

*2021 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL*

**VOLUME 10**



**SPIRITUAL  
WARFARE**

**MORE THAN  
CONQUERORS**

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## MORE THAN CONQUERORS - UNITY IS THE STRENGTH OF THE BATTLE

**T**he little known “Great Siege of Malta” took place in 1565. Malta’s mixed army of Knights, foot soldiers, women and children of about 6100 deterred the invading Ottoman Turks. It was approximately 4 months of anguish and yet unyielding perseverance. During that era, the battle became known as one of the most distinguished events of the 16th century in Europe. Much acclaim was given because of the proclaimed invincibility of the Ottomans and when the Europeans saw that fraud and pomp was layered in their rival, it emboldened them in their northern resistance. The Maltese people against such revered fighting army and military strategists should have been trampled over, however their resistance and unwillingness to surrender gain them a small, yet outstanding page in history.

Man’s will, coupled with united certitude and conviction is unshakeable. Following the flood, a united people with one language set in their heart one vision, one purpose; to build a tower that reached the heavens. *“And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech”* (Genesis. 11:6-7). The work was stopped because they were no longer saying and hearing the same thing. Resources were still available, they had mortar, slime and the blueprints (possibly), however they were unable to proceed. Unity was the foundation to bring to life the vision. *“...We are...”* (Romans 8:37), undoubtedly was not a mistake, it remarks the lessons we learned as we grow; two makes heat, one can chase a thousand, two can put ten thousand to flight. “We are,” in this statement lies strength and set the stage for the conquer’s victory.

Unity is one of man’s greatest virtues, it is more sustainable than any weapon. Visions and dreams are never suspended because of lack of resources, they usually fall victim to fragmented perceptions and

perspectives. It was not resources, nor was it disenchanting will that hindered the tower of Babel. It was the inability to bring minds together through language. By ourselves we cower under the attack of our advancing enemy, with unity we are emboldened. The Lord said if two agreed, (Matthew 18:19). What if one thousand agree? Limits will be broken, walls and strongholds will be brought down. We are more than conquerors when you and I are united; saying, seeing and hearing the same thing, attract God in the midst, and the battle is won. A united front in Babel brings God on the scene, too bad they were not in His will (Genesis 11:7). We conquer when we fight and rejoice together, desiring, saying and expecting the same thing.

The Maltese wanted nothing but their freedom and independence and the 5-year old knew it and believed it. The people at the tower of Babel wanted a tower and every man drew a brick. ORAC, we want His Kingdom that He promised. We want to be empowered to dominate according to His will, therefore, our efforts to conquer must be with the same mindset; saying and expecting the same thing. *“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12:32). Circumstances may get us down for a moment, but as the song writer penned *“stay in the fight until the final round, we are not going under.”* As we fast and pray let’s conquer with *“one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,”* Philippians 1:27.

SATURDAY

JANUARY TWO

2021

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## MADE ALIVE

**Focus Scripture:** *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...;”* (Ephesians 2:1, KJV)

**A**dam and Eve may not have fully comprehended the far-reaching consequences of their disobedience, but as a result of their sin in the garden of Eden, every human person who is born in the world, is dead in trespasses and sins, depraved

in heart and at enmity with their Creator. Prior to regeneration, human beings have no desire for spiritual virtues and are all under the eternal condemnation of God. Even as saved believers, we still struggle with sin and disobedience. The ones who professes to be without sin deceive themselves (1 John 1:8).

By “dead in trespasses and sins”, the apostle Paul conveys a state devoid of all spiritual life, incapable of animating itself, as a person who is physically dead is of restoring his or her body to life. This state of being spiritually dead is a condition of conformity to this world and enslavement to that proud, carnal temperament which is in unregenerate people. The devil has free reign in such hosts.

It is only through the New Birth that the gulf between God and man, caused by the “fall”, is bridged. God made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). A repentant life that is regenerated through the Holy Spirit, is brought back from spiritual death to spiritual life. We have now received redemption through His blood and are presently forgiven of our sins, according to the riches of God’s grace, which has been lavished on us in all wisdom and compassion. We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to God’s eternal will and purpose, and are now sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the down-payment and surety of that eternal inheritance.

The significance of this truth is wonderful. In one moment, we, who operated as children of disobedience, become heavenly saints and children of God. We are now clothed in His perfect righteousness. This utterly amazing transformation is not accomplished by the Law, good works of the flesh or the keeping of rules, but simply by God’s grace. It is His amazing grace that made us free from condemnation and eternal separation from our Creator.

As we meditate on God’s marvelous grace that made us alive in Christ, may we pray that the Holy Spirit would truly open our understanding to, and deepen our appreciation of, this indescribable truth. May God make us bold in proclaiming it and be pleased to use us in the furtherance of His plans and purposes.

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## TOGETHER WITH CHRIST (SEATED IN HEAVENLY PLACES)

**Focus Scripture:** “*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*” Ephesians 2:6 KJV

Once we were dead in trespasses and sins and we conducted our lives in consort with the system of this world. But God intervened and rescued us by His mercy and, through His grace, broke the power of sin in our lives and we have been raised to newness of life in Him.

As wonderful as that truth is, we discover that Jesus did so much more for us when He died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven – we now inhabit a new and eternal position. We now have our spiritual habitation in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

Being seated together with Christ is not a mere hope, but a present reality. Paul is so certain of this, that he records it as current occurrence. The apostle Paul declares in Ephesians 2:6 that God has “*made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” As believers, we are in a binding and permanent covenant and union with Him. We died in Him (Romans 6:4), and we were buried with Him (Colossians 2:12). When He was raised up, we were raised up (Colossians 3:1).

While positionally and spiritually we are already seated together with Christ in the heavenly realms – our physical condition may seem to contradict the truth of our new position. We are dead to the world and the things that are of the world. Being justified in Christ, we are at once complete in Him and yet, through the process of sanctification, we are to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus – the work of a lifetime.

What is the significance of this to us? It means that whether we are Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, educated or unlearned, black or white,

sick or well – all believers are seated at the royal table. As citizens of Heaven, we must abandon all jealousy and comparison and glorify the One who won a place for us “*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion*” (Ephesians 1:21). The moment we appreciate our lofty position in Christ, our present circumstances, steeply diminish, freeing us from anxiety and fear.

As we contemplate these truths of the Scripture, be encouraged today that we are not victims of the changing circumstances of life. Through Christ Jesus, we are more than conquerors, seated far above this earthly realm. Let us therefore take our seats and live lives of faith, in a manner worthy of our exalted position in Christ.

MONDAY

JANUARY FOUR

2021

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## A FIRM FOUNDATION

**Focus Scripture:** “*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*” (Ephesians 2:19-20)

**T**he old hymn declares, “On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.” As people of God, there is no truth which gives us the assurance we need in these difficult times quite like this. We have a natural proclivity to pursue security. But without a sure foundation, something consistently reliable on which to stand, our search will be in vain. There is only one such foundation, Jesus Christ and His Word.

The apostle Paul, by describing Jesus as “*the chief corner-stone*” does not mean, that Christ is simply a part of the foundation. He is conveying that Christ is placed in the middle of the corner for the purpose of reconciling mankind who was separated from Him but is

now established on Him. The corner stone functions as the support stone for all other stones, that are a part of the entire building. Jesus Christ completely and perfectly frames the building of the Church. He is still in the process of fitting believers into His Holy Temple.

The Lord has given us the honor of being *“fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”* We are established on the foundation *“of the apostles and prophets”*. Jesus is the rock on which the foundation rests. He alone supports the Church. He alone is the rule and pattern of faith. The importance of this cannot be overstated because the tendency to err is always present. Our great adversary, Satan with all his wildly schemes, will try his best to minimize the effect of the Word of God, but the truth will advance unabated. The faith and attitudes of men may change but the truth of God never changes.

