment over His children?

THOUGHT: Is my life under God's wrathful judgment?

PRAYER: Father, let me live with clean hands and pure heart.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 30

ACTS 5:12-14

HEBREWS 2:1-4

*“God also bearing them witness,
...with divers miracles...”*

MIGHTY MIRACLES

The great signs and wonders God manifested in the ministries of the Apostles were to authenticate their message and ministry. God used this to authorize these hand-picked, unlearned and ignorant people to show forth His great power and majesty. There was a hiccup when Ananias and Sapphira sinned, but God continued to help the early church to flourish because the Apostles were faithful to preach the gospel and to implement God's discipline on the rogues in the assembly.

Done by the Apostles: The mighty miracles were wrought by the hands of the Apostles, not by anyone in the assembly of believers. This was a special grace upon the Apostles for a specific reason: authentication. *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues”* (Mark 16:17).

Magnified by the people: The miracles were wrought among the people, for their edification that they might see God in their midst and receive the message of the Apostles as from God. The miracles were done in one accord, in a coordinated fashion that focused on God. They did not have the spirit of jealousy and envy which happened in the midst of the Apostles when the Lord Jesus was still with them (Matt 20:20-28). Thus, those who were doubtful and were not truly convinced of Christ dared not join them but the believers magnified the Apostles.

Added by the Lord: The Lord remained pleased with the church. Believers were added into the church, not only a few but multitudes of them. It was not just an increase in attendance, but they were all believers. They were not mere spectators of the mighty works of God but were regenerated and converted people in Christ.

Do you desire to be a blessing to other brethren? Are the people around you thankful for your life?

THOUGHT: Does my life testify the mighty work of God?

PRAYER: Father, may Thou use me as Thy useful instrument to bless others.

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

ACTS 5:15-16

JOHN 14:12-13

“...and greater works than these shall he do...”

HEALING FOR ALL

Healing was not just a sign of God’s authentication of the Apostles’ ministry, it was a manifestation of His love and care for His people. It showed how He desires everyone to be restored to His original plan at the creation which was destroyed by Satan when he deceived Adam and Eve. In healing, God shows He has power over physical infirmities. Man must repent of his sins and believe in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

By the Apostles: The Apostles did many signs and wonders such as their healings and other miracles. The people saw the power of God and brought forth the sick people onto the streets. They carried them on beds and mattresses so that at least they could be under the shadow of Peter when he passed by. The shadow of Peter had no power to heal. It is God alone who has the power. The phrase “*the shadow ...might overshadow*” describes figuratively their coming near to Peter. The word “*overshadow*” speaks figuratively of the effectual presence of God (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 1:35; 9:34) in their midst. Peter was representative of the Apostles who were empowered to do the healing.

For the multitude: The Greek word for “*came*” means to come together or to assemble. The tense and mood signifies “kept coming together,” denoting a continual coming. They were bringing the sick and those vexed with unclean spirits. When the Lord Jesus Christ performed healing miracles during His earthly ministry, it was not only to authenticate His authority but also out of care and pity for the people. “*And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick*” (Matt 14:14). The miracles of the Apostles too were performed that the people might know not only the higher purpose of proving that their authority was from God, but also that God has compassion on them.

Are you trusting Jesus as the great Physician? Are you thankful for His love and care upon you spiritually and physically?

THOUGHT: Am I healed of my spiritual infirmities?

PRAYER: Glorious Father, I thank Thee for the promised glorified body.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

ACTS 5:17-18

MATTHEW 5:10-12

*“Blessed are they
which are persecuted
for righteousness’ sake...”*

PERSECUTION FROM THE HIGH PRIEST

The high priest is a remarkable title in the Old Testament (Lev 21:10). Aaron was constantly called “*the priest*” and would correspond to what is called high priest in the New Testament. His office is ordained for men in things pertaining to God that he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He stood for the people to offer up the sacrifices which put the people in proper relation with God (Lev 9) and blessed the people as from God. However, today’s passage describes the high priest opposing the people of God. He was angered by what the Apostles did. He could not see the hand of God performing the miracles through the Apostles.

Filled with indignation: Luke described the high priest as from the sect of the Sadducees. The Sadducees were rationalists. They did not believe in angels and spirits, thus they did not believe in the resurrection (Matt 22:23) which the Apostles preached. They are the modernists and liberals of today’s Christianity. They were jealous of the disciples who could perform signs and miracles. They became envious of the attention the Apostles got from the people. They found themselves losing the reverential adoration of the people as representatives of God. They were not just angry, they were filled with much hatred against the Apostles of Christ.

Forced detention: The disciples were incarcerated in prison. The common prison is the public prison; or the prison for the keeping of common and notorious offenders. The laying of hands was not a description of a gentle action but with the sense of violent beatings as they brought the Apostles into prison. They were targeted because they had done many mighty deeds that caught the attention of the people. The high priest believed he could destabilize the assembly when their leaders were put in prison. He was not aware of the higher invisible hand of the all-powerful God in heaven who controls everything.

Are you ready to face persecution for righteousness’ sake? Will you see the hand of God allowing these things to come into your life?

THOUGHT: Am I living righteously?

PRAYER: Father, prepare my heart to face adversities for Thee.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

ACTS 5:19-21

MATTHEW 28:18-20

*“And fear not them
which kill the body...”*

DIVINE DELIVERANCE

God’s providential care over His people has various purposes depending on what our good Lord has prepared for us. There are those who remained in jail until their death while others who in spite of being cast into the most inescapable dungeon God delivered. God does things according to His higher plan. In either case, we must be thankful to God for His loving care.

Miraculously released: It was no doubt miraculous. The angel of the Lord came and released them without troubling the guards nor destroying the prison. The Lord brought the Apostles out of prison, it was not to rid them of their enemies, for He allowed them afterwards to be brought back and beaten again. What He declared by this miracle was that they were in His hand. He sent His angels, ministers of God, to lead them out. The opening of doors could have allowed other criminals to escape, but only the Apostles came out.

Explicitly commanded: The angel commanded them to go, stand and speak to the people in the temple *“all the words of this life”* (Acts 5:20), i.e. *“things whatsoever I have commanded”* (Matt 28:20). Jesus already mentioned that man *“shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4). Having been miraculously released, they perceived the significance of their release and they fulfilled God’s purpose and will in their lives.

Immediately obeyed: After hearing the charge, they obeyed without procrastination. They went out early in the morning to witness. The disciples went to the temple as told. They were courageous in the midst of the threat and the possibility that they could be executed because they escaped from prison. They taught the people, indoctrinating them. Teaching must be with conviction, pressing the hearers to apply the Word taught to them.

Are you determined to obey without fear to teach the Word of God? Would you still continue even if threatened by imprisonment?

THOUGHT: The glorious power of Christ will lead us to glory.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for all the great prospects of Thy power.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

ACTS 5:22-23

LUKE 24:31-32

*“And their eyes were opened,
and they knew him...”*

CAUGHT UNAWARE

God works in supernatural means that even the emissaries of the archenemy are caught unaware. Let us trust in the power of God and know that He is victorious over the wiles of the devil. The defeat of Satan is already prophesied in the scriptures. Knowing this, Christians must be mindful always of the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee”* (Josh 10:8).

Apostles were out: When the officers arrived at the common prison, the Apostles were not there anymore. The prison guards apparently had no idea where they were. Even the other prisoners inside did not know how the Apostles got out. The Lord revealed His power over man. Who can fight against God and win? When God shows His omnipotence, man is left baffled. Liberals may immediately label this event as impossible and therefore irrational. But for us who know who our God is, this can be a daily affair. God is working always in our lives and there are far greater impossible things that can occur in our lives that unbelievers would struggle to appreciate.

Prison was shut: The prison was truly found shut with all safety measures in place. This means all doors were properly bolted, and the keepers were at their post and not one noticed anyone leaving the prison. The guards were outside and they did not find the doors broken for the guards themselves opened the doors for the officers. But when they went in, the Apostles were not there! Surely they were astonished by the situation. This should have pricked their hearts to think of the involvement of a supernatural power and acknowledge the Lord's hand over this.

Do you believe God can still do the impossible? Are you experiencing the good hand of the Lord in your life?

THOUGHT: Am I sensitive to God's leading?

PRAYER: Father, deliver me out of the prison of fear and doubt.

PERPLEXING SITUATION

When people are perplexed, they think some incomprehensible phenomenon has occurred. However, for believers there is nothing beyond explanation. There is nothing impossible with God! Only if man acknowledge God as the most important factor in life's equation, perplexing questions and situations are made simple.

Fearful of the outcome: The perplexing situation brought fear among the religious leaders. It was possible that some of them did consider God's power behind these things, but their pride kept them clinging on to their beliefs. For them there could be no divine intervention. What they were more concerned with was the outcome. If this was made known to many, the group following Jesus would grow. To lose the support of the people would endanger their livelihood and the next generation of Sadducees.

Fearful of the teachings: Then there came a report that the imprisoned Apostles were standing in the temple teaching the people. The religious leaders feared that as the teachings spread, they would be found to be liars. The teachings of the Apostles were authenticated with amazing signs and wonders while they relied only on their secular power to stop and persecute the Apostles. They relied on their offices as priests and members of the council for their influence and control.

Fearful of the people: Although they wanted to get rid of the Apostles, they could not easily harm or silence them. They feared the people would rise up against them. The phrase “*without violence*” (Acts 5:26) describes no laying on of hands, binding or forceful action but in a calm and pleading manner were the Apostles asked to go with them to the council. The Apostles, having experienced the great deliverance of God, confidently and boldly followed the captain and officers to see the high priest and chief priests.

After a little respite, are you prepared for the next level of service for the Lord? Are you willing always to accept the privilege of serving Him?

THOUGHT: Am I serving God all the way?

PRAYER: Father, make me faithful, even unto death.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

ACTS 5:27-29

2 CHRONICLES 18:12-13

“...even what my God saith,
that will I speak.”

HIGHEST OBEDIENCE

God commands Christians to submit to their secular government authorities. *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”* (1 Pet 2:13-15). However, when the authorities contradict the Word of God, believers must submit to the highest authority.

Obedience to rulers is good: The Apostles did not defy the request for them to appear before the Sanhedrin. They followed the captain and the officers to the high priest and chief priests. This is commendable of the Apostles. Naturally, there is the tendency to avoid and not want to appear before an oppressive court. But, they knew well how the Lord Jesus Christ also submitted not only to the Sanhedrin but even to the court of Rome before Pilate and Herod. Their submission before the Sanhedrin revealed their assurance of God’s presence in their lives. They knew and experienced their God in such a supernatural way.

Obedience to God is best: When the Apostles were brought to the council, they were rebuked for not following the instruction of the highest religious body in the Jewish religion. They were told to stop teaching that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. *“...Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29). They were willing to face death rather than give in to the demands of the council. Our obedience to God must be of the highest degree and must surpass everything else. Christians are exhorted to obey the secular governments of their land, but when they are contrary to the commands of God, believers must obey God rather than man.

Are you afraid to obey God rather than man? What do you think is more fearful, jail or hell?

THOUGHT: Do I fear the Lord?

PRAYER: Father, give me a heart that will obey Thy words.

WHY WE OBEY GOD

Peter followed with reasons why they boldly said, *“We ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29). He clarified his answer that the Sanhedrin may be convinced also to obey God rather than their own teachings. The gospel was presented to them. If they had humbly taken heed, they too could be saved.

God raised Jesus up: Jesus was crucified on the cross of Calvary. He shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins. He suffered and died for the salvation of mankind. He was buried but the *“God of our fathers raised up Jesus”* (Acts 5:30). Peter made mention that this God is the Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God exalted Jesus: Jesus was slain by the hands of men, but was lifted up on high by the power of God in the highest degree of honour, that He may govern the people of God, and not that only, but that He may show Himself to be a saving captain, or the author of salvation. *“...Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”* (Rev 1:5). He came and preached repentance that they might be forgiven of their sins through faith in Him. *“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt 4:17). Genuine repentance is accompanied by faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such repentance and faith lead to the forgiveness of sins.

God gives the Spirit: The Apostles identified themselves as witnesses of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit whom God gives to them who obey Him. In conclusion, Peter clarified that obedience to God grants a regenerated life quickened by the power of the Holy Spirit. He has a new heart and mind to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you willing to witness to kings and governors of your land? Do you pray for such an opportunity?