The Lord will have a people true and firm, with faith as solid as His promises. They are to be His witnesses in the world, His peculiar vessels to perform a special, a wonderful work in these days. The time has come when we must know for ourselves why we believe as we do. We must strive, not in our own strength, but in the strength of our risen Lord.

TUESDAY

JANUARY FIVE

2021

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## BY HIS MIGHT

**Focus Scripture:** *“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;”* (Ephesians 3:16)

**A**s believers in Christ, we require renewed supplies of strength to enable us to navigate a life of difficulties and to perform the duties our calling demands. We have numerous enemies and trials much too great for our natural strength. We encounter many temptations, which no human power is effectively

able to withstand. We have many responsibilities to perform, which we cannot accomplish by our own skill or strength. Therefore, we need strength, energy and wisdom far superior to ours. We need God's strength.

This is the need that the apostle Paul recognized, and for which he petitioned God on behalf of his fellow believers. He asks that God may strengthen them inwardly through His Spirit so that they might not faint at the tribulations which they endured. The basis of Paul's confidence in God's ability to answer prayer abundantly is the "riches of his glory." The God we serve possesses boundless power, unfathomable resources, and unimaginable riches. So often we pray out of our lack of faith and spiritual poverty. Instead, we must learn to pray based on the assurance of the promises in His Word. By so doing, our faith will rise without doubt or fear, knowing that the resources available to fulfill our requests are limitless.

Human might, power, and strength are inadequate to accomplish the work of God on Earth. It takes the presence, enablement and power of the Holy Spirit for us to live effective, fulfilling, and victorious lives. We need this strength as much in blessing as we do in suffering, as much in success as we do in failure, and as much in health as we do in sickness. God strengthens us not only to defy evil, serve others, and share boldly, but to experience a deep and confident joy in Him regardless of our circumstances, weaknesses or trials. When we experience real strength, it will be because we finally gave up relying on your own strength. If we feel inadequate and feeble, we dare not strive to be more self-reliant; we need more of God.

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY SIX

2021

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## OVERCOMING THE WORLD

**Focus Scripture:** *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome*

*them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”*  
(1 John 4:4, KJV)

**T**he idea of overcoming the world, at first glance may seem like such a colossal task. How can an individual overcome the world; an entity that seems far greater? However, the world mentioned in 1st John is not referring to planet earth. It is referring to the systems of the world under Satan’s influence and the forces constantly at war with the Saints of God. John 14:30 declares “the prince of this world” and Ephesians 2:2 “*the prince of the power of the air*”. 1st John 4:3 tells us that this is the spirit of antichrist, which we have heard of is now already in the world.

But our God is sovereign. “*For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*” (Colossians 1:16). In Isaiah 45:7 God declared, “*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*” 2nd Corinthians 4:7 tells us, “*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not out of us.*” The creator is always greater than the creation. Consequently, if God is abiding in us, we are equipped to overcome.

For it is not our flesh that overcomes the world but the power of God in us. Therefore, 1st John 4 exhorts us that GREATER IS HE that is in us than he that is in the world. Galatians 2:20 states that we are crucified with Christ nevertheless we live; and that it is not us but Christ that lives in us. So how do we position ourselves to overcome? When we are baptized in Jesus name and filled with the Holy Ghost we are born again and become overcomers. “*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (1st John 5:4). For it is Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

We must recognize that the world appeals to the carnal nature. The loyalty of our affections determines how much power the world has over us. Matthew 6:21 tells us that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. Hence, 1st John 2:15 warns us, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the*

*Father is not in him.*” Romans 12:2 instructs us, “*be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” In this era of social media and societal pressures to conform, we as children of God need to take a stand. John 17:14 tells us that the world will hate us because we are not of the world. We need to denounce worldliness like the apostle Paul in Galatians 6:14 and declare, “*the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*”

Colossians chapter 3 admonishes us to seek those things which are above and to set our affections on things above. We should discipline ourselves by putting off anger, wrath, malice, and filthy communication. Recognizing that we have put off the old man and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge. If we do these things, then we can be persuaded that no principality or power or worldly influence can overtake us. But, “*in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Romans 8:37).

THURSDAY

JANUARY SEVEN

2021

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## **ABUNDANT LIFE**

**Focus Scripture:** “*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” (John 10:10, KJV)

**L**et’s just admit it. We live in a materialistic society. If you ask the average person their definition of “abundant life”, the likely response will be some quantifiable earthly measure or possession. Christ is by no means opposed to success. He wants us to be fruitful, to multiply and to prosper. Yet the abundant life Jesus is referring to has nothing to do with the square footage of our house, the make and model of our car, our 2.5 children or the acquisition of the American dream. He is talking about the eternal condition of the spiritual man and the fate of our soul.

In Genesis 2:7 God, *“formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* Then alas, by one man, sin entered the world, and death passed upon all men (Romans 5:12). Mankind originally had the divine breath of God but fell into a state of sin and subsequently all were shaped in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). This is the etiology of our displeasure. If we are honest, deep down we know that the earthly things mentioned will bring no real satisfaction. That is why Solomon expressed in Ecclesiastes 2:17, *“Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* The apostle Paul said, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1Corinthians 15:19).

Luke 12:23 tells us that life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. *“For a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,”* Luke 12:15. So, then what is our abundance? Romans 14:17 reveals that, *“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* How do we obtain this kingdom prosperity? It is only through Jesus Christ. Jesus through His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by His resurrection from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3). Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”* (John 11:25).

Only Jesus satisfies the intangible, unspoken fulfillment that we so deeply long for. Sometimes we think to ourselves, if I can only do this or have that, then I will feel fulfilled. But this is not the case. In John 6:35 Jesus says, *“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* John 1:4 states, *“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.”* When Jesus came, He dispelled the darkness of sin over mankind and brought illumination and purpose. His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105).

John 12:25 tells us that, *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”* Colossians 3:3 states, *“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God,”* Let us therefore not get caught up seeking abundant life in possessions. It is by humility and the fear of the Lord that we acquire riches, honor,

and life (Proverbs 22:4). In Revelation 21:6, the Almighty declares, “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*” He has given us an invitation to eternal life. Let us accept it freely.

FRIDAY

JANUARY EIGHT

2021

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## VICTORY ON EVERY SIDE

**Focus Scripture:** “*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 15:57, KJV)

**W**e have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. You may ask, what is our aim? It is victory, victory at all costs, victory despite all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be” (Winston Churchill, Speech to Parliament, 1940). Being human comes with the challenge of finding mastery and conquest against the struggles and antagonistic odds of life. The test may be in the form of a physical health crisis, an adversity of the mind, financial, or most importantly the battle for our souls. Today, we experience constant bombardment by current events and the threat of global catastrophe whether political, economic, pandemic or by natural disaster. Yet, it really does not matter what the challenge is, God is in total control. Everything in existence is subject to His power and His name.

Philippians 2:10 states, “*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*” The name of Jesus commands authority over every circumstance irrespective of its source. Whether it be natural or spiritual, earthly or heavenly, if you are in Christ Jesus, you have the victory. If you are in a storm, God is able to rebuke the wind and speak to the waves (Mark 4:39). If you are troubled, He is the peace speaker. If you are sick, He is a healer (Isaiah 53:5). If you are in need, He is a provider (Psalm 23). If your soul is lost, He is your salvation (Psalm 62:1-2). Whatever

you need, Jesus is the solution. For our God is the, *“I AM THAT I AM”* (Exodus 3:14).