THOUGHT: Am I a faithful witness of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, grant me open doors for evangelism.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
ACTS 5:33
HEBREWS 4:12

*“For the word of God is quick,
and powerful, and sharper
than any twoedged sword...”*

CUT TO THE HEART

The good news of Jesus Christ is not so good to the unbelievers. In fact, it is outrageous to them. Just because it is not appealing to the unbelievers, Christians must not shy away from sharing the truth of the gospel. We have to tell the truth no matter what.

Heard: The disciples did not mince their words. They declared “*all*” that the Lord wanted them to say. The use of the phrase “*cut to the heart*” (Acts 5:33) likened the council members to being sawn asunder. God’s people must always remember that the greatest weapon to use to fight against the enemy is the Word of God. The disciples being godly witnesses faithfully used the words of the Saviour.

Enraged: They were enraged. Instead of being convicted of their need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they were angered even more. They knew they were in the wrong but their depravity could not lead them to believe, instead it led them to want to exterminate the Apostles who were showing them the way. This is the sad truth of men who are left without God’s regenerating spirit by grace to have faith in Christ. Man’s rejection of the doctrine of Total Depravity only proves that man is totally depraved!

Slay: This was the only way for them to escape from their guilt. The suggested act is illustrative of a violent means to eliminate the Apostles. In other words, they desired to put the Apostles to death by hook or by crook. They were so desperate to remove the accusing fingers of the Apostles that they wanted them out of their sight right away. This is the desire of the enemy against God’s faithful witnesses. Jesus recalled how the Jews did this to the prophets of old. “*That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar*” (Matt 23:35).

Do you sugar-coat your message? Do you have the courage to go and preach the whole counsel of God?

THOUGHT: Do I have “itching ears”?

PRAYER: O Father, help me to share Thy Word in and out of season.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

ACTS 5:34-39

EPHESIANS 5:11-13

*“...for whatsoever doth
make manifest is light.”*

GAMALIEL'S COUNSEL

God can use the counsels of people to fulfil His will and pleasure. The counsel of the presidents and princes in the time of Daniel revealed the prophet's steadfastness in prayer and the power of God to deliver him out of the lions' mouths (Dan 6:4-23). The counsel of Hushai defeated the counsel of Ahithophel *“to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom”* (2 Sam 17:14).

Put them forth a little space: The Lord used Gamaliel, a high-ranking doctor of the law, to temporarily stop the persecution against the disciples. Gamaliel *“commanded to put the apostles forth a little space”* (Acts 5:34), meaning to leave them alone first. God used Gamaliel to give the Apostles a break after being taken to and fro by the officers of the high priest. God can use unbelievers but it does not mean that they are cleared of their sins being a “servant of God” for a season. This shows how our God is omnipotent and sovereign over all.

They came to nought: There were two examples given. Theudas had about four hundred men but when he was killed his followers scattered. Another person was Judas of Galilee who drew many but, similarly, when he died, those who followed after him were dispersed. In other words, Gamaliel expressed that man's power is not lasting. Movements opposing Christianity are empowered by the Devil. So, we still need to look to God for wisdom and guidance as to how to protect the people of God.

Do not fight against God: Gamaliel pointed out that *“...if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God”* (Acts 5:39). Rev Tow commented, “Gamaliel is a wiser politician who sees a greater issue, touching Christianity – because he sees the power of the living and true God energizing it.” Gamaliel knows the Jehovah God of Israel. No power is beyond Him and no council can oppose His will!

Do you have confidence that no one can touch you without the Father's knowledge? Do you trust the promise that He will be with you, even unto the end of the world?

THOUGHT: Do I submit to God's plan?

PRAYER: Father, help me to follow Thee even unto the end.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

ACTS 5:40

2 CORINTHIANS 4:9-11

*“Persecuted, but not forsaken;
cast down, but not destroyed.”*

PERSECUTED BUT NOT DESTROYED

Counsels of people may seemingly harm and impede God’s work, but rest assured that our God who permits this is all-wise. He may allow the enemies’ evil counsels to prevail but in the end it is God’s decreative will that will be accomplished. Be assured of that, believer, and you will not murmur at the enemy’s evil counsels. Our omniscient God knows all things from the beginning until the time we shall come face to face with our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ and beyond.

They were afflicted: The word “*beaten*” (Acts 5:40) has the idea of scourging or being smitten. Such cruelty was not acceptable even by the early Roman law when a person was not yet proven guilty. However, unfair treatment by unbelieving people should be anticipated. The only transgression the Apostles were accused of was that they did not obey the council of men but chose to obey God alone. Although the Sanhedrin agreed with Gamaliel’s counsel, indignation was still burning in their hearts. They probably remembered the greater afflictions the Lord Jesus Christ had gone through. *“And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him”* (Luke 22:63-65).

They were ordered: The council commanded the Apostles again not to speak in the name of Jesus. This was considered a crime for them who hated the name of Jesus. This was not possible for believers. To obey the council was to deny the love, mercy and grace of Jesus in their lives. Keeping their mouth shut was depriving the people of hearing the blessings in life. Even the lepers in the days of Elisha understood that they would not do well when they experienced the day of good tidings and they held their mouths from telling others (2 Kings 7:9). How much more for the spiritual glad tidings they had received through Christ, they surely knew they would not do well if they kept their mouths shut!

Would you still continue witnessing even if you were threatened? How do you respond to threatening?

THOUGHT: Am I a cowardly witness?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to be brave for Jesus’ sake.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

ACTS 5:41-42

JAMES 1:1-4

*“But let patience
have her perfect work...”*

ZEAL FOR THE LORD

A Christian's zeal for the LORD must not be hindered by persecution and threatening. In the event of persecution, we should take it as the Lord strengthening our faith. In the midst of threat, we should remember that it increases our faith.

Rejoicing in suffering: When they departed from the place where they were interrogated, they were not crying for the pain of the scourging. In contrast, they were rejoicing! This is amazing in the eyes of both the believers and the members of the Sanhedrin. They were rejoicing because they counted it worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake. It was a blessing for them as Jesus had already told them: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt 5:10). Feelings of hatred and revenge were not in their hearts.