The victory is through our faith (1 John 5:4) and we overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). We must exercise confidence in God and not try to fight our battles ourselves. Philippians 3:3 tells us to rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. For it is *“not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the LORD of hosts,”* (Zechariah 4:6). Psalm 24:8 declares, *“Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.”* Revelation 5:11-12 tells us that *“...ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands stand before His throne with a loud voice saying, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power; and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”*

The God we serve is powerful and sovereign. In Him we have victory even over death. This will be our ultimate triumph. 1 Corinthians 15:55 declares, *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”* Children of God, rest assured, it will be worth it all. Despite our struggles, if we abide in Christ Jesus, we shall be victorious. This is the promise and inheritance we have in Him. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 exhorts us, *“Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* 1st Thessalonians 4:17-18 tells us, *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*

SATURDAY

JANUARY NINE

2021

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## UNDER HIS SHADOW

**Focus Scripture:** *“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High*

*shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Psalm 91:1, KJV)*

**G**od is eternal and therefore His shadow is not transient or temporary. To abide under the shadow of the Almighty, we must first find the secret place. And when we find it, we should not just stand afar and admire it. We cannot just go to the door, take a peek and leave. We must enter and dwell there. The secret place is an innermost place. It is not a social hub or a place to cohabitate with one million followers in vain jangling. Abiding under His shadow takes focus, discipline, and a long-lasting relationship with God.

Under His shadow is a place of spiritual authority, anointing, healing, and deliverance. In Acts 5:15 the sick were brought into the streets, so that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. It was not the literal shadow produced by Peter’s human form that brought deliverance, but it was the power of the Holy Ghost abiding in him as he abided in Christ. In I Kings 17:17-24, when Elijah stretched himself upon the widow’s son and he came back to life, it was not Elijah’s own might but rather the shadow of the Almighty. The same was true of Elisha in II Kings 4:32-37. It is by remaining in His presence, through prayer, fasting and meditating on His Word, that God’s power becomes operational in our lives.

The shadow of the Almighty is a place of protection. There we are completely hidden; submerged from the crown of our heads to the soles of our feet. Psalm 91:4 tells us, *“He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.”* In Daniel Chapter 3, the three Hebrew boys were cast into a fiery furnace yet not a hair on their head was singed and the smell of fire was not on them. It was because they were completely enclosed under His wings. Under His shadow we have the advantage of being able to see the enemy coming while being invisible to the enemy. When the El Shaddai is overshadowing us, His glory is so brilliant it is blinding to the enemy. And yet the same glory that blinds the enemy brings us goodness and mercy. For He will hide us in the cleft of the rock so that his goodness can pass before us (Exodus 33:17-23).

Isaiah 49:2 tells us, *“And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;*

*in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver.”* The secret place is where we go to be refined, molded, and polished. I Peter 5:6 admonishes us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Hebrews 4:12 informs us that *“the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* So, when we are submitted to God in the quiver of His hand, we can become instruments unto righteousness. Today, Jesus wants to have an intimate relationship with us. He is standing at our door, knocking, waiting for us to hear His voice and invite Him in (Revelation 3:20). John 15:7 tells us, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”*

SUNDAY

JANUARY TEN

2021

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## A WAY OF ESCAPE

**Focus Scripture:** *“No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. But God is faithful; He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.”* (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV)

**T**emptation is a common plight of humanity. Saved or not, we all encounter moments when we are tempted to cross the line. Typically, one does not wake up in the morning saying, “I look forward with bated breath to facing some temptations today!” Yet it lurks, as though in ambush, waiting for the right time to launch its attack. James 1:12-15 tells us *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”*

So, once the opportunity meets our innate desires, the temptation is created. But there is good news! Being tempted is not sin. The deceiver would want us to bear unnecessary guilt because we were tempted to sin, however, we sin only when we yield or surrender to temptation.

Thank God for His faithfulness. Even in our fiery trials He is present. He will not allow our temptations to be more than we can handle. He will provide a way of escape so that we are able to endure. In other words, temptation cannot overpower us to the point where we become utterly helpless in the situation. This fact is enough reason for us to shout, knowing that we have a psychological advantage over the enemy. 1 Peter 5:8 admonishes us to be *“sober and vigilant,”* meaning that to be successful against temptation, we cannot let our guard down. We ought to always be aware that there could be a potential trial awaiting us. Hence our prayer should be *“Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”* (Matthew 6:13). The Lord will not tempt us with evil, but this prayer is our confession that we need His guidance. The way of escape could be in the form of a scripture, a song or a memory that comes to mind right at the moment of temptation. The key is to immediately take the way out and not linger in an atmosphere of temptation.

As noted in James 1:14, sinful desires live within us. Our enemy knows this also, so he tries to lure us in areas where we are most vulnerable. To counter that, we must *“walk in the spirit and we will not gratify the desires of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:16). Walking in the Spirit takes determination and discipline. Like Joseph (Genesis 39) we may be brutally tempted while we are doing God’s will. Joseph was not drawn away by his personal desires and snuck into Potiphar’s house while Potiphar was away. Joseph was legitimately placed in that house by God’s design. The deceiver tried to thwart God’s plan for him by putting evil in his way. However, with grit and determination, Joseph said, *“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:8 NIV). Like Joseph, you may have to run leaving your cloak behind, but whatever you do, make sure you preserve your integrity and please God.

Some practical escape routes:

- Feed your mind with healthy thoughts. (Philippians 4:8)  
*“whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure,*

whatever is lovely.... think about such things.”

- Surround yourself with likeminded people who will keep you accountable. (Proverbs 18:24) *“One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*

MONDAY

JANUARY ELEVEN

2021

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## GOD IS FAITHFUL

**Focus Scripture:** *“Being confident of this that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 1:6, KJV)

**I**n our fallen world filled with broken promises, God’s faithfulness gives us hope. It is the only sure foundation that we can build our faith on amidst the challenges of life. We all have had or will have our share of letdowns somewhere along life’s journey however, the following are some examples of Bible characters who have stood the test of time. May they serve to strengthen your confidence, knowing that our God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He was faithful to the them and He will be faithful to us as well.

### **Gideon: Judges 6 & 7**

Gideon was an Israelite from the tribe of Manasseh. In his eyes, he was the least in his family and his clan was considered the weakest of the tribe. Based on his background the odds were stacked against him, yet God called him a mighty warrior and told him that he would be the person to save his people from their enemy, the Midianites. Gideon doubted God and asked Him for specific proof that He would remain faithful to His Word. Twice Gideon tested God to be convinced that God was really speaking to him. It’s just like us, when a situation seems unbelievable, we pinch ourselves to prove that we’re not dreaming. Would God really use me for His glory? After all my failures, would God continue to work with me? Perhaps these are some of the questions Gideon

had, but in chapter 7 we see a change in his speech as his confidence increased. He believed that God was faithful to bring victory against the Midianites through him, so he commanded his troop, “*Watch me... follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do.*” (7:17 NIV). The Lord defeated the Midianites through Gideon using unconventional weapons – trumpets, broken jars and a shout! (7:19-22).

### **Jabez: 1 Chronicles 4: 9-10**

Jabez is listed among a long line of families that belong to several clans of the tribe of Judah. One could have easily overlooked his name, but the writer pointed out that “*Jabez was more honorable than his brothers*” and his mother bore him in pain (verse 9). Childbirth is usually painful, but there may have been something special about this pain that caused him to be in the spotlight of this section of the Chronicles. Nothing more was said of his background, but we know that he had a concern, so great that caused him to cry to the Lord, “*Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.*” (verse 10). Jabez knew that God was his only source out of pain and trouble, so he did the only thing that worked, he cried to the Lord. The verse ends with the simple yet powerful statement: “*And God granted his request.*”

### **Apostle Paul: Acts 9**

Saul was a zealot, who persecuted the Christians. God saw his determined spirit and decided that he would be the perfect man to preach the Gospel that he had been fighting against. At his ‘Damascus Road’ encounter he had no idea that his life would miraculously change forever. God purposed that he would proclaim His name before kings, Jews and Gentiles and that he would suffer for the name of Jesus. Paul did not ask for this life-changing experience, but God’s plan had to prevail. Many years after this first encounter, Paul preached to kings, scholars, Jews and Gentiles and he’s still preaching today, through the pages of the many books in the New Testament written by him. God is faithful. He performed His will in Paul’s life, just like He said He would.

### **You (insert your name here)**

How about you? Can you recall a time when God’s faithfulness prevailed in your life? Do you feel like you are waiting too long for God’s promises to be fulfilled in your life? When God makes you a promise,

He may not tell you how He will perform it, but you can rest assured that He will do it. If you stop to look back over your life and think things over, you'll see that you too can write a narrative about God's faithfulness to you. "*Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Additional reading: Genesis 15 & 17; 1 Samuel 1; Ezekiel 12:28; Galatians 6:9

TUESDAY

JANUARY TWELVE

2021

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## YOU CAN STAND

**Focus Scripture:** "*Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.*" (Colossians 1:11, NIV)

**I**t is easy to speak faith when everything is going well; the bills are paid, the children are fed, your career is thriving and there is no imminent threat to your stability. Then unexpectedly something changes, and your world is turned upside down. Your career is in jeopardy and the children are gravely ill. Added to that there is political upheaval and the whole world is in flux. Is it still easy to speak faith? Is it easy to stand while your world is falling apart?

In our focus Scripture, the apostle Paul prayed an interesting prayer for the brethren in Colossae:

- "*that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will...*"
- "*that they would live a worthy life pleasing to the Lord, bearing good fruit...*"
- "*that they would be strengthened with all power so that they may have great endurance and patience*"

This is the guide to being able to stand during hard times. Instead of panicking and retreating in despair, we can pray for strength so that

we can have “*great endurance and patience.*” Praying in this manner while going through trials will empower us with the wisdom of God, enabling us to respond to situations wisely, ultimately bearing fruit. The pain we endure can produce a beautiful outcome if we hold on to God during our darkest moments.

In Genesis 32, Jacob was fearful of meeting his brother Esau whom he had tricked out of his birthright years earlier. Jacob prayed “*save me I pray from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with the children...*” (verse 11). Jacob was vulnerable and honest in his prayer. In verse 24, while Jacob wrestled with a man, he was insistent on getting his deliverance through this encounter. From the meeting Jacob suffered a displaced hip but received a name-change and an amicable meeting with his brother. From him came the twelve tribes of Israel! Perseverance through prayer will yield good fruit even when you are left with a limp. The limp will remind you that you prevailed in your pursuit of God during a desperate moment.

You can stand when the boisterous winds of life are blowing, by crying out to God, who is not indifferent to your problems. Sometimes He allows the storms to remind us that our own ingenuity is frail at best. He gave us the prescription in Romans 12:12, “*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*”

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY THIRTEEN

2021

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## THE LORD IS FIGHTING FOR US

**Focus Scripture:** “*Hear, O Israel: you are advancing today to battle against your enemies. Do not lack courage. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.*” (Deuteronomy 20:3-4, Amp)

**W**e are in the fight of our lives to maintain our integrity and character as we seek to please God. This fight is not the same as the little inconveniences or challenges of life that we can solve on our own. This fight is for our souls; to challenge our faith and to keep us away from the presence of God. The fight keeps us distracted and agitated, so much so that we become unaware of His voice and numbed to His touch. A fight of this magnitude cannot be fought on our own, we need a force much stronger than ourselves to give us strategies necessary to be victorious.

In Deuteronomy 20:3-4, Moses taught the Israelites the laws of warfare. He admonished them not to panic, because their God would fight for them against their enemies and give them the victory. Their enemies comprised of nations that were bigger than them and had more resources. Their armies were stronger and their armories were intimidating. Without God's intervention, the Israelites would have been defeated at the beginning of the battle. Our battles are not physical armies coming against us with swords and chariots, but our minds are the battle ground for the enemy where we are continually attacked by visuals, thoughts, news and memories causing us to lose focus on the One who says He will never leave nor forsake us. One of the most challenging battles is a health crisis that can drive us into desperation and apathy. However, we must remember that the enemy's job is to bombard us with crises so that we shift our focus from Jesus to the issues. At this point we instinctively start fighting these battles by ourselves which we are unable to win on our own.

God is not absent. He is very much there in our battles. We must remember and acknowledge the fact that He is with us. As Moses admonished the Israelites in Deuteronomy, we also must remind ourselves that *"your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."* No issue can defeat us if we keep our focus on God. Isaiah 26:3 (NLT) reminds us *"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you."* God will fight our battles for us if we trust Him to do it. We need to cultivate the discipline of keeping our focus on Him. When life seems hopeless, muster the courage to sing songs of victory; songs such as, *"God is fighting for us, pushing back the darkness, lighting up the Kingdom that cannot be shaken! In the name of Jesus, the enemy is defeated and we will shout*

*it out, shout it out!”* (Darlene Zschech – Gospel artist)

Additional reading: Deuteronomy 31:6; Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 13:5; Zephaniah 3:17

THURSDAY

JANUARY FOURTEEN

2021

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## GOD’S PROMISES ARE SURE

**Focus Scripture:** *“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 Peter 3:9, KJV)

**A**mong the most common public ceremonies of our lives are weddings. The vows of marriage evoke solemnness as they are being exchanged between a man and a woman. The vows made are intended to be binding. Yet divorce statistics prove that today, even the most serious of human promises are broken. Not so with God. His promises are anchored in His unchanging character and steadfast love. The Bible is filled with promises upon which the child of God can depend. When even our most heartfelt promises sometimes falter, the promises of God are sure.

Many times, when we go through difficulties in our lives, we tend to forget what God has promised us, simply because in our eyes it appears impossible. Today as you read, pause to write down all the promises God made to you. It may have been months, years or even decades since you received your promise(s). Nevertheless, remain steadfast. Remember, the Lord does not delay as though He were unable to act, but rather is patient toward you (2 Peter 3:9). He promised that if we seek Him first, He will provide us with what we need (Matthew 6:33).

Never forget that *“the Lord your God, is God, the faithful God, which*

*keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations,”* (Deuteronomy 7:9). Write down what God has promised you. What He has shown to you must happen at the time that He has decided. It may not happen soon or at a time that you think. However, you must be patient. What God has promised you will certainly happen at the right time, **SO WAIT FOR IT!** (Habakkuk 2: 2-3). *“Let us seize and hold tightly the confession of our faith without wavering, for He who promised is reliable and trustworthy and faithful to His Word,”* (Hebrews 10:23).

FRIDAY

JANUARY FIFTEEN

2021

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## THE GIFT OF A CROWN

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

**A** crown is a symbolic headgear traditionally worn by royalties. It represents power, majesty, sovereignty, victory, honor and glory. Reserved for those with royal lineage or blood, one must be a member of the royal family or monarch in order to wear a crown. 1 Peter 2:9 refers to us as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a peculiar people. Becoming a child of God means we have become a part of HIS royal lineage. As a result, we are eligible to obtain a crown.

James indicates in chapter 1 verse 12 that the Lord promised us a crown of life. This is bestowed on the ones that trust God even during the midst of trouble; the one who remains steadfast and endures unto the end. Revelation 2:10 echoes the same sentiments; *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* There

Jesus spoke to the church of Symra. Just as He spoke to the church then, the same is applicable to us today. Jesus knows our sufferings and poverty (Revelation 2:9). He sees where we currently are, and He knows what we are going through. However, we are reminded not to fear any of those things. Though we may be tried and have tribulation, be faithful, and we will receive a crown of life. As the Word of God declares, “... *after that ye have suffered a while, the Lord make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*” (1 Peter 5:10).