Teaching and preaching: They did not want to hide and go on furlough for a time in order to rest from the harsh treatment they had been through. These things were not on their minds. They went on teaching and preaching. They continued with the commission Christ had given to them before He ascended to heaven. They were always carried and moved by the Spirit to do God's work. Their marching order was from their Lord: *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4). Daily they taught and preached. This was the King's business left for them to continue: the desire for business twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week! Every place was their venue for preaching and teaching. Jesus Christ was the theme of their teaching and preaching. This was their hearts' desire. They were joyful because they knew they were serving the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Are you actively sharing God's Word? Are you doing it only when it is convenient for you?

THOUGHT: Do I enjoy sharing God's Word with others?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a heart that desires to talk about Jesus.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

ACTS 6:1

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16

*“Do all things without murmurings
and disputings.”*

MURMURING

When there seemed to be a problem that might divide the church, God moved His people to the rescue. By the Lord's wisdom things turn out for the best! We must give a special thanksgiving to the Lord. When problems arise, we go to Him, and He then works things out for the best. Indeed, *“...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Rom 8:28).

When numbers are increased: The number of disciples was multiplied. These were not additions but multiplications. Praise the Lord for the increase! Though increases are desired, we must also be aware of the duty of the church to take care of the believers. An increase in number of members also increases the need to supply basic necessities to them. God knew well these concerns and this account shows us how God was hands-on in taking care of His first church in Jerusalem.

When needs are neglected: However perfect a management programme may be, there will always be loopholes. This was seen in the early church when people were neglected of their daily ministrations. The Grecians were the Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Jews, while the Hebrews, were the Hebrew-speaking Jews. The widows were those who were affected in the church. Widows were destitute and therefore to be relieved by the church, especially if they did not have younger relatives, whose duty it was to support them. Since the church was providing for their daily provisions, there were probably some who were neglected because of the large number of recipients. The Lord's timely intervention is always perfect, and surely the Lord alone must be given the glory and honour.

Do you easily murmur and complain at unfair treatments? To whom do you murmur?

THOUGHT: Am I a thankful recipient of the Lord's blessings?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for all Thy provisions.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

ACTS 6:2-4

COLOSSIANS 1:9-13

“...since the day we heard it,
do not cease to pray for you.”

APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

“When God works, Satan is working doubly hard!” This is a principle that must always be remembered, especially by leaders of the church. The “*murmuring*” (Acts 6:1) is grumbling and complaining, an expression of dissatisfaction. The problem emerged because of neglect. Satan, having failed to arrest the work of the Gospel by external attacks, now sought to injure it by internal divisions. The dissension prompted the Apostles to call for help. They did not seek a multitude of voices to suggest myriads of ideas. A collective decision was made by the plurality of the twelve Apostles (as God ordained), and they informed the multitude accordingly.

The ministry of prayer: Prayer is the lifeline of the church to God. The Apostles knew it was vital in the life of the church. Their neglect to pray would cut off important communication lines to the Father, and the church would go into turmoil. They were not to leave what had been ordained for them to do. The multitude then looked for seven disciples of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. The word “*tables*” (Acts 6:2) in this context includes financial matters. The phrase “*will give ourselves continually*” (Acts 6:4) is the translation of a single Greek word which means to attend assiduously to all the exercises with diligence and perseverance.

The ministry of the Word: The supremacy of God’s Word in the ministry is the highest concern of every servant of God. The Apostles never forgot their primary roles: praying and teaching the people. They knew their function in the church. God commissioned them to study and teach the Word of God. Their main duty was to see to it that the Word of God was faithfully and accurately preached. Involving themselves in other ministries would take away much of their time from the preparation of the Word and would impact the spiritual lives of the multitude. Every pastor or preacher must have the highest view of the Word of God in their lives. Making it secondary destroys the church!

Are you helping in the church so that your pastor can concentrate on prayer and the Word? What gift did God give you to serve Him?

THOUGHT: How is my service in church?

PRAYER: Father, may I be willing to serve Thee more and more.

THE DEACONS

The Apostles set the qualifications of the deacons and the multitude chose them from among the disciples. The multitude looked for them, knowing what kind of men they were seeking. Familial and political influences were prevented as the Apostles laid out the standards.

Chosen by the saints: After the Apostles' decision to let the multitude look for seven men, they were pleased and they chose according to the qualifications which the Apostles gave. All seven were Greeks (they had Greek names), which assured attention to the neglected Grecian widows. These people were the unanimous choice of the whole multitude. They excelled in all the virtues that the Apostles stipulated. They were described as being full of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit. Only those Christians fully yielded to the Spirit of God can faithfully serve this office. Deacons are primarily concerned with the physical and financial management of the church. Laying hands on them signifies the invoking of God to bless them in order for them to attend and fully discharge their functions.

Ordained by the Apostles: The multitude presented the seven chosen men and the Apostles prayed for them. Here, the prayer was for their consecration and the Lord's anointing upon them was to confirm the Lord's approval upon the seven men. The Apostles laid their hands on them, committing them to God in prayer and charging them on behalf of God. This was a token of ordination for special service as they offered themselves to the office they were called to take. *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”* (1 Tim 4:14-16).

Are you willing to serve in the church in whatever capacity? Are you sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in your service?

THOUGHT: Am I filled with the Spirit of God?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for calling me to serve Thee.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

ACTS 6:7

ROMANS 10:17

*“So then faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.”*

THE LORD'S APPROVAL

The Lord was pleased with the decision of the twelve Apostles. With the establishment of the office of the deacon, the dissension decreased, the widows were attended to and the Apostles prayed and taught. When God's order is in the church, the blessings of God are surely upon her also. This surely brought blessings of spiritual maturity.

The Word of God increased: It did not mean an increase in content and length, but in its supremacy in the church. God's Word took the preeminent place in all their ministries. Be it in prayer, fellowship and breaking of bread, the Word of God took primacy. The people also sought to know more of God's Word. The place of the Word in the hearts of the people increased and their hunger for it intensified. Many were interested to know the doctrines of the Christian faith and they devoured the teaching and preaching with much gusto.