Unlike many other prizes we may receive in life that are corruptible and temporary, we have the promise of an incorruptible crown (1 Corinthians 9:25). Like Paul in Philippians 3:12-14, you may not have yet completely become the person that God wants you to be. However, do not dwell on what has happened in the past. Instead, try hard to reach the things that are in front of you. Be like a runner who wants desperately to reach the end of the race and win. Press toward the mark for the prize; the gift of the crown of life. Fight a good fight, keep the faith, finish the race (2 Timothy 4:7).

SATURDAY

JANUARY SIXTEEN

2021

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## A WINNER'S FAITH

**Focus Scripture:** “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” (Hebrew 11:6, KJV)

**H**ave you prayers that seem to be unanswered? Anxious moments, trials hard to bear? Are there loved ones yet for whom you're burdened? Lonely nights spent bowed in fervent prayer?" These are some of the questions asked in the song entitled "Faith in God can Move a Mighty Mountain", written by Watkins, Peterson and Smith. These song writers encouraged and reminded us that God sees every tear and heartache and will answer

prayer. How does one believe this when going through difficult periods in their life? The answer is to have faith in God.

Faith is that element in life that allows a person to not look at what is visible but rather what is possible. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. If we cannot please God, we cannot win the spiritual battle. Faith is a powerful tool that helps the child of God overcome and live a victorious life. Faith heals (Mark 10:52); protects (Ephesians 6:16); makes the impossible possible (Matthew 17:20); builds patience (James 1:3) and it prompts God to take action on our behalf (Matthew 15:28).

Hebrews chapter 11 gives an account of several characters that through faith lived a victorious life even during the midst of challenges. Through faith, they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings, closed the mouths of lions, extinguished the power of fires, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became mighty and unbeatable in battle and put enemy forces to flight (Hebrews 11:33-34).

Romans 15:4 states that: “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” As you pray today reflect on those who have gone before us and used faith to overcome. May it give you hope so that you too can have a winner’s faith.

SUNDAY

JANUARY SEVENTEEN

2021

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## OUR HERITAGE

**Focus Scripture:** *“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.”* (Isaiah 54:17)

**U**nderstanding who you are and whose you are determines how you think and carry yourself. To facilitate an understanding of who you are requires an understanding of your birthright. A birthright can be defined as a right, privilege, or possession to which a person is entitled by birth (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Galatians chapter 4 gives us a great depiction of who we are as heirs of God through Christ. This chapter starts out with an analogy of a father-son relationship. It gives a depiction of a son who will one day receive what belongs to his father. However, while he is a child, he cannot receive his inheritance/estate until his father decides, or he is of legal age. Until then, the son must obey his parents and caretakers. In the same way, we are children in God's family. We were slaves to sin. But Jesus Christ died for our sins, setting us free. As a result of this, we are no longer slaves to sin, but have become children of God and because we are children of God, we are heirs to His estate.

The term birthright is often used synonymously with the word heritage. Isaiah 54:17 indicates that the heritage of the servants of the Lord is that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper! So why do so many of us as children of God seem to live beneath our privilege? We sometimes operate like commoners when we are of the royal family of heaven. We live a life of defeat when we have been declared victorious. We live in fear, hopelessness and despair when He has promised to take care of us. This is not the will of the Lord. The heritage of the children of the Lord is to live a life of prosperity.

Understand however, that living in prosperity does not mean we are immune to periods of trials and difficulties. In fact, it is quite the opposite. From Isaiah 54:17 we can infer that weapons will be formed, and we will come under attack. But as we go through these difficulties, we must never forget that the enemy will not succeed with the attacks. *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His Glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy"* (1 Peter 4:12-13). Be encouraged and know that in the end, we have an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4). This is our heritage!

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## TRUE POWER AT WORK

**Focus Scripture:** *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,”* (Ephesians 3:20, KJV)

**G**od is able to do exceeding abundantly above all, and beyond all that we could ever ask or even desire in our hearts. He is the omnipotent God, the One who has supreme power. He is not subjected to physical limitations like man. Hence the rhetorical question asked by God in Jeremiah 32:27, *“...is there anything too hard for me?”*

Throughout the ages, God has demonstrated to His people that He is competent and has the capacity to do the impossible. One of the evidences that proves such declaration was when God told Abraham and Sarah that they would conceive a child. He asked them, *“Is there anything too hard for the Lord?”* (Genesis 18:14). Sarah had passed the time of her life to bear children. Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born, (Genesis 21:2-5). This act of having a child was impossible given the human biological challenges, but it happened anyway. Nothing stops God from fulfilling His promise. He is powerful enough to see it materialized. Job chapter 42:2 declares that *“I know that You can do everything and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.”*

If you are experiencing situations that are causing you to worry and making you feel like your world is falling apart, you are a perfect candidate to experience the power of God working wonders in your life. Just believe that He can do anything and nothing can stop the fulfilment of His purpose. The Bible states, *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”* (Mark 11:24).

While in prison, Jeremiah the prophet prayed to God saying, *“thou hast*

*made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.”* (Jeremiah 32:17). The year 2020 may have been a challenging one for you and your family, and your situation may have you in a prison of doubt and fear. However, God is saying to you just as He rhetorically answered Jeremiah, *“Is there anything too hard for Me?”* We have hope in Christ Jesus and not in this world. For with God, every impossible situation can become possible (Luke 1:37).

If you are currently facing fiery trials, remain faithful, God is able to deliver you. Didn't He deliver the three Hebrew boys from the fiery furnace? (Daniel 3:24-30)

The true power of God was revealed to the blind men who came to Jesus (Mark 10:46-52). It was also revealed when the woman with the issue of blood was made whole (Mark 5:25-34) and the multitude was fed with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). Jesus can do the same for you today if you will allow Him. The Lord said in Jeremiah 33:3, *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”* God is able. There is no hurt that He cannot heal. He will faithfully fulfill every promise.

TUESDAY

JANUARY NINETEEN

2021

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## WINNING SPIRITUAL BATTLES

**Focus Scripture:** *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”* (Ephesians 6:18, KJV)

**I**n Paul's final instructions to the Ephesians, he told them to put on the whole armor of God so that they may be able to withstand the enemy. After such an eloquent description of the pieces of this armor, he then turns their attention to prayer, another important element in

winning spiritual battles. Prayer was not listed among the pieces of the armor of God, yet without it, we are unable to win our spiritual battles. The significance of prayer that Paul was reiterating is that without it our armor becomes ineffective because our communication is broken with the One who gives us the power to use our armor.

Can our physical strength help us overcome obstacles and challenges in the spiritual realm? No! *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:12). But in prayer, even the physically weak can become strong in the spiritual realm. Through prayer we defeat the power of the evil forces. Upon reflection of our personal lives, we can see the cunningness of Satan’s strategies, as he tried many times to let us fall. However, with great joy, we can give God thanks that through the spiritual strategies of wearing the armor of God coupled with prayer, we can walk in victory daily.

Prayer is that communication tool between our Commander and Chief, Jesus Christ at Headquarters (heaven) and His believers on the battlefield. This world is not our home and we should never allow ourselves to become comfortable here. It is our battlefield! If we desire to win and become overcomers, we must be dependent upon God for His strength, direction, and wisdom. This we do through prayer!

Paul instructs us to *“keep on the lookout.”* Luke 21:36 states, *“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”* We can keep alert by praying the Word of God. When we do so, we gain some mental understanding, while nourishing the spiritual man through God’s Word. We should pray *“with all perseverance.”* In an unorthodox parable in Luke 18, referencing prevailing prayer, Jesus told the multitude of a widow, who by her continual coming to the unjust judge, caused him to relent, giving her the answer she sought. We learned from the parable that God will see that justice is given to His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night. He will not keep putting them off, but one day He will answer.

Furthermore, Paul tells us to care for each other by making *“supplications*

*for all saints.*” When we pray for each other we are giving room for the manifestation of signs and miracles in our lives. When Job had prayed for his friends, God blessed him in measures beyond what he previously possessed (Job 42:10). The first century church continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42-43).

Surely, we have desires to see the greater works than these, as proclaimed by Jesus in John 14:12. However, it is through a dedicated prayer life that we will have these experiences in our midst and become overcomers in our spiritual battles.

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY TWENTY

2021

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## STAY ALERT

**Focus Scripture:** *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8, KJV)

**E**mergency evacuation drills are carried out frequently in the workplace, and they are necessary for testing our responses to emergencies. Sadly, we often lose our alertness over time due to infrequent reminders of the possibility of danger that may come. In the spiritual sphere, 1 Peter 5:8 is our emergency notification that timely and constantly reminds us to Stay Alert! Why? Because there is a devil that is relentlessly looking to destroy us. According to John 10:10, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...”*

The five foolish virgins are a noteworthy example of the consequence of losing alertness. They did not have any oil in their vessel. Matthew 25:3-4 informs us that, *“They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.”*

The wise virgin took the necessary precautions to ensure that they had enough oil in their lamp in the unlikely event of a delayed arrival of the bridegroom. This parable in Matthew 25:1-13 illustrates that we should be spiritually prepared for the coming of our Lord and Savior. No man knows at what time our Lord shall return, so we ought to be ready and waiting. Matthew 25:6 states that, *“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”* The midnight cry marks the end of any opportunity for prudence and correction. Hence the reason for us to stay alert.

The apostle Paul reaffirms the importance of spiritual alertness by using the analogy of rivalry. Here he contrasted himself with a competitor who rehearses self-control in preparing to win the race. His preparation of self-control is like a competitor who disciplines his body with exacting restraint over his eating habits, exercise regimes, and other restraint practices. The Greek expression used here for “discipline” is *hypōpiazō*, which alludes to severely beating someone or something. To a fighter, it is giving his opponent a black and blue eye! Paul says he “pounds” or disciplines his body to toughen himself for his spiritual endurance. He says that he is doing this so that in the end, after he preached to others, he will not become disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Therefore, we should be sober and serious about how we live. We should not allow the pressures of this life to cause us to feel hopeless. Amid the imminent attack by the Philistines, the prophet Samuel took the time to build an altar to seek God for help (1 Samuel 7:8). We should be vigilant and remain in a position of being watchful unto prayer. Prayer is an essential weapon that helps us to stay alert spiritually. 2 Corinthians 10:4 states, *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”* Let us purpose in our heart that we will stay alert because the end is truly at hand.

## RESIST AND CONQUER

**Focus Scripture:** *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7, KJV)

**T**he Bible informs us that we were given power. Luke 10:19 states, *“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”* This power enables us to resist the devil to the extent that he will flee. However, it is critical to understand that it is through submitting to God that the platform for that power is materialized. Submission in this context means surrendering one’s self to the authority and control of Jesus Christ. When God controls all areas of our lives, we become empowered to conquer any evil force or adversarial attacks that come our way.

Our enemy is cunning and possesses more power than us by ourselves. Nonetheless, the Bible reminds us that “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). It is the Holy Spirit in us that gives the power to conquer. Therefore, we need not fear. Isaiah 41:10 says, *“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”* As children of the living God, we have more than enough ammunitions to fight and be victorious in every battle on a daily basis.

We also have the Word of God as our weapon. Hebrews 4:12 states, *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* We can use the Word to give us the victory. Jesus did it and so should we, His children. He responded to the devil’s temptations by quoting the Word: *“It is written ... it is written ... it is also written”* (Matt. 4:4-5,7). If our Lord resisted Satan’s attacks with Scripture, we also should meet the tempter’s attacks on the same basis. By the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we stand against

the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:11;17). Satan often uses his weapon of deception, but God’s truth protects us from his lies.

Therefore, we should earnestly and consistently draw near to God and intentionally remain close to Him. We must have a relationship with Him in order to be able to resist the devil. We must obey His commands and submit ourselves to Him. The process of submission involves elevating God’s Word above our desires. The devil cannot overpower the believer who is living a surrendered life to Christ. When Christ died on the cross, He took control of the keys to death, hell, and the grave. He then freed those who were held in slavery by the dreadful fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15, NIV). Today we can boast in the finished work that Jesus did at Calvary, which gives us power to trample the enemy under our feet.

Finally, put on the whole armor of God that you can stand against the enemy. Let us make God’s Word the authority by which we live our lives every day. For it is through the Holy Ghost that we will identify the enemy’s temptations and craftiness. *“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* (1 Corinthians 10:13). God has given us the Holy Spirit and His Word so that we are able to resist and conquer.

FRIDAY

JANUARY TWENTY TWO

2021

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## WAITING ON GOD

**Focus Scripture:** *“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”* (Isaiah 40: 31)

**W**aiting on God is a choice that we often do not readily welcome. Our basic instincts are geared to having instant fixes or gratification to our needs. As if to say, “We want it and we want it now.” Whatever that “It” represents, it is

not one of the finer attributes of mankind. It generally negates a feeling of wasting time. However, Isaiah encourages and reminds us that our strength is only renewed when we wait explicitly on God. The result of waiting allows our natural and heavenly vision to become clearer. Therefore, despite the situations encountered, we are at the place in our relationship with God that we are willing to wait on Him. The result of waiting allows us to soar as eagles, whether our needs are met or unmet. Our focus shifts from self to an All-knowing God who has all the solutions to our problems.

During our time of waiting, our total dependence is on God. As a result, we trust and know that He will come through for us. The result might not be what we anticipate, however, we can be reassured that He knows what is best for us. Therefore, whatever the situations are, we should endeavor not to become weary or faint, but wait patiently upon God. We should take great delight in waiting on the Lord, having the assurance that God knows from the beginning to the end of our experiences. As we delight and trust in Him, we have a better understanding of who He is and what He can do for us. Nothing takes Him by surprise because He is the omniscient God. *“Wait on the Lord, be of good of courage and He will strengthen thine heart, wait, I say on the Lord”* (Psalm 27:14).

SATURDAY

JANUARY TWENTY THREE

2021

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## GROW IN CHRIST

**Focus Scripture:** *“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.”* (2 Peter 3:18)

**H**uman growth is not instantaneous but a life-long process from birth to death. We are body, mind, and spirit with each aspect growing and maturing overtime. Although all aspects are important, the spiritual aspect is the most important because it is that portion that gives meaning and direction to our lives

(Frankl, 1992). Since our growth pattern is not stagnant but a progressive process, we should influence the lives of others in a godly fashion.

Growing in grace involves the development of Christlike character traits; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These traits are produced by God's Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). To grow in grace also requires the application of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting as well as the study and application of God's words to our lives. We must allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. When this occurs, our view of God, self, and others takes on a different perspective. We should therefore make a concerted effort to grow in grace reflecting the attributes and beauty of His character.

Peter also encourages us to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We grow in knowledge by establishing a personal and intimate relationship with Christ. The closer you get to someone, the more you know and understand that person. Likewise, the closer you get to Christ the more you know Him. We grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding by depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is able to use our understanding of Christ to reveal Himself in our lives. We mature significantly as God imparts to us *"the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him"* (Ephesians 1:17 KJV). Let us endeavor to grow in grace and knowledge of our Savior, *"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 fullness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:13).