The disciples multiplied: Because of the increase of the Word of God, the number of disciples further increased. They multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, a blessing from God for their faithfulness. The increase of God's Word resulting in the increased number of disciples is the biblical pattern for church growth. Many churches today increase in their numbers as they undermine important biblical doctrines, but the increase only makes them centres of religious activities without the worship of the living and true God.

The priests believed: It was described that a great company of priests became obedient to the faith. The previous chapter described how the high priest and chief priests were against the Apostles. However, during the course of interrogations, these priests probably heard the arguments of Peter and other Apostles. The recipe given here is not the seeker-sensitive strategy of today's church, but the Word-centred approach of the New Testament church. Church growth must begin with God's Word.

Is God's Word supreme in your life? Do you consider the Bible as the centre of your personal, family and church life?

THOUGHT: Do I acknowledge the power of God's Word?

PRAYER: Father, teach me to use the sword of the Spirit, the Bible.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

ACTS 6:8-15

PHILIPPIANS 1:17

*“...I am set for the defence
of the gospel.”*

THE WISDOM FROM THE SPIRIT

The chosen disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and they were faithful stewards of the church. It is the primary role of the deacons to see to it that the church is conducive for the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Apparently, the appointment of deacons brought peace to the church. The Word of God was preached resulting in an increase of believers.

Disputed: Stephen preached God's Word and did great wonders and miracles. There came from the synagogue of the Libertines (thought to be free men of the citizens of Rome) who questioned him. Stephen was ready to give an answer to those who asked him about the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:15). He defended the faith with wisdom from above. The Libertines could not withstand his words. Instead of believing, they hated him and wanted to kill him.

Accused: Evil men accomplish their works in evil ways. The Libertines searched for people who could bear false witness against Stephen. They were determined to persecute him. He was accused of speaking blasphemous words against the temple and the law of Moses. They accused him of preaching that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple and change the traditions they had received from Moses.

Feared: The council saw Stephen's face as if it had been the face of an angel. This was God's way of reminding them that they were fighting against God. Yet, they continued to harden their hearts although God had offered them mercy through Stephen that they might believe the words he preached to receive forgiveness of their sins and the hope of life eternal. They feared when they saw his face resembling a heavenly being. However, it did not deter them from persecuting Stephen.

Are you ready to answer those who ask about your faith? Are you afraid to talk about the gospel of Jesus Christ?

THOUGHT: Am I ready to defend the faith?

PRAYER: Father, give me the courage to answer the unbelievers.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
ACTS 7:1-8
GENESIS 12:1-5

*“And I will make of thee
a great nation,
and I will bless thee...”*

ISRAEL'S BEGINNING

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:8-10).

God's call to Abraham: Stephen traced the beginnings of the nation of Israel to explain about Jesus Christ. It started with the call of God to Abraham who was then in the city of Ur in Mesopotamia. He left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran before he went on to Canaan. From this account, we can recall the faith of Abraham in the words of God. He obeyed although *“not knowing whither he went”* (Heb 11:8).

God's faithfulness to Abraham: The Lord promised Abraham a possession and posterity. Although it was impossible in the eyes of man, God continued to assure Abraham of the Promised Land and the promised seed for him. A prophecy of living in bondage under foreign dominion was announced to Abraham. Yet, he remained obedient to the faithful promise of God. The children of Israel greatly increased in number such that when they left Egypt the count exceeded a million.

God's covenant with Abraham: God made a covenant with Abraham to show the truthfulness of His promise. When the covenant was made, God entered the covenant alone, with Abraham being the recipient of it. *“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable”* (Heb 11:12).

Am I willing to follow the call of God? Am I trusting in God's faithful promises?

THOUGHT: Am I an obedient Christian?

PRAYER: O Father, lead me to where Thou wantest me to be.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

ACTS 7:9-16

HEBREWS 13:5-6

*"I will never leave thee,
nor forsake thee."*

ISRAEL'S CARING GOD

God assures His people of His providential care. He does not allow His children to go through difficulties in life without a purpose. He will fulfil His grand plan for the glory of His name and for the salvation of souls. This assurance should help believers endure in the midst of the challenges in life for the Lord does not make any mistakes.

Joseph sent to Egypt: The account recalled how Joseph was sold by his own brothers. However, God was with Joseph. This was repeatedly mentioned by Moses in the book of Genesis. Joseph who was with God perceived the real reason behind what he went through: *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"* (Gen 50:20).

Joseph made governor of Egypt: Joseph arrived in Egypt in chains, yet in the Lord's perfect time, He raised him to become the "Prime Minister" of Egypt. *"He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom"* (Ps 105:17-22).

Joseph called Jacob to Egypt: God's prophecy to Abraham unfurled when Jacob and his whole family went down to Egypt. It was a needed move, they had to comply with the will of God. God assured Jacob: *"...fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again..."* (Gen 46:3-4). Stephen recounted God's gracious hand upon Israel that the high priest and the rest of the council might realize how gracious God was to them; but they remain hardened and blinded.

Do you see such hardened hearts and blinded eyes today? Are you still willing to reach out to them?

THOUGHT: Is my heart hardened too?

PRAYER: Father, enable eyes to see and hearts to believe.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

ACTS 7:17-19

ECCLESIASTES 3:11

*“He hath made every thing
beautiful in his time...”*

GOD’S PERFECT TIMING

Most of the time, men do not seek God’s approval and leading in their daily lives when everything is smooth sailing. But in tough times, when they are shaken, that is the time they come to God in prayer, seeking for His help and will. Thank God for the Spirit’s prompting. As believers, we ought to be sensitive to it that we may be dependent servants of Him.

God has sworn: The prophecy given to Abraham was made hundreds of years before the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. God declared, and it was fulfilled. This is one marvelous display of God’s faithfulness to His promises. He never will forget what He has proclaimed. He is not late nor early. Everything is set according to His directive plan and we as His children must be attentive to His directives so that we will not be left behind! The population of the children of God increased and they were prepared to go to Canaan to occupy the Promised Land. They were then to drive out the heathen nations of the land and to inhabit it. God assured them of His presence and they were always assured of victory as they fought their battles in the strength and power of the Lord!

God has ordained: There was a newly appointed king who knew not Joseph and therefore was very hostile to the children of God. He ordered all the male babies to be thrown into the River Nile. But God was with His children and He saved many of them. It was a very difficult life but it made them willing to leave Egypt. It may not seem to be the best method to convince them based on worldly wisdom but it was indeed the perfect one. It was the best way for them to see God’s almighty power and caring hand to carry them out.

Do you see always the perfect timing of God in your life? Do you appreciate and give thanks for it?

THOUGHT: Saints may feel the stroke of death, but not its sting.

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to look beyond my vexations unto the glorious triumph that Thou hast promised.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

ACTS 7:20-22

HEBREWS 11:23

“...was hid three months of his parents,
because they saw he was a proper child...”

TIMELY BIRTH

God’s timing should never be taken lightly. It is always perfect and forever faithful because it is the fulfilment of His promises given in the scriptures. *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Matt 5:18).

Exceedingly fair child: In God’s perfect time, Moses was born, a very comely child that caused his parents to hide him for three months to save him from death. The Jewish people highly regarded Moses as their deliverer from the bondage of Egypt. Stephen highlighted him so that the priests might remember the Old Testament writings and the promised greater Moses. The religious leaders who were supposed to be anticipating the coming Messiah were the ones who put Him to death. Moses who was an appointed deliverer in his time suffered from the hands of the people, and so did Christ.

Nourished by Pharaoh’s daughter: By God’s providential hand, baby Moses was raised by his own family. This was beyond imagination. There is no other explanation for this except for the mighty hand of God arranging everything for His servant to be properly nurtured and educated to become the deliverer of His people. Exceedingly abundant was the provision for this child, for his own mother was given resources to support the child.

Learned in all wisdom of Egypt: Moses went to the top schools of Egypt as the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He gained all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He became powerful in words and in his works. We know he said to the Lord, *“my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue”* (Exod 4:10). But the Lord had His purpose for this and we know how the Lord used Moses in commanding Pharaoh to let the people of God go.

Do you experience God’s goodness in your life? Do you appreciate how much God attends to your needs every day?

THOUGHT: Was my birth untimely?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy timely provisions in my life.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 20

ACTS 7:23-25

PSALM 37:34

*“Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,
and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land...”*

ANTICIPATED TIME

There may be a time we think is the best time, but according to God's timing, it may not be so. We must abide in His presence through His Word so that we can discern the right season of His pleasure and will. There are many Christians who fall by the wayside because they run before God. We must learn to wait upon the Lord for His correct and precise timing.

Visited his brethren: Moses' heart was moved to visit his brethren, the children of God. Being the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he could have lived in the ostentatious palace while his brethren lived in slavery under the cruel taskmasters of Egypt. Seeing the distress of his people, Moses could not contain his heart's desire to liberate them. His intention was to be kind to them and to relieve them. He had the desire to deliver them out of the great burden they suffered.

Avenged his brethren: When Moses went around, he saw one who was persecuted. He defended and avenged this brother and killed the Egyptian. He thought he could deliver them by himself without the aid of the higher omnipotent hand of God. But it was not yet God's time of deliverance.

Misunderstood by his brethren: Moses expected to be acknowledged for his “heroic deed.” He supposed that was the way he would deliver them. He anticipated that his brethren would see him as their God-sent deliverer to bring them out of Egypt. Stephen made reference to Moses to direct the hearers' attention to God's perfect time in sending the Lord Jesus Christ into this world, yet they refused to acknowledge Him. *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (Gal 4:4-5).

Do you see the perfect arrangement of God in your life? Do you realize how terrible your life would be if God did not arrange it so?

THOUGHT: Am I patiently waiting for God's perfect time?

PRAYER: Father, help me to wait upon Thy foreordained plan in my life.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

ACTS 7:26-29

ISAIAH 26:1-4

*“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee...”*

PREMATURE DELIVERANCE

When we serve the Lord according to our own plans and programmes and we fail to seek His will and way, the results will be discouraging. Some may be distressed and eventually leave their calling because they find themselves a failure. Others however remain faithful to the Lord and acknowledge the mistakes they have made. They repent of their ways and wait upon the Lord for the right time to work.

As a ruler: Moses' expected time of deliverance was wrong when he tried to impose himself as the ruler of his brethren. The Lord did not introduce him, and the people did not acknowledge his authority over them. He was just seen as one of the Egyptian princes who had pity for the children of God. He asserted his good counsel to them warning that they should not strive against one another for they were brethren. But the problem was he set a wrong example in murdering the Egyptian soldier. He promoted kindness and love, but he had demonstrated murder before their eyes.

As a judge: Moses was questioned about his authority over his brethren: *“Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?”* (Acts 7:27). He had no words to say. The priests who thought themselves righteous under the Mosaic law should have been pricked by this account. They did not have any authority over God's people. They themselves were outside of God's realm. They needed to be saved first so that they could perceive the truth.

As a fugitive: As somebody was a witness to what Moses had done to the Egyptian, Moses got scared. He became fearful of Pharaoh's judgment. He suddenly was overtaken by the fear of man. This is the condition of a person who begins a work without God's call and authority. He easily backs off and is scared of the sword. He forgets that there is a far greater and mightier sword that Christians possess: the Word, the sword of the Spirit.

Is God with you in your service to Him? Are you waiting upon the Lord to know His will and His way?

THOUGHT: Am I patient?

PRAYER: Father, may I be thankful for Thy foreordained will for my life.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

ACTS 7:30-36

HEBREWS 11:24-26

*“Esteeming the reproach of Christ
greater riches than the treasures in Egypt...”*

THE APPOINTMENT

Though it was untimely for Moses, the Lord knew how it was necessary for the deliverer to be trained first in the “University of the Wilderness.” It was “on the job training” for Moses who had to lead the people out of Egypt. He had to leave the palace of Egypt to abide in the wilderness of Sinai.

The LORD appeared: After forty years of obedient waiting upon the Lord, the perfect time of appointment came. The LORD appeared to Moses in the wilderness as a flame of fire in a bush. Moses learned his lessons well, he was not anymore the man who presented himself before his brethren. In Exodus 3 and 4, Moses made many excuses because he then knew that he had no power and talent to do the work. Moses’ attitude was not one of false humility, but a real acceptance of who he was based on what he had experienced.