SUNDAY

JANUARY TWENTY FOUR

2021

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## EXCEEDING RICHES

**Focus Scripture:** *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Where in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world ...; our conversation in times past to the lusts of our*

*flesh.... That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in the kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:1-7)*

**W**hen discussing riches, the thought that most often comes to mind is earthly wealth; money, houses, cars, and lavish lifestyles. However, the riches that the Scripture describes is different from the world’s viewpoint. We have been bestowed with exceeding wealth that our finite minds cannot begin to fathom. We were outcasts, wrapped up in trespasses and sins; *“were by nature the children of wrath, even as others”* (Ephesians 2:3). Despite all the derogative labels that could be assigned to us, Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords chose us and raised us up to sit together in heavenly places with Him (Ephesians 2:6), so *“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus”* (Verse 7).

God is waiting on us to display His exceeding riches. You asked, how can I do that? Testify about your situation; how Jesus saved you, brought you out of a life of sin to a place of sanctification, where you can have daily fellowship with Him and that your life is on the right track because of His saving grace. Frances Crosby’s song entitled “Unsearchable Riches” describes Christ’s exceeding riches toward us well.

Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ,  
Wealth that can never be told!  
Riches exhaustless of mercy and grace,  
Precious, more precious than gold!  
Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ!  
Who shall their greatness declare?  
Jewels whose luster our lives may adorn,  
Pearls that the poorest may wear!  
Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ!  
Who would not gladly endure?  
Trials, afflictions, and crosses on earth,  
Riches like these to secure!

## MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS

**Focus Scripture:** *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy path.”* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

**D**ecision making is an ongoing process that affects our lives either in a negative or positive way. Some decisions appear to be easy, while others are difficult. However, working from our frame of reference we often make small or huge mistakes. So often we think we have the answers to the solutions that we so desperately seek.

Proverbs 3:5-6 admonishes us to trust in the Lord in all that we do, which will help us in making the right decisions. He is the Master of the universe, the beginning and the end, the first and the last and we must acknowledge Him for who He is. Most times it is after we have messed up that we turn our attention to God. The Scripture encourages us to trust in the Lord. He is the only one that will not fail us. We sometimes do not ask for help from brethren due to fear of having our concerns discussed with others. Sisters or brothers, wherever we worship, God has placed someone in that body to minister to our needs or concerns. We must love and trust each other. *“Where no council is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Proverbs 11:14).

We must seek God’s counsel in all we do, despite how minute or huge the problems seem to be. God is waiting right now to help us make that decision we are faced with. Have you talked to Him about it? Have you gotten His approval? Are you satisfied with the choices you have made? *“If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him”* (James 1:5).

## PEACE IN THE STORM

**Focus Scripture:** *“And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”* (Mark 4:39, KJV)

**P**ace is almost always defined as the absence of turmoil and the presence of tranquility. That view is equally almost always dependent upon our circumstances and surroundings. If that definition and those expectations are accurate, it is doubtful that peace would be attainable. Peace is not the absence of turmoil. In fact, the real indication of peace is found when there is turmoil.

Peace is an attribute of the fruit of the spirit. Thus, it is found in the Holy Ghost, not in perfectly tranquil circumstances. The Bible does not hide the fact that in this life we will have trouble. In fact, Jesus expressly told His disciples and us that there will be tribulation in this world. However, and ironically, He states that He’s telling them this so that they might have peace (John 16:33). Peace amid tribulation and stormy circumstances? Yes! This is made possible by the peace that comes from the God of peace.

In a short story entitled, “The Real Meaning of Peace,” (author unknown), a king offers a prize to the artist who can paint the best picture of peace. The king looked at all the pictures submitted, uncovering one peaceful scene after another as the onlookers clapped and cheered. One of the artists, depicted a calm lake surrounded by peaceful, towering mountains. Overhead was a beautiful blue sky with fluffy white clouds. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. The onlookers that saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace. Surely this was the winner!

But there was another picture. It had mountains like the previous example, but these mountains were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell, and in which lightning flashed. Down

the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall; the crowd could almost feel it's cold, penetrating spray. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the king looked closely, he saw that a little bird had built a nest on a branch of a tree. A tree that reached out in the direction of the tumultuous waterfall. Yet there, amid the rush of angry water, undisturbed by her stormy surroundings, sat the mother bird on her nest, in perfect peace. (<https://www.melanieslibrary.com/the-real-meaning-of-peace/>). That turned out to be the winning picture.

Peace is internal not external. That is why it can exist in times of difficulty and why it surpasses understanding. God's multiplied peace will keep your heart and mind (Philippians 4:7). No wonder the song writer penned, "to multiplied trials, He multiplies peace." Peace, and its corresponding effect of rest, is found in God. The Bible makes repeated references to the peace of God and the God of peace (see Philippians 4:7, 9; Colossians 3:15; Romans 15:33, Romans 16:20.)

The Hebrew word for peace used in the Old Testament is shalom. The primary definition of shalom is completeness, to be whole. Paul reminds us that we are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). He further reminds us that our wholeness is made possible by the God of peace. *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Life is filled with many uncertainties, however, there is peace, rest and completeness in God's presence.

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY TWENTY SEVEN

2021

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## LIFT UP YOUR EYES

**Focus Scripture:** *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."* (Psalm 121:1)

In Jewish culture, when devoted pilgrims made their way to Jerusalem to keep the great feasts of the Lord, they sang Pilgrim Psalms as they ascend the Jerusalem hills. Author David Mitchell in his book, *Songs of Ascents* depicts the journey to the City of Shalom as he describes the Psalmist “having his eyes fixed on the Jerusalem hills ahead as he looks for heavenly protection on his journey.” How does this ancient mission apply to the people of God in the year 2021? Just like the Israelites, we are on our pilgrimage to Zion and it behooves us to keep our eyes fixed on the “hill” where all our help comes from. The old hymn “Close to Thee” captures the exact sentiments of our pilgrimage. May these not only be mere words in a familiar song, but may they become the deep yearnings of our hearts and sincere prayers for protection as we make our way to the New Jerusalem.

Close to Thee, close to Thee,  
Close to Thee, close to Thee;  
All along my pilgrim journey,  
Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Like the Psalmist, we must make the decision to lift our eyes to the hills and focus our gaze. If we look at the turmoil all around us, we will become distracted like Peter when he walked on the water. If we look down, we might find ourselves in a situation like Jonah, down in the bottom of a boat and down in the belly of a fish. If we look behind, we will only see regrets, disappointments and failures and run the risk of transforming into a pillar of salt like Lot’s wife. Be encouraged today, let’s lift up our eyes to Jesus, He will help us. He is the help of our countenance and our God (Psalm 42:11). Consider the caliber of help that we are able to solicit from the One who never slumbers or sleep. He is never languid, never weary, never drowsy, and never slothful. The Psalmist tells us that the Lord is a Keeper, He can keep us safe through any and every circumstance. The Lord is a Shade, we can hide under His shadow from the elements. The Lord is a Preserver, He can and will keep us intact especially when we face challenges in life. What a great consolation! We have the best help in the entire universe!

We cannot always rely on systems that give us a sense of security such as the government, the armed forces and pension funds. While we may utilize these benefits, let us also be aware that our ultimate help comes

from God, the Great I AM. 2020 was a year of great challenges of which many of us are still experiencing the effects. Some circumstances have placed us in the dunghills, but we can have the confidence that the One who helped us then will most assuredly continue to help us navigate our way through or around every pothole and peril that this season might bring. Choose today the direction in which you will fix your eyes.