The LORD commissioned: The LORD charged Moses to go back to Egypt to deliver the children of God. The commissioning was not because Moses had this plan before, but because the LORD had seen the affliction of His chosen people and He heard their groaning of pain and distress. The time was ripe for them to come out, the people were ready to leave. They needed a God-sent leader to bring them out and to lead them to the Promised Land. This is God’s mercy and grace upon His children. No one can accuse Him of neglect, He comes in the perfect time to deliver His people.

The LORD delivered: In God’s perfect appointment, He showed Pharaoh His power over the gods of Egypt. The people saw their deliverance in the God who called Moses to bring them out of bondage. The LORD did not just bring them out from the land of slavery, He went with them in the pillar of a cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He parted the Red Sea, He provided them with drinking water, the daily manna from heaven and meat. This is marvelous! When God delivers, there is no lack.

Do you acknowledge that everything is given through God’s providential hands? Do you appreciate His loving hands extended to you?

THOUGHT: Do I believe in the loving God of the Bible?

PRAYER: Father, let my mouth praise Thee always for Thy blessings.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

ACTS 7:37-41

DEUTERONOMY 34:10

“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses...”

THE PROPHET OF PROPHETS

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18:18, *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”*

Him shall ye hear: Moses prophesied that a greater prophet would come. This greatest among the prophets refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...”* (Heb 1:1-2). The last and final revelation is the Son of God and no other messenger will come after Him. Since He is the Prophet, Moses enjoined everyone that to Him alone shall they hear. The high priest and the chief priests too must hear Him.

Him shall ye receive: Moses received the lively oracles from God. The Ten Commandments should lead a person to life. It is not life itself for it cannot give life, but it points to the life: *“wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Gal 3:24). If a person receives only the commandments and does not follow its direction to come to Christ by faith, he remains dead. He must receive Christ: *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God...”* (John 1:12).

Him shall ye worship: They, who rejected the Messiah, resorted to worship other gods. They could not receive what the commandments through Moses pointed to. They did not look towards the coming of the Messiah, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. They worshipped and offered sacrifices to the idols they had made. The high priest and members of the Sanhedrin may not have worshipped physical idols, but they idolised man-made traditions.

Do you consider the Ten Commandments important for believers today?
Do you worship the living and true God?

THOUGHT: Do I have idols in my life?

PRAYER: Father, help me to worship Thee alone through Thy Son.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

ACTS 7:42-44

EXODUS 20:4

*“Thou shalt not make unto thee,
any graven image...”*

GROSS IDOLATRY

The LORD gave a solemn warning against idolatry through Moses in Deuteronomy 4:23-24: *“Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”*

Worshipped the host of heaven: God strongly forbids the making of images representing any likeness in heaven above or the hosts of heaven. *“And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven”* (Deut 4:19). Yet, the children of God worshipped the host of heaven.

Worshipped the figures: The LORD had already prepared the hearts of His children to worship the living and true God instead of figures. This was foreshadowed in the construction of the tabernacle. This tabernacle, which was also the pattern for the building of the temple, foreshadows Christ. It prefigured His roles and offices. The members of the Sanhedrin who were there should have recognised that the pattern of these holy places represented the Lord Jesus Christ as Immanuel, God with us! Idolatry leads to blindness and immorality. This sin has its rippling effect not only to the next generation but to the third and even the fourth generations. The spiritual state of the people engaging in idolatry is likened to the lifeless images and figures that they worship.

Do you worship the images and figures of the great people of your churches and denominations? Do you idolize them?

THOUGHT: Am I idolizing anyone in my heart?

PRAYER: Father, please cleanse me from all forms of idolatry.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

ACTS 7:45-50

EXODUS 25:8-9

*“And let them make me a sanctuary;
that I may dwell among them.”*

GOD’S HOUSE

Christ is greater than the tabernacle. *“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”* (Heb 9:8-12).

The tabernacle: It was the first edifice God commanded to build to manifest His presence among His people. *“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it”* (Exod 25:8-9). The Lord desired His people to worship Him, and the church in the wilderness was given this privilege to come with their sacrifices through the tabernacle.

The temple: When David expressed his desire to build a house for the LORD, he was told through the prophet Nathan that he did not need to do so, for it would be his son who would build the temple for the LORD. *“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever”* (2 Sam 7:12-13).

The throne: It is not the tabernacle nor the temple but the person of God on His throne that the believer needs. No building can truly represent the presence of God but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is the temple of God.

In worship, is the place more important than the person of God?

THOUGHT: Am I particular about grandiose ambience in worship?

PRAYER: Father, help me to worship Thee in spirit and in truth.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

ACTS 7:51-53

JOHN 10:25-28

*“My sheep hear my voice,
and I know them, and they follow me.”*

STIFFNECKED AND UNCIRCUMCISED

Obstinate and disobedient people are hindrances and enemies of the work of God and His people. They were already present in the time of the book of Genesis and they will be here until the time described in the book of Revelation. We must be prepared, like the Apostles, to face the stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.

Resisting the Holy Ghost: These are the people who oppose the Holy Spirit. Can a person resist the power of the Spirit of God? Is not God all powerful? The stiffnecked and uncircumcised people are those who are unregenerated and still dead in their trespasses and sins. Being dead, they are not able to respond to spiritual stimuli. But you may ask, does God not have the power to give life? Yes, He has that power but He only gives the grace to those whom He has chosen before the foundation of this world. The stiffnecked and uncircumcised always resist for they have no power whatsoever to respond to God.

Persecuting the prophets: Since they are not of God, they are of the devil and they hate the people of God. They persecuted the children of God starting from the time of Cain until the future period of the Antichrist. Paul referred to them as those who *“both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”* (1 Thess 2:15-16).

Rejecting the law: These people will depart from the law of God. They were found in Judaism during the time of the early Christian church and they can be found increasing in Christian churches as Paul warned in 2 Timothy 3:1: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”*

Do you continually resist the prompting of God for you to repent and believe? Have you remained doubtful and sceptical about the Bible?

THOUGHT: Am I a stiffnecked person?