Mitchell, D. C. (2015) *The Songs of Ascents Psalm 120 to 134 in the Worship of Jerusalem's Temple*. Scotland UK: Campbell Publication

THURSDAY

JANUARY TWENTY EIGHT

2021

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## QUARANTINE DOUBT AND FEAR

**Focus Scripture:** *“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”* (Isaiah 61:3)

**I**n the gospel according to Mark, we read in chapter 13 about a number of events and signs that will usher in the end of days. The Scripture tells us that these are the beginnings of sorrows. We can all agree that we have crossed the threshold and stepped into a period of troubled times. As we see the fulfillment of these prophecies, many hearts are becoming fearful. Even the people of God are getting anxious, and doubtful. Perilous times have come, but simultaneously it is also the season of redemption for the saints of God. Luke 21:28, tells us what our posture should be. *“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”* Being quarantined during a pandemic will not thwart the promises of the Immutable God. He has given us, beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and praise for a spirit of heaviness, therefore, fear and doubt should not be our lot.

What will it take to persuade us not to harbor feelings of anxiety and apprehension? There are numerous instances where the Word of God commands us not to fear or to be afraid. The Lord encouraged Joshua. *“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”* (Joshua 1:8). The God of Joshua is still commanding His people in 2021 to be strong and courageous because He is with us when we mourn, when we are in sackcloth and ashes and when a spirit of heaviness is upon us. There is never a time when He is not with us; even when we are not able to trace Him. He is still with us in the lowest valley and the deepest pit. He is still with us in our fiery trials and lion’s den. He is still with us in our stormy seas and our desert places. Our world has changed, but our God has not changed!

In this final chapter of Earth, the Lord is appointing us to be called trees of righteousness. This means that we will be rooted and grounded in righteousness and bear fruit, so that His righteousness will be revealed in us. Let’s not allow fear and doubt to get ahold of us. If we are planted in the Lord, we will not be moved by all that is happening around us. *“For all he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”* (Jeremiah 17:8).

FRIDAY

JANUARY TWENTY NINE

2021

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## **THE POWER OF IMAGINATION (WINNING THE BATTLE IN THE MIND)**

**Focus Scripture:** *“And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”* (Genesis 11:6, KJV)

**T**he word “imagine” means “to have a thought” or “to consider.” The power of imagination is therefore the power of a thought. American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

Life begins in seed form. So do our thoughts. Hence the phrase, “thought life.” Our thoughts are like seeds sown. Everything begins with a thought or something that was imagined. God acknowledges the power of our imagination when He said in Genesis 11:6, “*nothing will be restrained or withheld from what they have imagined*” or purposed to do in their thought life. However, in this instance what was imagined was not God’s will, so it had to be demolished.

Either God or the devil is partnering with our thoughts and will facilitate a manifestation of what we have imagined. Knowing the power of our thought life, the enemy of our souls bombards our minds with thoughts that are meant to derail us from our path and destiny. Therein lies the notion that the mind is the battlefield. Proverbs 23:7 teaches that we become what we think about, which is why we are “*transformed by the renewing of [our] minds*” (Romans 12:2).

The Greek word that is translated as “transformed” in Romans 12:2 is the English word “metamorphosis.” Metamorphosis is a complete change from one form to another. Therefore, if a person is ever going to change their life, their mind must first change. According to the parable of the prodigal son, after his riotous living had left him depleted “*he came to himself*” (Luke 15:17). In other words, he had a change of mind, and when his mind was changed, his words changed, followed by a change in his actions. What we speak is a direct indication of what we think. Think about what you think about. What is it producing?

The renewing of the mind is an ongoing, intentional act, because our mind is always vulnerable to attack. Therefore, we must be discriminating about what garners our attention. As the saying goes, “garbage in, garbage out.” When thoughts that are contrary to the word and purpose of God go unchallenged, they become strongholds that will shape future thoughts and actions. Those are the thoughts that the apostle Paul says must be demolished or pulled down (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). One of the

ways we demolish strongholds is by speaking and meditating on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

SATURDAY

JANUARY THIRTY

2021

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## EXCEEDING JOY

**Focus Scriptures:** *“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.”* (Psalms 43:4, KJV)

**T**he writer of Psalm 43 referred to God as his exceeding joy. It is one of those abundant expressions that overflow with love for God. There are times when God is so close and satisfying that He fills us with joy in Him. To us God is indeed our exceeding Joy because there is no comparison, there is no measure, and His joy exceeds all other Joys.

Joy is defined as a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. Spiritually, it is expressing God’s goodness, it is a deep-rooted inspired happiness. We may find joy or happiness in others and even in material things but that is only temporal and will not fulfil our heart’s true desire.

Peter in his writing talks about true attitude in affliction. 1 Peter 4:12-13 states, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”* Exceeding joy comes to all those who partake in Christ’s suffering. This certainly gives us hope to know that as Christians our afflictions are not in vain.

Jude reminds us that we are kept from falling and we are presented

faultless before the presence of His Glory through exceeding Joy. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). Let us tap into that source, dwell in the presence of God and draw from the fountain of life. Let us rejoice knowing that we can have exceeding joy and happiness in Jesus Christ. Pray that we will have exceeding joy and that the people of God will seek after the things that promote exceeding joy.

SUNDAY

JANUARY THIRTY ONE

2021

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## HOPE IN GOD

**Focus Scripture:** *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”* (Psalms 42:5, KJV)

**O**ne of the dictionary’s definition of hope is wishing or a feeling of optimism that something will happen in the future. However, Biblical hope is a firm confidence from God about future issues because they are based on God’s promises and revelation. In other words, Biblical hope is linked inseparably with a firm faith and confident trust in God.

Psalms 146:3 tells us to *“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.”* Unfortunately, we cannot trust in man, world systems or governments. The sure hope for us is a hope that does not put us to shame. *“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* (Romans 5:5).

There must have been a time when you’ve struggled with a personal situation and it seems like there was absolutely no way out. You looked to the left and to the right and there was no hope. It’s as if you were about

to lose your mind. It seems like there was no answer from God. That's how David probably felt as expressed in Psalms 22. But his spirit was lifted in vs 4 "*Our fathers trusted in thee: They trusted, and thou didst deliver them*" When you are able to reflect on what God has done in the past, it gives you hope and serves as a reminder that all things are possible with God.

Hope gives us purpose to live and not to give up. During the Covid-19 pandemic the disaster helpline saw a 338 percent increase in the volume of calls received from February to March. There was a concern about the potential increase in suicides due to economic stress, social isolation and medical problems (cnn.com). People simply lost hope. When we hope in God there is so much peace and joy. Romans 15:13 states, "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.*" You are reminded of His promise never to leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). One of His greatest promises is found in Isaiah 54:10: "*For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*"

So where exactly is our hope? Our hope is in God and He will not fail us. Let our prayers reaffirm our hope. Pray for those who are hopeless, thinking there is no way out. The next time things seem to be hopeless just remember what God has done for you and that He can do it again.

**Editor In Chief** - Rhonda McKenzie

**Writers** - Keshia-Gaye Anderson, Stephen-Paul Bartlett, Judith Harvey, Derron McCreath, Rhonda McKenzie, Ivreen Robinson, Natalie Spence, Oshika Whittaker, Sheryl Harris, De'Jon Reid and Keith Brown

**Editors** - Dermoth Mattison, Sheigla Smalling

**Biblical Assessor** - Keith Brown

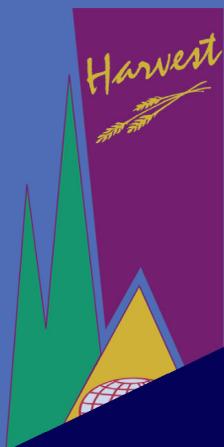
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**ONENESS REHOBOTH APOSTOLIC CHURCH  
125 EAST THIRD STREET  
MT. VERNON, NY 10550  
[914] 667-8209 | WWW.ORAC.CHURCH**