PRAYER: Father, please give me a teachable heart to receive Thy words.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 27

ACTS 7:54

JOHN 16:7-11

“...he will reprove the world of sin,
and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

GUILTY PEOPLE

These people who were guilty were angry! They were full of hatred for that is the natural tendency of sinful man. The bondage of sin kept them from doing what was right. They were programmed to do evil and their default is to murder, kill and destroy. Beware of these men. They were present in those days, how much more today?

Cut to the heart: Yes, they were dead spiritually and could not respond to anything that would cause them to have life. Their evil and hateful hearts could only respond to destroy life. They were energized by Satan and they moved and acted in the ways of the devil. They were cut to the heart by the Word of God which Stephen preached (Heb 4:12). Their pride was pricked by the words preached. They were not convicted of their sins, they were angered because they thought they were doing what was right and they were being questioned. They did not acknowledge the sovereignty of God over their lives and could not understand why anyone would say that what they did was inappropriate.

Gnashed with their teeth: They did not show off their teeth because of joy, they gnashed their teeth because of hatred. This is a sign of violent and fierce anger. They were stricken with madness. This is the way ferocious animals in the wild would respond. They wore this facial expression because they were ready to murder and shed blood. They were possessed by the spirit of the devil whose desire was to eliminate God's children. Their blood boiled within them. May the Lord grant us the grace to remember these words and utter them as our own: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us”* (Rom 8:35-37).

Are you prepared to face such opposition? Are you ready to give everything for the sake of the gospel of Christ?

THOUGHT: Am I guilty of hatred against God and His people?

PRAYER: Father, convict me of my sins and grant me the grace to repent.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
ACTS 7:55-56
JOHN 14:1-4

“...I will come again,
and receive you unto myself;
that where I am, there ye may be also.”

SPIRIT-FILLED SAINT

Those who resist the Holy Ghost are characterized as stiffnecked and with uncircumcised hearts, but Spirit-filled saints are always submissive to the will of God whether in enjoying life or facing death. Which are you? Are you easily provoked to wrath when someone reproves you and you wish to destroy the person? Or are you one who will prayerfully consider the Word of God and examine yourself?

Sees the glory of God: We are told in this passage that a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit was not hateful of God's Word or His people. Having seen the fierce faces and the violent desires of the people to destroy him, Stephen was calm, looking up steadfastly into heaven. His trust was in the Lord. Thus the psalmist declared boldly, *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand”* (Ps 121:1-5). Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. He was assured that God knew what he was going through. He saw Jesus in a posture that manifested His care and attention towards him. Such is the love of God upon those who are faithful to Him.

Sees the Son of man: Stephen saw the heaven opened, prepared for his coming. He saw Jesus standing ready to welcome him. He saw his Lord looking forward to meet His beloved whom He purchased at the cross of Calvary. O, what a sweet assurance it is for believers that we are not a people who are lost, but the Lord of heaven is ever ready to receive His chosen to be with Him for eternity in glory. That is why the psalmist could say, *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints”* (Ps 116:15).

Are you assured of heaven and its glory? Do you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour for ever and ever?

THOUGHT: Am I eternally secured in Christ?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy great salvation so rich and so free.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

ACTS 7:57-58

ROMANS 1:28-32

*“Backbiters, haters of God,
despiteful, proud, boasters...”*

HATERS OF GOD

Those who hate God cannot be guided by the Spirit to do what is good. Their hearts and minds are in bondage to the sinful desires of their flesh and they despise the Word of God. What they desire to do is only evil continually and they have no sense of goodness and truth. *“Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes”* (Rom 3:15-18).

Cried aloud and stopped their ears: They screamed at the top of their voices. They did not want to hear any more of the convicting words of God which cut their hearts. They did not want to do that which was of God. They pressed their ears to avoid hearing anything from God. God’s Word to them was so prickly and irritating that they did not want any more of it. They were filled with the spirit of the devil. They dared not hear the voice of the Spirit and be converted, all they had in their hearts was the desire to destroy! So the people in one accord ran towards Stephen. They were determined to kill him because they hated his God.

Cast out and stoned God’s servant: When they caught Stephen, they cast him out of the city. He was brought outside the walls even as his Lord Jesus Christ who was also killed outside of the city. They stoned him without a cause, a most heinous crime to murder an innocent man, a man who wanted only their salvation and to bring them to see the light. With their violent hands they set themselves to eternal condemnation. They reserved their names in the eternal Lake of Fire. A man was there to sanction the stoning; a young man by the name of Saul. He heard all the words of Stephen. Yet, this was not God’s appointed time for him to see the light. If only he was hit by that bright light and kept the people from stoning Stephen. But this was not to be+, God had His own plan for the life of Stephen and Saul.

Do you hate the ways of God? How do you deal with people who are haters of God?

THOUGHT: Do I sometimes despise how God deals with my life?

PRAYER: Father, please give me the wisdom to understand Thy ways.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

ACTS 7:59-60

LUKE 23:34-38

*“Father, forgive them;
for they know not what they do...”*

THE SAINTS

The word “*saint*” signifies holiness and righteousness. A saint is one whom God sanctifies because He has made him righteous through Christ. He is first justified before God by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many characteristics that we can use to describe a saint. One may say he is a sinner saved by grace! In these two verses we have two descriptions which remarkably identify Stephen as a saint of God.

Ready to die: Being saved by grace through faith, Stephen had full trust and confidence in the salvation that Christ wrought for him. Therefore, he was ready to depart from this wicked and evil world the moment God called him home. *“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Rev 14:12-13). He was not desperate to leave this world behind but he was mindful of and longing for that final place where the Lord has prepared mansions for His children.

Ready to forgive: Another amazing characteristic portrayed here is the heart to forgive. Stephen prayed just as his Lord and Saviour prayed, to *“lay not this sin to their charge”* (Acts 7:60). Jesus said, *“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you”* (Luke 6:27-28). Jesus, in the prayer He taught His disciples, said, *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”* (Matt 6:12). If we are people who bear hatred and grudges in life, we must check our own salvation and Christian life if truly we have experienced the forgiveness of God in our lives. No true believer can deny that we are forgiven of the great debt that we owe Him because of our sins and transgressions.

Are you ready to forgive? Do you acknowledge that you are forgiven of your sins only through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ?

THOUGHT: Am I washed by the blood of the Lord Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, help me to forgive others as Thou hast forgiven me.

Notes

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